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SPEAKERS

Jacob Morgan



Jacob Morgan 00:00

You're leading a \$67 billion business. Does that feel intimidating? A little bit? It's kind of nuts. Yeah. I mean, it's massive. Sometimes



00:06

when people are resistant to coaching, it's because you're fearful that you're not enough. You assume people don't have good intent.



Jacob Morgan 00:14

Was there ever a time when you were getting feedback? And you were saying, this is BS? I've



00:18

always been one of those people that seeks feedbacks. And I think if you can be open minded to the fact that someone is seeing something differently than you do, there's always a learning there.



Jacob Morgan 00:26

Are there some employees who are not coachable? It's a great little challenge.



00:28

But I try to make it my responsibility to find the way and how do you do that? I always try to put myself in the other person's shoes

myself in the other person's shoes.



Jacob Morgan 00:37

Can it ever backfire? Authenticity?



00:39

Yes. And I'm still willing to take the chance though you can't live your life based on fear, right? I just think it's the right thing to do. And you have to remember that generally, as leaders, you have a bigger appetite for change than most people do.



Jacob Morgan 00:53

Everyone, thanks for joining another episode of great leadership, used to be called leading the future of work recently changed the name. So hopefully everyone is aware of that. And my guest today is Deb cup. She is the president of Microsoft North America board member at Ralph Lauren and Avanade and leading a \$67 billion dollar business. She's also one of the CEOs that I interviewed for my upcoming book leading with vulnerability. Deb, thank you for joining me.



01:19

I am so thrilled to be here. Thanks for having me.



Jacob Morgan 01:21

So does it sound weird to say that you're leading a \$67 billion business like that? If I had to say that I would, I would freak out a little bit.



01:31

It sounds like I don't know if you saw me sort of smiling when you said it's still something that I you know, my when my mom, it's I gauge everything that way, my mom reacts to it. Right? So she'll be like, wait, what? Like, it's, it's, if you had thought that, you know, 30 years ago? No, no, yeah. It's kind of nuts. Yeah.



Jacob Morgan 01:49

I mean, it's massive. Like there's some people out there who say I ran like a \$20 million business \$51 million, I \$67 billion. I mean, even the division of Microsoft, North America that you're responsible for is larger than like 99% of global organizations. Does that too intimidating? A little bit? Funny,



02:13

I think, I think when it when I first stepped into the role, I think that for sure. You're kind of like, whoa, like, that's, it's big. And I think part of it is more of the responsibility, the fact that you have an accountability to all the people in that business, in addition to your shareholders. So I think there's a little bit of that, you know, thinking like, wow, okay, like this is material. And you know, I have an important job to go do to take care of a lot of people and take care of the company. But as time goes on, you sort of it sounds weird, but you don't really focus on it, you don't I don't think about it that way. I just think about it in the context of the work that we have to do every day and the customers that we serve, and the people that we support here, so. So yeah, so that's sort of how I get my head around it.



Jacob Morgan 02:52

And by the way, for people who are listening and not watching this, you're missing the fact that Deb and I have unplanned matching colored shirts. So if you watch it on YouTube, you'll be able to see that but if not, we did not plan that. turquoise colors. So today, I really wanted to frame the conversation around this idea of of coaching and having a coaching mindset, not just if you're a leader. But I also think that if you are not a leader, you probably also need to have a coachable mindset where you accept that people can coach you. Yeah, before we jump into a lot of that I thought we can go back early on in your career. And you can share a little bit about the first job that you had, and what your journey was like to becoming the CEO of one of the world's largest organizations.



03:39

So I'll try not to bore you with a big long story here. So my first corporate job actually was right out of college. So I work for a company called benchmark systems. And we sold medical software. And so what's that? Sorry?



Jacob Morgan 03:53

Is it still around?



03:54

Oh, is it is not still around. So it was a family run business, which was interesting, by the way. So that's a fun experience to see what it's like to be working in a in a family business. And then moving into more what I would consider it was a public company. So I was there for about a year and a half. And it was just literally like cold calling like working streets, working the phones, selling to any hospital or medical practice in the area. And I lived down in Virginia and went to school in Virginia and I lived in that area. And then I went from there to a company called standard register. And I was there for 17 years. So I did all sorts of things inside of standard register. That company is also not still around. It is now telecommunication. So it was bought by a company called Taylor communications. And I really grew up there. I mean, it was it. The best part about that company was I remember how I think I had my first p&l When I was

