

Jacob Morgan 00:00

Once it starts recording, I'm just gonna jump into some questions if that works for you. Okay. One of the things that I saw, I can't remember if it was in the Guy Kawasaki interview, I think it was. But in a recent podcast, you said that there were two human beings, two most important human beings in your life.

One was your mother. And the second was the first commanding officer that you had. Why your mother and why this first commanding officer, what role did they play in shaping Tom Peters?

00:33

Could we start with an easier question?

Jacob Morgan 00:36

We could but then what would be the fundament,

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but that's true. My I was an only child. And the children have only child only, only children tend to very often be driven very hard by their mothers. And I was driven. I had a funny conversation coming from Alan Weber, who was a co founder of Fast Company Magazine, and I was out visiting him in Santa Fe, where he happens to be married now and chatting with Alan and his wife. And we were talking about some of this stuff. And I said, Well, if you want to understand me, you've got understand that my mother was pushing me insanely, by the age of five. And Alan's wife who I don't really know that well looked me in the eye. And she said, I bet it was more like three. And that may be the case. So, you know, you could argue it's too much pushing. I'm willing to argue that, but it's turned out pretty damn well is the answer. The other thing, which is a kind of a strange thing to say, I've got an awful lot of problems with what goes on in a lot of the South, I'm sorry to say, but my mother was in Virginia, and she taught me good manners. And that is no small thing. You know, it's really, really important. As to my first commanding officer. I mean, I've always said, I got lucky. I made two tours to Vietnam. And incidentally, I don't know how well you know, the world about 80 miles north of you, but it was in Ventura port why nimi? At is where I was. And I got lucky because I had two deployments to Vietnam. Doesn't sound like luck. And two commanding officers, and I have written about them and called them Captain day and Captain night. Whatever the first one did, I tried to copy whatever the second one did, I tried to run away from it as fast as possible. But well, relative to the things I really care about. I was a so called Navy Seabee, a combat engineer, we built stuff for the Marine Corps, mainly. My first commanding officer really wanted the job to get done. And he really wanted to get it done well, and he really wanted to get it done fast. But you there were 875 of us in the battalion. And I swear to God, he knew at least 171 names, which is doubtless not true. But you know what I'm trying to say. Yeah, really, really, really cared about his sailors, which didn't mean he didn't demand the best, et cetera, et cetera. But it was just a, it was, you know, he I learned many years later, and we can talk about this at Hewlett Packard about the idea of managing by wandering around. Well, my first commanding officer, not that I had a word for their term for den, but he was the classic MPW, a guy, a lot of commanding officers, you know, stay in their little hole underground, or whatever else it is, he was always out in his jeep going around construction sites, checking to see how we were doing, checking to see what he could do for us to make life a little bit better for us. But it was I said, relative to the MB wa thing, which again, as I said, we can get back into MPW a taught me that effective leadership is an intimate app, and that word is chosen with incredible care. It is about people working with people to develop each other, and so on.

And so that's what Captain Anderson did, basically. And my second captain, who was and I hate to say this, since I grew up in Annapolis, Maryland, was a naval academy grad, who did everything by the books. And I was a Vietnam guy for a year and I should have more than one memory. But I ended up writing the deployment report, as they call it. And I remember and I'm an engineer, you know, which means that I couldn't spell words and things like that I can only do third order differential equations. And so I was called into the Captain's Office. After doing a draft, I can still see him leaning forward and saying, Mr. Peters, which is what you call junior officers in the Navy, do you not know the difference between the word tangible and palpable I still know 50 years later, but I mean, that was the guy in a nutshell, one guy's out in the jeep talking to the sailors. Another one is doing proofreading of a report. That's not very significant anyway. But it was, it really is not as silly as it sounds, say that after I had those two contrasts, I knew an awful lot more about leadership and an awful lot of people do.

Jacob Morgan 05:49

Here reminds me a lot of I know you're a fan of Doug Condon from Campbell Soup, and I had a Frank Blake on the show as well, fairly recently, the former CEO of the Home Depot. And he gave me this great quote, and he said that one of the few things that a lot of leaders don't realize is that being a leader actually means giving a piece of yourself to your people. And he said, most leaders are not willing to do that. They view themselves in the role. But they forget that they actually are giving some of themselves to their people. And he shared this story where he would give up a lot of his Sunday nights. And he too, would write handwritten cards to recognize a lot of his employees. And he would do hundreds of them every Sunday. And I said, frankly, you know, you're giving up your Sundays here. You know, a lot of people love their Sundays go relax. And he said, I have to give more of myself to my people. And that's, that's what I choose to do. And he said, a lot of leaders today, they just, they don't grasp that reality that leadership is hard. And that that's really what it's about. So I think that ties very well into some of the stuff that you've been, well, you've

06:50

defined perfectly in one paragraph, everything that I'm concerned about, and as you imply, my great frustration. Yeah. And you know, a lot of things we can talk about, but I think one very critical part of it is who you promoted into leadership positions. You know, a guy whose name Alas, I don't remember, wrote an entire book on hiring. And he said, hiring is the single most significant thing that a company does. Yeah, and most people aren't very good at it. And most people haven't studied it. And my version of that is hiring and promoting are the two most significant things that are done in any organization. And relative to what we're talking about with your colleagues who you interviewed. You can smell that stuff. In a good interview, a couple of friends of mine wrote a book called management lessons from the Mayo Clinic. And every time they have one of those rankings of the great medical centers, Mayo always tends to be number one, or maybe number two. And this is tiny, but I don't think it's tiny. You are one of the planet's great neurosurgeons, and you want to come to work for Mayo, and I'm the guy who's interviewing. And so we sit down, and we have an interview. And there's something that you don't know, and I know how corny this sounds, but these guys who wrote the book, I would trust with my life. During that interview, I am literally not figuratively, counting the number of times you use the word we and the number of times you use the word eye. And if the wheeze lose to the eyes, I don't care if your God with a knife in your hand, you're not going to work for Mayo. Now. What's fascinating about that, and makes it not just a cute anecdote is it goes back to Dr. Mayo in 1914, who established the idea of

what he called Team medicine. And this just pervades the place and in the insanity of most healthcare incidents, institutions today. That's about as far from what goes on as one could possibly imagine.

