

Panera Bread CEO Niren Chaundry on Creating a Culture Where People Feel Loved and Cared For

00:00

Leadership to me is competence and character.

Jacob Morgan 00:03

What does love have to do with anything in the workplace

00:06

leadership is where you inspire people to go above and beyond. That's when you have not only the heads but also the hearts.

Jacob Morgan 00:14

Do you still change your mindset and focus on what you can control?

00:17

My choice is to make a decision to go elsewhere.

Jacob Morgan 00:20

What motivates you still to do better?

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You know, I like to think of myself as work in progress.

Jacob Morgan 00:27

So how do you lead with heart

00:28

you give them the freedom, you trust them, you empower them, you care for the whole person, not the person that shows up at work you care for the individual.

Jacob Morgan 00:40

My guest today is Niren Chaundry, the CEO at Panera brands, which is the parent company behind Panera Bread, Einstein Brothers, bagels and Caribou Coffee. Niren is responsible for leading over 100,000 team members across all three of these brands. Today's discussion is one that I honestly think will truly change your life, both personally and professionally. It's a combination of business advice, combination of philosophy, career strategy, and just a general approach to living a better life during our

discussion near and shares the tragic story of his daughters and what he learned from them, why you should never see yourself as a victim. What the ultimate measure of leadership success is, in one of my previous guests, David Novak, the former CEO of yum brands, changed Newman's life and approach to leadership. I guess it probably makes sense to start off with just how what was your career path and trajectory like to become the CEO of Panera Bread. And for people who are not familiar with Panera Bread? Maybe you can give a little background information about the company and how many employees do you guys have? What do you do?

01:51

Sure. It's great to be on the show and have the opportunity to have a chat with you. So I look after Panera brands, which has got three, three brands underneath Panera Bread, caribou, coffee, and Einstein Bagels. And that's a total of close to 4000 stores across 11 countries employing about 130,000 people. Wow. Three fantastic brands, you know, and I just love being in the food business and having the opportunity to lead these brands in particular has been probably the best easily the best job not probably easily the best job of my life. So it started way back. You know, I grew up in India, and I worked in hotels, initially always drawn to the service industry. And people and you know, people focused businesses. I always found that fascinating. And then I joined yum brands, which you may know which is Pizza Hut, KFC Taco Bell,

Jacob Morgan 02:53

did you work with David Novak?

02:56

I did. He's He's like my mentor. And my best best buddy. Ah, he's,

Jacob Morgan 03:00

he's been on the show before. He's one of the CEOs I've interviewed for my book. Yeah. David. David's Great.

03:05

Yeah, I love David. He's probably had the biggest impact on me of any leader I've worked with. So interesting.

Jacob Morgan 03:11

Okay, I'm gonna, I'm gonna have to touch on that too. I'm very curious here. Yeah.

03:16

Yeah, I love the guy. So I started with yum brands in India, and then worked with yum for almost 25 years. Fantastic career, lots of different opportunities. So I ran and lived in Europe. I lived in Holland. I speak a bit of Dutch then went to Germany speak a bit of German as well. Then when did the UK so 10 odd years in Europe 10 years of running these brands in India, you know, from a startup opportunities. All three brands, I introduced them in India. And then I became the global president for KFC. That was my last job with yum. And then I joined my current employer, which is JB holding an investment fund that own a bunch of very exciting food retail concepts like the banana brands that I mentioned, but also

Krispy Kreme, you know, that you may know and beats coffee, etc. So I joined them about seven or eight years back and have been with them ever since. My first job was Krispy Kreme. So I was the international president CEO, oh, peddling donuts all over the world.

Jacob Morgan 04:26

Giving free donuts

04:29

backing these donuts in my briefcase and flying all over the world. Fabulous brand great job. And then I came on board say now four years back to Panera Bread in 2019. To transform the company. Fascinating assignment. You know, I was taking over from a very successful founder. And my father had just acquired the business so I came in then and here we are, you know, four years later. Exciting. A journey it has been for sure.