like 27 I mean, we had so much empowerment to really learn how to run a business. It was amazing. So I was there I was in sales. roles, I was in large deal selling roles. And then I moved into management roles. And then we moved into it was my first experience with vertical Ising businesses. So we ran sort of a geo based model. And then we moved into a vertical based model. And that's sort of where I fell in love with the healthcare space. So I manage the healthcare business there for quite some time. And then I went from there after 17 years in lots of different roles, with lots of amazing mentors and peers and people I still talk to today, I went from there to SAP. And I was at SAP for six years, and I ran saps, regulated businesses in the US, and then did that for about three. And then SAP made a lot of cloud acquisitions. And for my final three years, I was running the SuccessFactors business in North America. And that was an HR software business. And that was so fun, because it was kind of a traditional enterprise software company, and as Silicon Valley, cloud company coming together, which is very different cultures. And I had been at SAP long enough to understand SAP, but not too long that the folks on the other side would be like, Oh, no, we don't want this long term or so it was such a cool match of cultures and being able to lead that organization collectively together was great, great fun. So I did that for about three years. And then I went to Microsoft. So I was I've been at Microsoft now for almost five and a half years. And I started in a in a worldwide business. So I looked over our what we call our enterprise customers at Microsoft, which is our large customer segments. And then I ran with our enterprise business, also our industry segments. So I was responsible for looking at our priority industries that we serve at Microsoft, and how do we serve those industries, specifically, differently, you know, if you're a manufacturing customer versus a healthcare customer versus a retail customer as an example. So I did that. And then it's been, it's been almost two years that I've been in this role. So I took over as president of the US, and then we moved that into North America. So as of as of now I run North America. So that's the abbreviated version of all the things that I've done across across the journey in the last, you know, however many years that is pretty many, I guess.



Jacob Morgan 07:10

So it seems like a pretty interesting journey. And when you even think back early on in your career, did coaching play a role for you as far as you being coached by the leaders that you worked with?



07:21

Always and, you know, I was an athlete growing up, I played division one sports. And so I feel like I have coaching, just ingrained in my DNA, both from the standpoint of being coached, in addition to coaching. And so yes, I think for me, I'm, I've always been one of those people that seeks feedback. So I was always interested in, in learning from both bosses and peers, I think it's your earlier point, coaching comes from all sides, right. So I think the opportunity for all of us to be great coaches and to be coached is there.



Jacob Morgan 07:51

So let's talk a little bit about maybe the the coachable mindset that you need to have, because as a as a maybe an entry or junior level employee, I mean, we keep hearing about coaching all the time in the business world. And we'll talk in a few minutes around what it means as a leader

to coach people. But I don't think enough gets talked about that you also need to have a coachable mindset, because if you have a leader who's trying to coach you and mentor you, and you don't have that mindset of accepting feedback, understanding that you need help being open to receiving it, then it kind of falls on deaf ears. And it's, you know, especially the more senior you become, the harder it is to have that mindset. Yes. So early on in your career. Were you always open to being coached? Or was there ever a time when you were getting feedback? And you were saying, this is BS? Like, why is this person telling me this? I know what I'm doing it off my back? Like how do you how do you embrace the feedback that you're getting? You know, I



08:48

think it's, it's funny, I thought about this a lot, because you have experiences both with trying to coach people who may not love it, in addition to receiving coaching. And I think, for me, it comes to the place of, of always trying to, to improve in what you're doing. And it's always coming from a different point of view. So even early in your career, when you're like, I know that like they're telling me something, I'm good at this, I don't need any I don't need any help, like, look at all the success I've had. There's a different perspective. And I think if you can be open minded to the fact that someone is seeing something differently than you do. There's always a learning there. And I think that's incredibly valuable. So the biggest part to me about having a mindset to be coached, is to be vulnerable, you have to be open to consider the fact that perhaps there's a space that you have an area to grow. You might be great, you might be really, really good. Do you want to be great like it? So it's that opportunity to continue to raise the bar for yourself. And I embrace that. So I think not everybody embraces that. But I think if you change your mindset around how and why you're getting coached, I think there's something there all the time, even if you don't necessarily agree with all of it. You look for the things you do you Do you think can help you?



Jacob Morgan 10:01

If only somebody out there was writing a book on leading with vulnerability? If only such a resource existed, yeah, that was coming out October of this year.