Jacob Morgan 09:15

Yeah, I like that story. That's that's interesting. I I remember actually another another we're talking about interviewing one CEO that I interviewed, I think it was Sheryl Palmer, the CEO of Taylor Morris. And she said that she always interviews potential leadership candidates in a restaurant. And I said well, why do you always want to go to a restaurant she said because I want to see how they treat the staff. I want to see how they respond when things don't go well if they're going to be rude to people they don't know and and I thought that was a very another you know, an interesting approach right?

09:48

Who was who was the guy's name? I can't remember now who wrote swim with the sharks, the leadership book. Do you remember that?

Jacob Morgan 09:53

Yeah, I don't remember who it was.

09:55

Anyway, doesn't matter. But it was the same thing. His it was his last test. In his last test was to take the candidate out to a Minnesota Twins game. And, you know, see how they behaved with the popcorn pedalers. But you know, I think that's what I don't want to do is lose the thread of where we were three minutes ago. Namely, your phrase give of yourself. Yeah. Because nothing that we will say in the next 45 minutes is more important than that. You know, that was that first commanding officer. And I don't know, I'm not a psychiatrist. I don't know exactly how we define it. I think you can smell it. And I think you can see it, and I and the other thing he said, which is just, you know, just the other half the story. So many people think the job of a leader is to sit in the office and give orders, you know, which is total crap I've ever hearing a little story up years and years ago, which I guess was true. And Joe Smith got promoted to manager. And he spent all of his time sitting in his office kind of twiddling his thumbs. And somebody said, Why are you doing that? He said, Well, that's what my former boss did. And I thought that's what bosses were supposed to do. Now, that's silly, but it ain't really all that silly. You know, I another way I defined it is my wife and I used to have a home in New Zealand. And I remember I was there one North American winter, kiwi summer, and I was walking on the beach. And it's pretty horrible to mention that when you're over 70, you're walking on the beach in New Zealand thinking about management. But I remember having this, this flash, and the flash took it one step further. It said, If you do not have fun, doing MPW A, you should go home, sit down at your desk and write your resignation letter, if it's not a kick, you know, there's a woman I wrote about Anyway, next, the last book, who was a store manager at Nordstrom. And you know, Nordstrom has had some troubles but Nordstrom were the gods of customer service, and so on for a long period of time. I remember her saying in an interview, and she said, You know, when I come into the office, and I've got 87 problems on my desk, and I'm going through them, and I really need an injection of hopefulness, she said, All I do is immediately slammed the office door behind me, and run out into the store and chat with people about what they're up to. And she said, without exception, I come back to my office fired up and ready and emotionally ready to do the job. But I mean, what the hell are you and I are going to do about this? Yeah. I mean,

it's a horrible, horrible thing you give of yourself, or you shouldn't be, you know, leading turtles across a road, for God's sakes.

Jacob Morgan 13:12

What do you think

13:14

one thing we could do, by the way, is hire a lot less MBAs and a lot more liberal arts majors. And we can go there if you want to. And there's a lot of evidence to support my apparently sarcastic remark.

Jacob Morgan 13:26

Yeah. So I'm curious about that. But before we even jumped to that, I'm curious. So if we agree that you know, the leaders responsibilities to give more of themselves? Would you say that we're doing a better job of this now? Or have we been doing a better job of this in the past? In other words, are leaders giving more of themselves today than they did before?

13:46

Well, arguably, that began to happen or is happening more, it was the blessing of the heart pandemic, at some level, you had to find ways to be in touch in this new zooming, etcetera, world. And I would like to think that that changed the dispositions of a significant number of leaders, I have no hard evidence, and I've done no research, but as a generic proposition. I'm not sure we're making progress, which if you're my age, really frustrates the hell out of you. You know, Gallup did some research. And only 20% of workers are engaged by their job. And that number doesn't seem to change from year to year or for that matter from country to country. And I'm really focusing on that right now and for not a different reason. But it strikes me that if a person was engaged and involved and giving of them cells that work, whether it's a waiter, or whether it's the boss, people would be a lot less likely to go for some of the crazy theories that are driving us right out of our mind right now. But yeah, unless you unless you were born rich, you're gonna spend more of your waking hours at work than any other thing that you do as a human being, no matter how much you love your family. Yeah, and I've always said if you piss away your work life, you literally technically pissed away your life because those are your waking hours.

Jacob Morgan 15:29

Yep. Yeah. Oh, well, speaking of which, I wanted to talk about two leaders who I know you're huge fans have. One is Jack Welch, and the other is Elon Musk. And I know you

15:43

do do are the greatest human beings God has ever put on her.