Jacob Morgan 04:57

Let's talk a little bit about David now that you met mention him. So one of the things that I'm really interested in always and I have a couple people, I've had already stars. Yeah, I know. Okay. Yes, I think he's a top golf now. He also talked about David Novak and the current CEO of yum. David Gibbs. David. David Gibbs. Yeah. So it's funny because quite a few people have talked about the impact that David Novak has had on their lives. And you've mentioned that he's been a great leader for you and a mentor to you. What what did David do that had such an impact on you, as a leader?

05:35

I'll tell you, David, there was of course, the business side of David, you know, and his business philosophy of get the people capability, right, first, get the culture right, and results will follow. That was a core philosophy that he had. And part of the, you know, culture being catching people doing things, right, the recognition aspect of it, which I embraced. But you know, it does not that the reason why I absolutely love David, is because of his humanity. And I think leaders who inspire me, interestingly, are those who are, of course, they're smart, and they know how to get things done. But I get really inspired by the human emotion, compassion and care. And when that shows up in a leader, you know, I get very drawn to it. And I've learned from it, and I try and sort of pay that forward. So I'll share with you a story. I lost my 18 year old daughter, Aisha in 2015. And, you know, it obviously crushed me. And the day after she passed away, the doorbell rings, I opened the door, and David Novak is standing on my doorstep, having taken three flights, three commercial flights, because he couldn't take his normal sort of private jet. Three commercial flights came in, we both hugged, we both wept. And then he turned around, and he left and took those three flights and went back home. And he just came to the show me that he cared for me. And you know, and this is one of the many examples of just you know, human empathy and care that he demonstrated not only with me, by the way, but so many hundreds of other people across the company, that then makes you feel that you want to do anything for this individual, you know, and that's, I think how you inspire people is by connecting with them as a human by having that bond of, you know, empathy and compassion. And that's how you inspire people to go beyond what you may want them to do. And that certainly, that certainly was David for me.

Jacob Morgan 07:47

i He actually never I never knew that story. So he flew, and I'm assuming he What did he stay for a few days with you?

07:54

He overnight, he just came in. He hugged me. He spent the night and then he was back on the plane and he was gone. Wow.

Jacob Morgan 08:01

Yeah. You don't hear stories like that from from leaders. And it's interesting that you mentioned that because he he was obviously a very competent leader. And maybe for people who don't know, yum brands, I think when David was the CEO, what was it like 1.5 million employees, it was one of the world's largest companies. With brands, KFC, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell. So this is absolutely massive organization, one of the world's largest. And the fact that he did that, I think speaks volumes to David's character. And obviously, he was a very competent business leader. He was very good at what he did. But it seemed like for other leaders like you, and for those who worked with David, what really stood out wasn't just his business acumen, but his being able to connect with people, which is what made you want to go above and beyond to do things for David. Things. And that's and that's a very, very powerful thing. Because I think especially in leadership, we competence is important, but we spend maybe too much emphasis only focusing on competence and forgetting about the need to connect with people.

09:08

Yeah, you know, I so agree with you because I think leadership to me is competence and character. And I would argue that character perhaps is even more important in today's world than competence. I think competence you can get, but character, which is you know, one of to me character is basically a collection of your, your habits. And if you have clarity of values, you have consistency in how you show up. And if you have consistency. That's how you build trust. And if you build trust, then you can, you know, unlock human potential. So I totally agree with you. I think, I think we and you know, as as leaders today, we spend a lot of time developing a competency, and you know, how or how competent we are. Yeah. And I don't know if we spend enough time nurturing what defines our character which in turn is shaped by experiences, shaped by our community, by people around us kind of friends that we have, the things that we read, listen to, and all these things, you know, combined shape us. And if we can do that in a very conscious way, I think we can actually embrace a mindset and beliefs that are more powerful, that define who we are. And we show up as that consistently. And through that build trust and you know, unlock the potential of others.

Jacob Morgan 10:29

And I think that's the sign of a great leader is not what they do for the business, but what they do for people who work at that business, who then go on to other things. And it sounds like in your case, you took a lot of those lessons from David, of connecting with people of being human. And now you brought this into another organization with 130,000 people. So you you've applied, I guess, you've brought that same philosophy from David into this other organization.

10:55

Yeah, you know, I have this, you're absolutely right. You know, I've, I have always believed in and David showed me why it was important to have seen the evidence of it that the power of a people first culture and people first business philosophy, so my business philosophy is very simple. My job, indeed, job of the leaders in my company is to love our people, love, if we love our people here, love our people, not just take care of our people love our people. And if we love our people, then they will delight our guests. And if they delight our guests, we will also, you know, serve our communities. And if we do that, that's how we'll create enterprise value. So I think it's going to into our process. And I think, therefore, I think I spent a lot of time thinking about how do we create an environment and a culture, and a leadership style where people truly feel that they are loved and cared for, in a holistic way. So that's my business philosophy. I think that's what we practice at brands at Panera. And, you know, that's what we show up to do every single day.

Jacob Morgan 12:02

It's funny, you don't really hear many leaders say that we should love our people. And, you know, some people listening and watching this might say, it's not a leaders job to love their people, it's a leaders job to get their people to do their job and to perform well. And to unlock their potential. What does love have to do with anything in the workplace? And how

12:23

do I know that song? What's love?

Jacob Morgan 12:25

Exactly, exactly. So why, why have that message? Why

12:30

why love? I'll tell you why I think you know, all of us, as leaders, go through three stages of leadership passage. One is individual contributor, where we do things ourselves, then we're a manager of people where we tell people what to do. And normally, that's where people stop is like, you know, my job as a manager, they're calling it being a leader. But I'd say you're being a manager when you're telling people what to do. And you don't need to do anything beyond that. And as long as you're efficient, and you can delegate effectively, and you can empower them, they will get it done. And do you need to do anything more? And my argument is, yes, you can, and you must do more. And that more is actually leadership. And that leadership is where you inspire people to go above and beyond what you want to get done. But the magic is when they do it, because they want to do it. Yeah, not because you're asking them to do it. And that inspiration comes only through I believe, when people feel, you know, loved cared for respected, have a sense of autonomy, have a sense that this is this aligns with who I am as a human and what I want to see happen. And, you know, I'm happier at work, and I enjoy myself. And it's not just a paycheck, it's more than that. That's when you have you know, not only the heads, but also the hearts. Here's the other thing. I think you'll agree with me that any company sets out to create enterprise value, and you know, and which is understandable. Now, enterprise value is very important, and it's output of a great strategy that is well executed. And strategy is kind of how do we win? What's the point of difference? How do we sustain that competitive advantage, etc. But I would argue that strategy is good, but execution is everything. Because strategy, if you look at the components of strategy, I think most companies have very similar strategies, but the difference is how you execute it.

And execution to me is a function of heart, not the head. It's kind of how badly do I want it? What is my level of intentionality and commitment and I can fire up all these 130,000 people to want to come every single day and be the very best version Who can be consistently being better than they were a day before? That, to me is more than just, you know, being managed? Yeah, it's kind of being inspired to be the very best that you can be. And in doing so, you know, make yourself successful as the company becomes successful.

Jacob Morgan 15:19

Can you share the story and I saw, I believe you did an interview with somebody else on another show. And you shared the story of how, when one of your daughters was very sick, and you need to raise you needed to raise money? Can you just go through that story? And that'll that'll give context to kind of the question that I want to ask afterwards. But I thought it was a very, very powerful and interesting story about what you did and how you did it.