Jacob Morgan 15:48

I know you love them both very dearly. And anybody who follows your tweets, especially as of late with Elon Musk will we'll understand. But let's start with with Jack Bosch. And I've interviewed a few people over the years who've worked with Jack Welch. I interviewed Jeff Immelt who was Jack Walsh's protege at GE. And, you know, I always hear very different things depending on who I'm talking to. Right. I mean, a lot of people say jaguars, young, greatest CEOs, celebrities, CEO, this and that. And

then you talk to other people who are like, Man, this guy was terrible. Where do you stand on that line? And why?

16:24

Well, your introduction suggested that I'm not their greatest fans. The flip side of that is, I don't want to use one liners. All of us good, bad, or indifferent are pretty complex people. I don't remember the name of this new book that came out. But the subtitle was something like how Jack wells destroyed capitalist. And that's a pretty significant charge. And I don't think it's necessarily trivial. I also know that there was a book that came out, I don't know, 20 years ago, I'm looking at it. By your own sake, you didn't read it. It was called testosterone, Inc. And if you ever want to find a boys club, I mean, you know, the stuff that our former president did in that regard, is no match for a lot of corporations. And you know, I think GE was amongst them. It was the ultimate pool. Some of this stuff is just, you know, no matter what I would never I would never describe it in any way, shape, or form. It was the boys club of all boys clubs. But there's so many dimensions. I mean, I don't know whether you remember or read. The line about Wells was when wells goes and visits a facility. They call it a neutron Jack. Yeah, yeah. neutron bomb. The building is still standing with the people of all disappear.

Jacob Morgan 17:57

Yeah. And I found a book on Amazon. It's written by David Gillis, I guess and it's called The Man Who broke capitalism, how Jack Welsh gutted the heartland and crushed the soul of corporate America, and how to undo his legacy. I actually wasn't familiar with this book. I guess it just came out a couple of months ago.

18:14

Why don't you put it? Why don't you get him on the show? And tell me when it's gonna be on

Jacob Morgan 18:19

today? Yeah, that's not a bad idea. I'm gonna make a note to reach out to him.

18:23

Yeah. Well, I mean, there was a neutron Jack thing. He got rid of bodies, thoughtlessly. He did the thing which we can talk about more, more in some more detail. People were ranked. And the bottom I think it was 25%. Were just, you know, thrown out on their butts from the organization. And then they leave your conversation with Mr. mL? I don't necessarily I'm not even suggesting that he did anything illegal. But boy, did he play with the books? Yeah. I mean, yeah, it didn't, somebody said he was more mathematically inclined the knee over 20 year period, the standard deviation of GE E's earnings was approximately zero. They just went up in a straight or tilted line with to perfection. And that doesn't happen in the real world. And relative to that, when wells came, and they are to some extent, still the day, they made appliances, they made jet engines, they made this, that and the other. Welsh focused, I will not say almost entirely because that's probably not fair on GE Capital. And if you've got a financial institution like that, as we discovered in the age of the derivatives, you can make the numbers be any damn thing you want them to be. And so I think what else was not a great human being, and I think he was in retrospect horrible role model. And I refuse to admit in the public setting like this, that there was a period of time when I thought he was one of the good guys. And for, as I said to somebody is on my

top 10 Mistakes list. And he did have, I mean, he had the big son of a bitch. And he had the greatest Irish smile that God ever gave an Irish, you know, he grinned as he threw you out the door or something like that. But no, he was not. He was not. You know, one of the good guys, and one thing we're gonna do during this time, and you can set the question aside for a little bit later, is we're going to talk about Milton Friedman and shareholder value because the two things are directly related.

Jacob Morgan 20:45

Yeah, no, and I haven't no to talk to you about that, too. Yeah, there was well, the musk

20:49

thing. You know, I was doing my activist of active duty during the Welsh years. I don't know the intimate details of the musk story other than what I read. I haven't been out. I haven't interviewed. I know, that I was in I think it was the San Francisco Airport. Not so many months ago. It's totally bizarre is I was waiting in line, there were about three or four people talking about musk. And there was this one woman somebody says something he said, No, no, no, no, no, no. Somebody said, like, how did he become an asshole? And she said, No, no, no, no, no, my husband and I worked with him on his first startup. He was always an Ansel, and you know, how you evaluate that? I mean, here's the slight complexity fire. Not as much as my wife. But I am a very avid climate change, fanatic. And there is no way in the world, you can disagree with the fact that Musk made the electric car, part of our vocabulary. You know, we knew what they were, we knew how to build them. But until Tesla came around, they were at the very most an asterisk. And now in the short period, I would guess about eight or nine or 10 years. I read something the other day that in 2025, GM expects more than 50% of its profits to come from its electric vehicles. So I refuse to clobber Musk on that dimension. As to his people skills, you know, what's going on at Twitter right now. I mean, you you don't have to be a management guru. And you don't have to have ever read a management book to realize that it's just hard human behavior. And I don't know I mean, you know? Well, I mean, yeah, I was gonna compare. This is not fair on so many dimensions. Musk and Zuckerberg, I have big Zuckerberg problems, too.

Jacob Morgan 23:08

Yeah, it's funny, because I get asked about Elon a lot, as well. And like you, right? I mean, I don't know the inner workings of what's going on inside of Twitter and the details. But sometimes, you know, I tried to put myself in Musk's shoes, and here you have this person. And I can't remember another time in history, maybe you recall where an individual like musk actually purchased a company to become the owner of it like that. I mean, I'm not talking about right. So it's a it's a very, very unique situation. And I sometimes try to imagine like, let's say I were Elon Musk, and I am buying this company. And as soon as I buy it, I realize it's losing \$4 million a day. And I realized, like, all this craziness is going on, like, how would I respond? And I'm always left thinking like, I don't know, I don't know what I would do, would I go in there and fire 80% of the people like on day one, because I'm at that point, that becomes my money? Would I? You know, I don't know. So it's challenging because we see all these things online. And then you see some of the stuff that Musk is doing, but at the same time, it's also very easy to criticize based on what we see online without understanding the inner workings of what's going on at the company. I remember one image that was actually put up on Twitter, not that long ago, where there was a picture of Elon Musk. He was doing a selfie. And he was taking pictures with engineers, and they were saying, oh, you know, working late into the night and, and he got criticized for it. And somebody

was saying, Oh, you're a dictator. You're forcing your employees to work there and like, How dare you? But on the flip side of that, I was thinking, what if those people wanted to be there? What if they are getting, you know, they're enjoying the work? They're enjoying the challenge they're enjoying from Elon and they opted in to be there. And I remember even in an interview that you did, I can't remember maybe it was with guy maybe it was somebody else. So you even talked about a time when you love a job so much, or maybe it was one of your commanding officers, that you would have gladly worked 25 hours a day for this person. And so I always try to see kind of both sides there. But I'm curious to hear your your thoughts on it, because I feel like it's so

25:16

one part to continue with putting asterisks. There was an article that I read just this week, and I'm afraid I don't remember the source, but it seemed to be legit. That said, a lot of good guy, Silicon Valley executives are quietly clapping a little bit. Because when everything was going roses, when you couldn't do too much, the competition in a lot of those companies became who could find the best chef in the planet, to make sure that the lunches that we were serving, were the best gourmet lunches in the world. And I think that particular statement is not a joke, incidentally, because I've read a bunch of stuff about that. And so I think you could argue, and what the argument was that, you know, even the good guys realize that in this effort to hold on to engineers, or coders or what have you, we may have gone too far. So, you know that that is a little bit of an asterisk, but the question is how you do it. And what I'm gonna say, is a digression. But it's not. I used to be on the road all the time, I had a speaker's bureau, they were called the Washington speaker's bureau and in theory, you know, they're best in the country or planet or what have you. And I would go down, just to check in, you know, I was on the road by check in with him in Arlington, Virginia, Alexandria, Virginia, every six months or something, and I think it was after the big whack with the derivatives that happen. I and they, you know, obviously they live off of meetings of the accountants Association, where five speakers are needed. I mean, that's their, their bread and butter, and that dried up. And I was walking into the office are getting ready to someone I know her name is Christine Farrow, and she's the CEO of the company. And I was chatting with somebody and I think it was a receptionist out in the hall. And we were talking about Christine is a lovely person. And she said, Tom, let me tell you about Christine. She said, I walked in to Christine's office one time when the worst of this was going on. And she was being vigorously hugged by the woman she had just laid off. Wow, the woman she was just laid off had said, It's okay, Christine, I'm going to survive. Don't please don't shoot yourself. But that's a real story. And I don't think Elon should have hugged 17,000 employees. And I do agree that you can't lose \$4 million dollars a day. But you really don't have to do it that way. There could have been, there could have been a better I have I have no truck with him whatsoever. And you know, also, by the way, if you did spend 44 million billion dollars, and it's just pocket change for you. You really don't have to fix the thing in the first 15 minutes. Yeah, you have to fix it to a significant degree. Of course you do. I would never disagree with that in a minute. But you don't have to do it by simply walking in and literally, you know, lighting the fuse on a big bomb. It's disgusting.

Jacob Morgan 28:53

Yeah, I agree. There could have been a better way he could have done it in a more human in a more people centric way is for me, we've heard so many terrible stories, right? I mean, there have been other

CEOs who laid off hundreds of employees via zoom there. It's just, it feels like some leaders are human and some leaders, you kind of

29:11

let's not use people centric. I do that too. Yes. But it's a far more intimate thing than that. It's that not going back to the commanding officer, the person who walks down the hall and smiles and really means it. But don't effing promote those people. Yeah. You know, I have argued in my writing for the last X number of years, that the single greatest asset of any company is the full collection of first line supervisors. They drive everything retention, quality, productivity, and so on. And yet, back to promoting. You know, we got to fill the slot. We out, you don't gotta fill the slot. You know, we need somebody who has the same attributes that you and I are apparently championing in the conversation even more in that first level manager job and you got let me let me, let me give you one of my favorite examples, which is fairly recent years before the pandemic, which means it wasn't fairly recent. But here I am having done this stuff for 100 years, and I was blown away. I was giving a speech in Mumbai. And sitting stand Yes, sitting 15 feet away from me in uniform, was a four star Army General, who apparently runs the Indian army, which in terms of bodies is the biggest one in the world. And since I had been a junior officer in the Navy, I'm scared shitless of generals even to this day, but we got talking about this promoting thing. And he said, You and I are the two top commit contenders for a generals promotion promotion agenda. And you don't have to be a military person to realize that general is a big deal. He said the one thing I do, above all, is by hook or by crook, I go back and find the people three or four or five promotions ago who worked for these guys. And see the degree to which they as human beings and leaders grew. Because of the two years they spent with Tom, you were x and then you work for Tom for two years. And it's not that your career flipped. But you really had a fantastic time after that you develop people. And I'm honest to god, I almost teared up when he was saying that, you know, the measure is, and I you know, I was raised in Presbyterian, but I don't talk in the church doors very often. So it's not a religious. David Brooks wrote this marvelous column a couple of years ago, three years ago. And in it, he contrasted what he called resume virtues and eulogy virtues. And it's pretty obvious, the resume virtues, where do you go to college? You know, how many times were you promoted? What's your net worth, or what have you. And the eulogy virtues are what they say about you, at your funeral, obviously, at your funeral, they talk about what kind of a of a human being you are. And, and that's, you know, that's not not a trivial point. But I mean, my life as a leader, is the subsequent development of the people, whether they're first liners or bosses with whom I work, that is my signature as a human being. For those 37 and a half years that I work, that's my output. My body output is not seven more damn cars coming off the end of the line a year later than when I got there. That is not my output.