15:44

Sure. So this is a you know, the, for those who may not be familiar, this is about my daughter, Aisha, who, as I mentioned, passed away in 2015, when she was 18. Now she, when she was born, she was born with a immune deficiency. I was living in India, and she needed a bone marrow transplant. And that operation could happen only in the UK. And you know, it, the cost was about 150,000 pounds. I was living in India, I didn't have you know, I didn't have that money at all. But I was determined as a father as any father would that I have enough money to buy a ticket. And I'm going to go and take my daughter there and I'm going to save her I had no no idea how I would do that. I had no money, I didn't have people that I knew there who would help me so I go there and I'm and then once I land in London, I realized that you know, we're running against the time clock and we had only a few weeks to collect the money otherwise she would not survive. And you know, I did a bunch of different things, but finally had a radio appeal. On an Asian radio interestingly, now because my daughter's name was Aisha is funny, but that Aisha names spoke to religions of all kinds. Christians thought she was Christian. Hindus thought Aisha was a Hindu name Muslims thought she was a Muslim girl and, and Sri Lankans thought she was Sinhalese. It was a name that was sort of international, and she belonged to everybody. And that story resonated with everyone. And then suddenly, we had, you know, a room that was filled with envelopes and donations, and we collected in excess of 200,000 pounds, and we had to then go back on air and ask people to stop sending checks, because we just had didn't have the ability to process it. I was so deeply humbled, you know, in that moment, because of just the generosity of people who were contributing to somebody who was not even from the country, you know, who didn't know they had no connection with. And that's when those moments are that you feel like that, you know, truly humbled, and how important it is to have that deep sense of compassion, and even in tough times to have a sense of gratitude for people being willing to help you when things seem to be so difficult.

Jacob Morgan 17:58

Yeah, and I mean, even prefer that, right, I read that you were you would go like door to door, you were calling people, you were just doing anything possible.

18:07

Yeah, that there's a funny story. I went to the high commissioner's office in London, and I said, Give me rich of all the read Rich, to the High Commissioner, I said, all the rich Indians, give me the names, and I'm gonna cold call them. So I started picking up the phone and calling them and saying giving them the story and saying, I need money, I need to save my daughter's life. And interestingly, they, you know, sometimes I think when your intent is sincere, you know, people can hear it. And they said, well, as long as you can confirm the story, you know, they were pledging money. But it was going too slowly. Yeah, you're right. You know, I did I, you know, and I think any father would be, you know, in my situation so desperate that you would do anything to save the life of your child. And, you know, which is what I was trying to.

Jacob Morgan 18:50

So the reason why I wanted you to share that story and kind of the background is because one of the messages that you deliver quite strongly, I think, is to not see yourself as a victim. I mean, you didn't. I mean, when you grew up, did you grew up in kind of a middle class environment? Or would you say it was more more middle class?

19:09

Middle? Middle class? Yeah. My dad and dad was in the government service. My mum was a doctor, but you know, like, a loving family, but very much middle.

Jacob Morgan 19:17

Yes. Okay. So this message of not seeing yourself as a victim, you know, you've obviously gone through some terrible tragedies, you've kind of made a life for yourself in a career coming here from India, becoming the CEO of one of the largest companies. And, I mean, I don't know if you would agree with this, but it seems to me especially in today's climate that we're in, it seems very easy for people to default to victimhood. And it's hard to pinpoint why that's happening and what the root cause of that is, but it seems to me that at least more people today are trying or feel like they are victims of something and there's not enough ownership being be taken on behalf of people to take control over their lives, their future, their destiny. And I tell the story of my dad frequently on this show as well. And I have parents who immigrated from from Georgia, the former USSR, and they had no money, they didn't speak the language, they had no documents, and they ended up coming to the United States that they lived in, in poverty, pretty much in the Republic of Georgia. You know, my dad lived in low income housing in Philadelphia, before he was able to get a job. And even they were able to build and create something for himself. And to this day, and my dad doesn't even want to talk about his past, he doesn't want to burden people with his problems, he doesn't believe in victim, like, you create your own path and build it. And then almost feels like that's not a message that we hear enough of in today's world. And a lot of people are, I don't know, view themselves as victims for why they are not able to get where they want to be, or why they're unable to get what they want. And so I love your message of kind of empowerment and not seeing yourself as a victim. Can you talk a little bit about why, why that's so important in today's world? And are you seeing that as is a problem inside of or maybe not even inside of organizations just in our lives, just kind of the victimhood mentality?