Jacob Morgan 33:06

How do you balance that? And I guess this kind of ties into a little bit of the shareholder value, right? Because I guess as a leader, you need to balance both right, you're also taking care of your people, you're helping them become more successful, even more successful than you've ever been. But at the same time, you're also responsible still, for generating business results for for growing for achieving whatever goals the business might have. So how do those two things play together? Are they at odds with one another? Or are they they run out?

33:33

There? Absolutely. We won't talk about the shareholder VAT Well, yeah, let's do that. My old friends at the now appropriately, significantly discredited McKinsey and Company where I worked for seven years, did a study of something like 600 companies that as I recall, represented 60% of the GDP. And they determined through whatever their measures were. And that's obviously something that McKinsey is fanatic about. So it can be trusted, something like 125, who, by their measures, people training etc. 125, who developed devoted themselves to people to research and so on. And over a 20 year period, the financial results of the good guys blow the other guys out of the out of the ballpark. I mean, you know, maybe because you're trying to save every penny for the first two years. You know, you and I start start a CEO job at the same time. And I'm the cost cutter and you're the people developer, it's entirely possible that Tom is going to do better than you for those first two years, but the five IBM results are the 10 year results will be laughable. And it's what I love kind of about what I do. I'm not asking you to sacrifice profits and growth, I'm asking you to maximize profits. Not tomorrow morning's maybe. But you know, over and not over 20 year period over two year period three year period, it may be as much cost the first year as you did. And so it's funny, my first year was significantly better than yours. So what's

Jacob Morgan 35:29

funny, you mentioned that because when I wrote my book on employee experience, which I think came out, and I don't know, 2016, or something, I looked at 252 companies around the world and I looked at how do the companies that create the best employee experiences, how do they perform compared to the NASDAQ, the s&p 500 best places to work in all those different measures. And I found that the companies who create best employee experiences which I defined as focusing on three areas of culture, technology, giving employees tools and resources to work effectively, and space, giving employees spaces where they actually want to show up to work each day, the companies that did that outperformed every other category of organization. So there's definitely something to be said for companies who invest in their people and the outcome that that has, as far as as far as business results.

36:19

Yeah. Well, and if you're talking about national economies, what came out of the McKinsey study, and I'm sure it's true, the people you looked at, is they were the job creators. Yeah. The job creation record. Of the good guys totally swamped, the bad guys probably had a net negative. The good guys is I mean, ended a number sticks in my mind, the average growth of employee numbers for this 160 was something like 146% Yeah. And so you know, there's zero sacrifice except maybe for the first 24 months. I mean, I it's funny. I lived in the Bay Area for and I know you were there for a while for ever and ever. And it was the days when which some older people will remember the 40 Niners were on top of the world, and they were coached by a guy named Bill Walsh, who happened to be a neighbor of mine. So Bill Walsh, Hall of Fame coach, comes to the 40 Niners who had just had a record of two wins and 14 losses. What is the record of the 40 Niners Walsh's first year, two wins and 14 losses. The next year with six wins and 10 losses in the third year, they won the Super Bowl. But the reason he wrote about it in a book and a guy who knew even wrote about that stuff, whose name I can't remember wrote about it. Well said, and this really goes to exactly what you were talking about and your work. Well said, I spent the first year focused on team culture. And this guy is not a guy. He's an academic with a PhD

in social sciences. But his his term, you know, it was stuff like trivial stuff, like getting the guys to wear a coat and tie on the team bus. So we would be prepared professional and feel professional. And maybe that's totally out of the question and 2023. And you know, this was back in the early 80s. But, and I've always loved that he had a bad year, and he was getting ready for great years. And I think it's an analog to what we just talked about in the last five minutes.

Jacob Morgan 38:37

Before we get to the last part of the part of the podcast where I want to focus on some some action items and advice for leaders. I wanted to switch to one more personal question before we get to that. And that is do you think about your your life and legacy and kind of the outcome and what what role you want to play in the world of business and leadership and Nice Guy Kawasaki, this same question. And he said not to be morbid, but he said, You know, I think about death all the time. And you know, we talked about that for a bit and he was talking about it in the context of the impact that he wanted to have the legacy that he wanted to have. Do you ever think about that for yourself?