21:15

Yeah, well, I think, you know, we all from time to time get overwhelmed by what's happening to us. Yeah. And then we're seeking a way out of it. And it's quite understandable that the pressures may be so immense that we just saw sort of, you know, lost, that we can't fit, find a way out, and we keep spinning and what the issues are. And interestingly, the only way out is by focusing on what you can control, and not get lost in the narrative of what's happening to you. And if people I would argue, and if the listeners were, I'm sure they do it in many aspects of their lives, but if they realize that, you know, whenever things are very tough, and they step back and say, Okay, this is difficult, but what can I do? What is it that I control, and can I just have a maniacal focus on just that, because that's the only thing that I can influence. If they do that, you have a strange sense of calm, and of being empowered, and of being in charge. And ironically, you can influence the things that are outside your control, by actually ignoring them, and focusing on what you have control over. You know, because when you focus on what you have control over, you expand your influence over things that you don't have control over. So let me and I think in my case, I have to be honest, you know, I kind of stumbled into it. And some of it was just the necessity of what I was going through. So I lost two of my daughters. And in both of those situations, I felt the intense pain of not being financially independent, I was so desperate. And I felt like such a failure, not being able to provide for my children and, and for the well being that I resolved in my mind that I have to do much better with my career and what I can control and you know, and be the very best version of myself. So that was kind of a big trigger for me to get really focused. But then on, I learned from my daughter, you know, think about this. So Aisha was 13, she was told she was going to die in five years. And, and she knew she had only five years to live. But you know, she lived her life, focusing on the time that she had, as opposed to thinking about what she did not have and everything that was taken away from her. And in those five years, she achieved, you know, she became a best selling author of a book. She's a motivational speaker, and, and she had this innate ability to just focus on the here and the now and today and the present and Make it magical and make it meaningful, and have gratitude for that. And I think I saw her firsthand, and that has truly inspired me, because I saw the impact and the joy of it, you know, and therefore it's kind of shaped me. So it's not that I never, you know, go into this realm of worrying about what might happen, of course I do, but then I catch myself and remind myself to focus on what I can do and what I can influence and every time I've done that, I have felt more empowered, I felt happier, and I've actually ended up influencing the uncontrollable and therefore it becomes like, you know, like a winning habit. And I think therefore, our listeners, I would encourage them to, you know, to try it, and I'm sure that you know that people do it in some parts of the lives and not everyone in everything, but I think it is a phenomenal ability once you're able to exercise it and build that muscle.

Jacob Morgan 24:59

Do you Want to learn how to create an amazing corporate culture, while avoiding the pitfalls that make for a toxic one? If so, I created a brand new eight part training video series just for you. In total, it's around 30 minutes in length. And you can get it right now by going to help my culture.com Go there right now, before this training series disappears forever, again, that is held my culture.com and get access to this free eight part training series on how to create an amazing corporate culture. And it seems like another part of that is the motivation to actually do something, because it's one thing to identify what you can control, it's also another thing to have the motivation to go out and do it. And, and so maybe I don't know, where a lot of people struggle with maybe they struggle with identifying what it is, maybe they struggle with getting the motivation to actually do it. But where do you think that

motivation comes from? So it could be you know, maybe you're an employee at a company, and you're not a leader, and you want to be and you say, Well, I'm not a leader, because, you know, it's a bad culture, and my manager doesn't like me, and they're not promoting me or my manager has unrealistic expectations of me. And it's, it's, you put a lot of why you are not able to achieve something you give somebody else the power for dictating why you're not able to get there. And yeah, great question. Maybe you I do you do identify what it is I can control I can, I can work hard, I can put in more hours, I can do x, y, z, but then you also have to do it. And sometimes that motivation, especially if you're working for a manager, who you don't feel likes or respects you or appreciates you it's very hard to do that. And you kind of need the internal motivation. How do you get that? Where does that come from?

26:41

Yeah, I think great question. So I would take it back to how our character is wired. And I think the I think the source probably lies there, as we explore this question. So our behaviors are a function of our thoughts, right? We think and then we do. And our behaviors then become habits, habits, define character, character unlocks destiny. So character, coming backwards is habits, behaviors, thoughts, and then what drives thoughts of values. Values are, you know, the roots, almost like the metaphor of a tree that nobody can see. And under the values is your core need of what gives you your sense of identity? Who am I. And I think, that core sense of identity of who I am and what I drive my sense of self from. And then values are so important, because they shape how you think, how you show up how you behave, who you are, and what will happen to you. And therefore, for example, if my value and coordinate is that, you know, I am the master of my universe, and I can unlock whoever I choose to be. And I am responsible for what happens to me nobody else, right? If those are your ingrained values and beliefs, then you will show up in that way. And if they're not, then you will not so therefore, this importance of, you know, nurturing up not only a competence, but also a character. And that goes back to our upbringing, our family, our schools, our community, our spiritual practice, what we read, friends, or mentors, and, you know, therefore realizing the importance of that, because that I think, then deeply impacts and shapes who we are and how we show up, and the choices that we make in life.

Jacob Morgan 28:30

So you need to have the right values, it sounds like some maybe maybe the challenge for a lot of people is they have the wrong values that they are leading their lives by,

28:39

I would say that probably unknowingly, they have embraced self limiting beliefs, self limiting values, and they have a they have a core need, which is like maybe I'm a victim, you know, maybe like, I've never life has never been fair to me. And if only other people who do more for me, I would be I would live a better life. And if you embrace those kinds of limiting beliefs, then that's what your reality will be. So I think something like this requires, you know, deep work, where you're able to step back, and this is not that this can't be unplugged and changed, I think you can step back and say, Okay, if I had if I wanted to take great owner, greater ownership in the destiny of my life and the direction of my life, let me examine, why do I behave in this way? You know, why do I procrastinate? Why do I not take action? Maybe because I'm thinking this and why do I think this? Well, because maybe my core belief is this? And is that the right core belief? Or, you know, has it's lost its relevance? And let me just take that out, throw it out. And let me now basically include a more empowering belief, which is that, you know, like,

like, I can control what happens to me, and that I choose to focus on things that I have control over. And I think if you do that, and you read and you kind of deepen your appreciation of that. I do think that's how I think transformational change can happen. Yeah, I think anything else will be very cosmetic, I think,

Jacob Morgan 30:01

what about in situations where you are genuinely in a position where there is an injustice or where somebody's trying to hold you back? Or where you're not able to get to where you want to go because of a process or a system or a person, like there's legitimately something keeping you from getting ahead? Do you still change your mindset and focus on what you can control? Or? Or is then? Or is it then acceptable to say, Well, I'm able to get there, because there's this framework or this person in place, that's just keeping me from getting ahead.

30:35

I would say even in those situations, and all of us, you know, deal with that is, you know, I mean, there is always this overlap of what's happening to you and what you contribute to, but I would argue my starting point is that I control a lot, and even how other people are responding to me is a function of how I am showing up. So therefore, my first default position would be, okay, I'm not getting the end result that I wish, what can I do about it? If the process is broken, if the person is not seeing me the way I ought to be seen that let me go and have an honest conversation? Let me explore it. And let me push this as far as I can, because that's what I can do. But if it comes down to the fact that this is not an organization whose values are respect, was not an organization where I feel I belong, then I opt out, you know, because I feel that I have gone to the end of the road in terms of what I could influence. And then this is not the right environment, environment for me. So in that moment, my choice is to make a decision to go elsewhere. You know, but again, you're you're in control, you're the one who's choosing the path of your life, because I think your life is nothing but a consequence of the decisions that you make. So So I think that's what I would do in that situation.