39:23

I obsess on it. And I'm gonna really it's a serious question. I'm gonna answer it seriously, but I just have to take a little bit of a detour which actually fits. I hate the term. It wasn't my term who was the Economist magazine of management guru. My biggest criticism of the Guru class, including me, and in a way it's been implied in our conversation is they act as if the world was the fortune In 500 in the footsie 100 Well, it isn't only 7% of us work for the fortune 500 and doing the advanced math that I learned in engineering school, that means 90% plus of us do not. And in all these arenas, there are 1000s and 10s of 1000s of five person companies, 10 person companies, 40 person companies that are gifts of God relative to these things. And so we, you know, we got to worry, I mean, we got to, we've got to make sure we don't just talk about the well wishes, or even the good guys that, you know, the comments, what about the person running, you know, I've tried to put them more into my book. So that's part of it. I two things that I've said. Number one, I've got four degrees from Stanford and Cornell. So I've got a really terrific education. If you want to understand my work, you must show me a signed graduation certificate from the fourth grade. It ain't the technical stuff. It ain't the technical stuff. And, you know, I really mean it, that focusing on people and so on. It's something driven by mom and dad and the neighbor next door to a significant degree. And in my case, it was my mother's manners. And even more than that the elementary school I went to, I can still remember every teacher's name, we could spend the next hour talking about Miss Landers in the first grade and Miss Churchill in the sixth grade, and so on. In the second thing I would say is, and I would love to talk to guys, I wish we were having a three way conversation. And I'm being a little sarcastic. I'm not sure how much if Tony Robbins walks into a room of 1000 people, he expects to change 1000 lives. unfair, but not totally unfair. If I go into a room of 1000 people, and three people come out with a real determination to go right instead of left or left instead of right. I say to myself, I have had one hell of a day. So of course, I'm distressed 20% of people are engaged by by their jobs. 80% aren't. I haven't made a difference in that I haven't made that damn, 20 haven't made it go up to 21 For God's sakes. And is that frustrating? Do I literally as well as figuratively want to shoot myself over that? Yeah. You know, two and a half million frequent flyer miles, and I haven't nudged the needle on that one. But the other side of the coin, I think I'm talking about the right things. And I think now and again, I get to people, I remember the stuff when I wrote In Search of Excellence, my thrill from In Search of Excellence was not the letters from big time

CEOs. I actually get many of those. But it was the one that came from the number two ranked guy in the Episcopal Diocese of New York. It was the Catholic priest who I got to know who used in Search of Excellence for his theological PhD. From The University of Notre Dame, it was it that was the turn on the fire chiefs, the police chiefs, you know where I live right now, there's a you know, there's a private school, secondary school and the first time I ever met the former headmaster, he said, God, he said, I ran that school by In Search of Excellence. And so yes, those are great things. I can look back on those with with some degree of pleasure, but I must admit, I'm, I'm a bit I'm a born pessimist. And the fact that we're still at 20% says, and, you know, I don't know what I'm allowed to say on a show like this. And so I won't say it. You can

Jacob Morgan 44:19

say whatever you want, um, I effed up.

44:22

I didn't. I didn't. If it's still 2080 You know, I'm bullshitting myself if I say those 2 million frequent flyer miles, made the world a better place. I hope I helped a few people. But I am monumentally frustrated by the whole thing. Because as I said before, if people cared about their jobs, they wouldn't be spending as much time looking at the cranks out there on social media and I will bet you my last penny on Yeah.

Jacob Morgan 44:55

Yeah. Well, that transitions nicely to what I wanted to talk about for For the last few minutes, and that's some action items or things that people can actually apply. So if you had the era of, you know, all the leaders out there they were they were tuned in listening to this episode and watching you right now. And they were thinking great, I, you know, I want to put people first, I want to be human centric leader, where do I begin? What? What does that mean to you, first of all? And how do you begin? What do you do? And I know that sounds like a weird thing to say like, how do you put people first, but for some people, maybe that maybe that sounds abstract to them, and they don't understand what that means. And where to begin? Do you have any suggestions on that?

45:39

I'm not going to give a list. Because the answer to the question beneath the surface, is it depends on your views of your health, fellow human beings. And I can't give you three steps that will make you walk in and exchange truly pleasant words, with the receptionist is opposed to care head buried in the sand. I can't I refuse to some level, I refuse to get sucked in by the question.

Jacob Morgan 46:23

What sounds like you can't I don't know I can't.

46:25

There's nothing that Mr. Conant. Here, here's, maybe this is the sort of thing you could do. And from some of the responses I've had on Twitter, people, at least that lesson I stole from I worked in the, in the on drug abuse issues in the White House for a couple of years. And I stole something from my boss, who was absolutely fabulous at making things done way above his rank. On the last day of the on the last week of the year, I would call between 25 and 50 people, and thank them for the way they had

supported me. And most of them were low ranking. I wasn't going to convince the congressman, but the Congressman had a legislative aide in LA with whom I'd developed the relationship. And I would send them a note, call them on the phone was called not note, call them, and thank them for the help they've given me. And, you know, the response was mind blowing. So you know, again, here's the problem. I can say call 50 People in the next two weeks, but I don't know what you're gonna do when you pick up the phone. And I don't know what, you know, it's, it's, you know, and I just appreciate, you know, the problem wasn't as my buddy mother again. And so I appreciated that that legislative aide, who has 8372 things on her agenda, gave me some time. Yeah, I did appreciate it. She had made my life better. Now. I don't know. I don't know what the How to is. I think the notes is great. And maybe I will say there's a possibility that I had a good friend who was doing some fundraising. And you know, she was a no nonsense person. And again, my mother taught me that. thank you notes. were next to God. I said, if you want to understand my mother, halfway through opening Christmas presents under the tree, you took a pause, and wrote thank you notes to all the people you've gotten presents from. It's not true, but it's not too far. But I did say to this friend, and this is our friend Mr. Condon. Again, I did say to this friend, just try thank you notes. Just try little four line, handwritten, thank you notes. And I said, Here's my dirty little secret. The responses will be so good that you will begin to develop an addiction to sending thank you notes. And it's true. And just four lines, they have to be handwritten. And they sure as hell can't be a text. And people really is a wonderful example of that. And yes, it's any number of years ago, one of the companies in Search of Excellence just about my favorite company was 3am. I got to know this guy tape Matt Tate elder who was a division general manager. Well, tape came to a seminar of mine, X years later, and he came up to me at a break and he said, Tom, you are going to love this story. He said when I went to my retirement party, a guy came up to me. And I really hope that people who listened to me will think not think that I'm exaggerating. These were his words. He said a guy came up to me almost with tears in his eyes to thank this makes me tear up. Thank me for a thank you note that I had sent him 10 years before that he had had plastered on the wall of his cubicle for the whole 10 years. Wow. And I will promise anybody who is listening or watching that, to the best of my knowledge, I am telling the truth. And if I could give you 10 seconds to meet with Tate elder, you would know that he is the anti. This is of a bullshit artist. Yeah. And so the show what happened with my friend who said, thank you. It's just what I knew was gonna happen. Yeah, people were. And so maybe you can humanize yourself that way?

Jacob Morgan 50:53

Yeah, well, it's funny because you can't force people to care. And you know, the subject of a new book that I'm working on, which will come out towards the end of this year is all about vulnerability. And so for me, what I have found is an important answer to that question is to be a vulnerable leader. So at least what I have found from a lot of the research I've been doing so far is an important aspect to kind of get get you to care is to be vulnerable with with your people.

51:19

I've just been engaged, and I don't know what you how closely you follow me. I've been engaged in a pretty intense conversation on vulnerability within the last seven days. On Twitter. Yeah, I was championing it. And a lot of people were saying, Well, you can't be you have to be decisive. I mean, that's the other stuff. Got to be the no nonsense got to be decisive. Bullshit. You've got to be a human being. And yes, you do have to be vulnerable. It helps to laugh at yourself, when you excuse me, fuck

up. That doesn't hurt at all. You know, there are other things, I guess I would say. And again, I don't think I can shove these down anybody's throat.

Jacob Morgan 52:13

What sounds like if you don't care about people? Well, a you shouldn't be in the role that you're in. But it seems like maybe part of the challenge is that there are a lot of stuff to say, because I've interviewed a lot of see, and I'm sure you've worked with a lot of CEOs and leaders over the years. It's rare that I come across somebody who I talk to you and I think, wow, this person genuinely does not care about other human beings. This person is genuinely evil, this person, like you don't really come across leaders like that. I mean, of course, there are some here and there. But it's funny, because you don't come across leaders like that. But for some leaders, for some reason leaders act in the stereotype. That's how they need to be so part of it, I think, is also breaking down the leadership stereotype. Yeah. And how that came about. Because one of the things that I found fascinating from the current book research is I interviewed a lot of these CEOs. And I asked them about vulnerability. And they say, you know, they're big believers in it now. And I say, Well, were you always like this? And they say, oh, no, no, no, when I first started my career, vulnerability wasn't allowed. I had to, you know, fake it. And I had to know the answers. And I say, okay, but now that you're the CEO, and you realize that that doesn't make sense, you know, that there are a lot of people in your company, who are scared to be vulnerable, like, what is it after you become, you know, a certain level of leadership that your eyes open, it's kind of like you get taken out of the matrix for some reason. And the only thing that I've come to be able to understand is that when you first start working for a company, you're very focused on the tasks and the projects that you need to do. And as you become a leader, you realize that your job is not about the task. It's about the people responsible for the task. And the only way that you can unlock their potential is to connect to them on a human level. And that's when it kind of clicks like, oh, maybe I should be vulnerable with him. Maybe I should open up a little bit. Maybe I should connect with them so that they want to go above and beyond and do a better job. But it's it's fascinating, in a like weird paradox of like, why we don't have more leaders like this. Even though when you talk to leaders, they're not actually bad people.

54:18

I can't wait to read the book, by make sure you send me a copy. I would be delighted if it lives up to half of what you're saying. I'd be delighted to endorse it.

Jacob Morgan 54:29

Oh, yeah, that would be you. Well, Marshall Goldsmith is writing well committed. It's not officially I don't want to like spill the beans on the show. But Marshall Goldsmith said he would be writing the

54:38

foreword to it. Oh, fabulous. That's,

Jacob Morgan 54:41

I'm excited. He wrote the foreword.

54:44

Yeah, Marshall. Yeah.

Jacob Morgan 54:46

Yeah, yeah, I mean, invulnerability. I mean, I think. I hope that over the coming months and years, we will see more of a shift towards leaders who genuinely care about people are wanting to put them First, and but like to your point, right? I mean, you've been talking about this for decades. So it's interesting to see why this is such a well, one

55:08

thing we have not talked about, which is a giant step forward. Is more women in senior leadership roles. Yeah. There are women who are awful. And there are men who are fabulous. But I mean, first of all, you know, go buy my books, well, don't buy my books. But I will guarantee you that they are loaded with hard nosed research that says, on average, women are better leaders. Yeah, and a lot of the reason is what you and I have just been talking about. You know, there's I read a book years and years ago, called the female brain. And the author was Luann, prison Dean, who is the neuroscientist at UC Santa San Francisco. And the one fact that stuck in my mind is that by the age of three days, they baby girls are making three times more eye contact with their fellow human beings than baby boys. And I would argue relative to what we've just talked about, that's a pretty damn good surrogate for the connection thing. And so, you know, more women in leadership roles, more women in senior leadership roles. There was a study McKinsey did that Nick Kristof talked about in the New York Times and said, McKinsey said that if you really want to improve your profitability, the first step is promote more women. And so you know, I really want to, and again, I'm not being a jerk off of women managers, and they're fantastic male minus or so not being a jerk. But on average, you know, I'm a, well trained in math, I believe in bell shaped curves. And on average, women are a lot better to a significant degree because they pay attention to exactly the things that you've been talking about, you know, another variation on that which I want to recommend to everybody who is listening to us and watching us and so on, is by Susan Kane's book, quiet you it total title. And what she says, and this is really related, I think, and I'm not a neuro psychologist, but I think it's related to exactly what we're talking about. Introverts, that, first of all, you know, my lesson that came out of is I met her one time, and I said, So Susan, did you really have to call me a jerk in your book, which of course she didn't. But you come out of the book, and you realize, to some extent, the average person is hiring or promoting, ignores or downgrades, the 40% of the population that are introverts and the studies are all over the place, we think, yeah, we think extroverts are more attractive, we think extroverts are more intelligent, and so on, and so on, and so on. And it's just not the case. And so if we promoted more of the quiet ones, I, you know, you probably know the answer to this, and I don't, but I'm willing to guess if we ran an experiment, that the vulnerability correlation between an introvert and express vulnerability would outscore that of the extroverts.