Jacob Morgan 31:48

It's funny, I interviewed Ray Dalio fairly recently, you know, he wrote the book principles and created Bridgewater and Associates, and he had a very, very similar message. And I guess you could say, in some, some situations, you can look at it as kind of a tough love approach of like, nobody's coming to save you. But you know, there's no, nobody's gonna look out for you. But you, and if you view yourself as a victim, you will be a victim. And if you give other people a power for why you can't grow and succeed and get to where you want to be, then that's kind of the reality that you're going to live in. So I think that's an A very important mindset for a lot of people to have, especially in the corporate world. Because you can, you can probably accomplish a lot more than what you think you can do if you get your mindset and your values in the in the right direction.

32:36

Yeah, I think it must have, you must be familiar with the Pygmalion effect. Right, which is that what you expect to see is what you end up seeing? Yeah, and, and I think we all know that human beings are flawed. You know, we have filters, we have biases, we have assumptions, we have labels, we have all kinds of stuff going on, we the only thing that we have is our perception of reality. And the funny thing is

if we assume that a certain person is treating us a certain way, and we're not conscious that that may not be true, we started responding in a certain way, which will actually make make a self fulfilling prophecy. Yeah. So I think it is so important, therefore, to constantly check yourself at the door, question your assumptions, and again, show up in a very positive way to ensure that you're getting the outcome that you seek. And if not, then you make a decision accordingly. But you know, I think it's, I think it's a very powerful way to be because you always feel that, okay, I am in charge of my life, this is my life. And I will steward it to whatever gives me the most fulfillment, and joy.

Jacob Morgan 33:41

How important is that fulfillment, enjoy, you know, especially and for some people, they might say, I don't have the luxury of fulfillment and joy, I just need a job that pays the bills. So how do you balance the fulfillment, the joy, the happiness of the work that you do with the fact that you need a paycheck at the end of the day?

34:02

So I think, I think it depends from person to person I can share with you, you know, my sort of take on it is a life we I really believe that all of us want to live a good life, I believe that all of us want to leave a legacy all of us want to have an impact. And to me, a life well lived is a life that is fulfilled. Not in a uni dimensional way. But in a multi dimensional way. Let me explain. I don't think life is just uni dimensional, that it is only about work, that I am who I am because of how I show up at work eight hours a day. And that's it. No, it's a multi dimensional, you know, wheel of life almost like a wheel of life where if you were to imagine that each spoke of that wheel is the role that we play. So I'm a father, I'm a son, I'm a colleague, I'm a coach. I'm a student. I'm a sportsman. I'm a musician. I'm a reader. I'm a learner. I'm a spiritual learner. I'm a community servant, etc. So I have these many, many spokes and my Life will be fulfilled, and well lived. If I have progression on all of these spokes, I'm becoming a better father, a better coach, a better student, you know, a better athlete, a better musician. And, you know, something that if we are seeking fulfillment across all these dimensions will have a well balanced life. Yeah. If we don't, then our only self of identity. If it is only work, then guess what, if something happens at work, you know, we absolutely gone. I mean, it's like life has lost all meaning and purpose. And we, we have such a disproportionate reaction to it. So I think holding this view that my life is much more than how I show up at work. And my fulfillment in life and journey is about progression, you know, progression, and may not be excellence, may not ever achieve it, but progression, which is, if ever, I feel I'm a deficit in a particular area, I take some action. If I feel that I'm not being a good friend, I pick up the phone and call up my friend that's taking action and drives fulfillment. On the other hand, if I'm feel feel I'm being fulfilled, then keep taking action to stay fulfilled. Yeah. So that's kind of my take off, like what is a fulfilled life? It's, it's more than just, you know, how I show up at work and paycheck and all that that's important. But I think for no matter who you are, you have a multi dimensional life. And I think that is a richer way to express what life can be than just say, a singular one dimensional aspect.