Jacob Morgan 58:32

Yeah, I wouldn't be surprised. You know, the other thing that I was fascinated, and this is, from my previous book on leadership that I worked on, I found that most people actually don't get leadership training until they're in their mid late 30s, early 40s. Yet, they actually become a leader in some capacity in their mid 20s. Right, you can be a supervisor of a store, you're technically in a leadership capacity. And so there's a period of like 1015, sometimes 20 years, where you are actually responsible,

and you're leading others, and you were never taught how to do it. Yep. And the idea that you should only get leadership training after you've been at the company for a certain amount of time, after you're in a you know, the leadership track, so to speak is insane to me. Like why wouldn't you want everyone at your company on day one, to know how to lead? Like, why? Why why do you wait? years did so I think that's another like very frustrating, just old school way of thinking about leadership. That's just it's been the process for decades. And that's what we've always done.

59:29

Well also explains why I said in the Financial Times piece I wrote I think about a year ago, first step to better businesses is to close every MBA business school. And I have met, you do not get leadership training in business schools. And the students who go there don't want it.

Jacob Morgan 59:51

They want to climb the ladder who wants to

59:53

finance and they don't want the soft course in Organizational Psychology. Yeah, and I happen to take Get this off course. And I happened to have the teacher this off course became my closest friend in the world. And he told me I had to get a PhD in that stuff. And it was the best thing that ever happened to me. But that's not what a person goes to business school for. And so the best way to avoid that, and I will tell you medicine is just as bad. Or maybe even worse. There's a wonderful book, which came out you'd love it. If you haven't read it or seen it. About a year and a half ago. It's called compassion nomics. And it is the demonstrated power of compassion. And, you know, you win a doctor. And I mean, the two guys who wrote it are MDs, and they are hard nosed, no bullshit researchers. There's no flab in that book. When a doctor makes 39 consecutive seconds of eye contact with a patient. Complications go down by about 25%. Lying to the hospital stay goes down by about 25%. It's just ridiculous. The research is ridiculous. And I love the fact that it's I said to one of the authors, I love it that you call it a compassion omics, because that means even the CFO has to read the damn thing. But it's and the stuff is just, I mean, my, my favorite experiment these days that I've read about, I'm sure you've read about it, too, is. And this, again, is hard nosed measured research. Seventh grade teacher stands in the doorway, as his kids enter the classroom. And he smiles and he says good morning, doesn't have a conversation, he may say, Come you sound like your codes a little bit better than it was last week or something like that. He stands in the doorway, acknowledges the kids disciplinary problems go down by about 20% academic engagement goes up by over 20%. And all he did was acknowledge the kids as individuals. Yeah. I love that. And of course, the question for you and me that we've raised through the research is can the average teacher even do that? Or just Yeah, you don't have to grin and be silly, but I mean, it's like, you feel we know it between human beings. You know, I feel that, you know, Professor X actually is pleased that I made it the class. Yeah, he gives a chef, I actually am the owner. And if you want to use this, I will rent it to you for free for free. I, I am the owner, undisputed owner of give a shit ism.com. So I will make a challenge. If you or anybody that's listening or watching, I'm starting with you because of what you're writing about. If we can figure out how to use that website, I would just love it. Really give a shit.

Jacob Morgan 1:03:15

I love that. You're all That's hilarious. Well, speaking of URLs, Tom, I feel like I could talk to you forever. But where can people go to learn more about you grab your books, anything that you want to mention for people to check out?

1:03:27

Well, the easiest answer is Tom peters.com. We have literally not figuratively got everything that I've done for the last 20 years, including, you know, 700 presentations or what have you and essays and everything else. And there is absolutely not one thing on the website that cost you one penny. And so that's you know, I do use Twitter. And I'd love to talk on Twitter. But you know, the easiest place to every, for better for worse. It's all hanging out at Tom peters.com.

Jacob Morgan 1:04:02

Awesome. Well, Tom, thank you so much for taking time out of your day to join me on the show. And maybe we will do that. Three way podcasts. We'll meet you in guy one of these days. I

1:04:11

think it would be. That would be great fun. I'll ask you wrote out the guy would buy that.

Jacob Morgan 1:04:17

Yeah, I'll ask a guy. I'll message him right after we get off this class. If you'd be open to that. That'd be that'd be entertaining.

1:04:24

That'd be it would be great fun. Yeah, for

Jacob Morgan 1:04:26

sure. Well, Tom, again, thank you so much. I really, really appreciate it. And congrats on everything that you've been doing.

1:04:33

Well, thanks. And I deeply appreciate you giving me this hour. So there we are. Thanks. Thanks, everyone. I'm gonna sign off because I'm a little past my departure time for