Jacob Morgan 36:32

I love that. So it seems like the maybe the first thing that a lot of people can do is to identify what are those spokes for you? Yeah, I'm in do you do? This is kind of like check ins with yourself, like, how do you Yeah, actually pay attention to? Because it's one thing to write out those spokes? But yeah, seems like another thing is to check in with yourself maybe every week, every month? I don't know. And it just,

36:53

yeah, every month, so I'll share with you my own assessment very honestly. So, you know, on my wheel, I think an area that I'm feeling quite fulfilled right now is a musician. So I play the guitar, and I've been playing for a long time. And then even if you're fulfilled, you want to do some things to take it to the next level. So I signed up for a Steve Vai. You know, guitar, we can cause Oh, wow. And when there,

Jacob Morgan 37:19

he's, he's quite the guitar player there good luck with Alan. Yeah, so rocked

37:23

out for a couple of days and came back and spoke. So that's one example of f is going well, interestingly, an area that's not going well, or was not going well is or a constantly, you know, work in processes, you know, my relationship with my wife, because you you keep sort of working on it. And so I would, I was not very happy a couple of weeks ago, and my wife said, you know, you know what neuron you're a human doing, you're always doing something, I want you to be a human being just be just relax, you know, just chill out, just, you know, just be with me just present. And initially, I was upset by that, that, you know, I felt judged and all that, but then I really thought about it and spoke to my coach. And he pointed me to this fabulous book called Five Love Languages. I know that Yep. And I read that and, you know, it just gave me a different window on here. It's not good or bad. It's just like, you know, people want to be loved in different ways. And what she's saying is, hey, I love you. And please love me in the way in which I want to be loved, which is, you know, do the chores around the house. You know, and when you're sitting with me, just put the phone away. So those are some examples of as you're doing regularly check in, you're aware of how am I showing up? In the relationships that are so important to me? And how can I how can I be better? You know, and I think it's applicable to all of us. And so I do that periodically, say, you know, once every month I look at it, and I do a mental checklist of, Okay, where am I feeling good? And where am I not feeling good? versus what's important to me? And if I'm not feeling good, or I'm feeling good, important thing is, what action will I take? What what is that one thing that I will do? You know, however small, you know,

Jacob Morgan 38:57

yeah, the actions are crucial, you know, the last 15 minutes or every show, I like to dive deeper into a particular topic. So before we get into that, which I thought we could look at humility and vulnerability, before we jump into that, and look at some of your feedback there and your your insights, your advice, your action items for people. Let's touch on one more theme, which is what motivates you and drives you today? Because you're you're the CEO of a large organization, a lot of people might say, Well, you've accomplished everything there is to accomplish, what motivates you still to do better, to lead better to learn new things to just be a better human being?

39:36

You know, I like to think of myself as work in progress. I think of life like you know, I like an unfinished painting. And you envision that painting and you wake up every day trying to make that painting a bit better. And I think for me, the construct of how I want to show up is like I shared with you that wheel of

life, you know, life well lived his life for fulfilled. However, I think my purpose is to inspire myself and those around me to be the best versions of ourselves in everything that we do every single day. I want to not only do it myself, I want to be a catalyst to do that with other people. And be it my son, who's an incredible musician, beat my wife, beat at work, or, you know, in any dimension of life. That's what really drives me. And I think, finally, I think any situation where I feel I can learn and have an impact is what really motivates me that I can make a difference and I can learn and have learned something new. I think that's what you know, motivates me.

Jacob Morgan 40:48

Yeah, I love that. Okay, let's use our last few minutes together to talk about something that I know you're very passionate about, which is humility, and we can touch on vulnerability as well. So why is humility an important aspect for you as a leader? How do you practice humility? Do you have any stories or examples that come to mind for you? Thanks again, for tuning into today's show. Remember to subscribe to the show on Apple podcasts. It's less than 16 cents a day. And when you subscribe, you're gonna get access to a bonus episode right now with niran where he talks about what it means to lead with humility and vulnerability and how to lead with your heart. You'll also hear a personal story from me a vulnerable story that near and asks me about, and I do share it somewhat reluctantly, but if you want to find out what it is you got to be a subscriber to the show on Apple. When you subscribe, you also get access to a weekly bonus episode from one of my amazing guests like near and you also get early access to new episodes and ad free listening. Again, it's just less than 16 cents a day. What could you possibly be waiting for? I hope you decide to subscribe and support the show. I'll see you next week.