10:14

I was gonna ask you when it was coming out, yeah, it's coming out



Jacob Morgan 10:17

October. So I love that you mentioned that and this idea of, of being vulnerable and coaching, you know, and I've also had that situation to where sometimes people have tried to give me feedback early on in my career. And it just didn't didn't resonate. It didn't connect with me in the right way. Maybe it was it was how it was being delivered. Maybe it felt more like criticism instead of coaching. So for you, as an employee to develop a mindset where you can be coached. How do you develop that? Like, how do you show up to work each day, being comfortable being vulnerable? Being open to receiving that feedback? I mean, you have a lot of

employees you work with? Do you ever see employees who are being coached by others? And it's just not? It's just not connecting? They're just not seeing it? I mean, I struggle with this sometimes, too.



11:06

Yeah, I think there's, there's a couple of things. And I'll just think about it from my own point of view is like, I think you got to check fear at the door. So I think sometimes when people are resistant to coaching, it's because you're fearful that you're not enough. Yeah. And that you that you are, you assume people don't have good intent. So I always kind of like one big principle for me is assume good intent. Assume that people are coaching because they're trying to help you. They're not coaching to criticize and not coaching to make you feel bad. They're coaching to help. So I think, assume good intent, check fear at the door, it's okay, if you aren't the best at everything, you know, if there's even people who are the best, the best athletes in the world get coached every single day. So I think if you take a different frame on it, it allows you to be a little more open minded and look, not maybe not every single thing that said to you is really going to resonate. And that's okay, too. But I think if you look at it from the context of saying, maybe I'll get one thing, one thing that will help me better my game will help me show up differently will help me be more successful in whatever capacity you're trying to be successful. I think it's worth it. So I think part of it is just feel okay, that it's a safe, it's got to be a safe space. And I think that's something managers need to really work on, is that they're creating the right space for coaching to be heard.



Jacob Morgan 12:22

And how do you do that? Yeah, I



12:24

think for me, it My hope is for many is that I always try to put myself in the other person's shoes. So if I'm going, if I see something, and I want to coach somebody on it, I think about it in the context of how would I want to receive that information. And you have to know the people. So I think the thing about coaching is, it's, it is a people first thing so understand people, people don't generally like to be coached in front of others. People don't generally like to be coached in a way that feels like it's, it's it's a criticism, it needs to be coached in a way or couched in a way that feels like you're trying to benefit them. So I often think about it in scenarios, people also don't like to be coached in ways that are not specific. Coaching that's not specific is incredibly unhelpful, because I think that actually leaves people with, like, I don't know what to do with that information. It's not specific enough for me to action. So I always think of it as the receiver, and how would I want to receive that coaching and know the person know the person, I have? A guy that used to work for me, and we got kind of fun, where we would be like, are you in a place where you can hear it? And he would say like, Nope, I go, Okay, we'll do it. We'll talk about it next time. So I think just that open, honest kind of dialogue with people give them the safe place to actually receive it. And in an a mindset when they're ready to



Jacob Morgan 13:43

pay you really quick, sorry to interrupt you. But did you know that 96% of the people who watch videos on this channel are not subscribed? Do me a favor, subscribe to the YouTube channel so that you can get notified when more videos just like this one are released. And now let's get back to the content. When you say specific, and I, I also see this as a big mistake. And sometimes I've even made this mistake with people on my team as well, where there's some feedback or some kind of coaching that you want to give. But you realize it ends up being just oh, do this better? Or, you know, can you improve upon this? Yes. And then the other person is just left with this thing of like, What do you mean, like better? What does improve upon actually mean? Yeah, so but as you know, but it's very different. If you go back to that person and say, Hey, can you know, I don't know you, you would actually probably have a good example. So what's a specific example?



14:38

So we'd say a great example might be in our world, like if you're talking about a particular product capability, and let's say perhaps that the person is describing it in a way that the customer isn't quite understanding it and perhaps it's not a technical buyer. Let's use that as an example. So a great coaching opportunity would be to say, you know, that product could like there it was is really clear that you're deep technically, but the customer isn't as technical as you. So let's think about how we put that concept in a story or an actual business outcome. So the customer can connect with it. So it's a great way to say instead of talking about it in the context of a technical capability, talk about it from the standpoint of an outcome that technology provides. Yeah. And then, depending on the industry, you can provide an example. So that's a good one, because that's a real one like that tends to happen when you have a product where people might be over the customers head in some cases.



Jacob Morgan 15:35

And I actually thought I want on my team as well, I have somebody who's really into technology and AI, and just kind of playing around with different AI tools and coming up with ways that we as a business might be able to use it. And sometimes he'll create these tools, and send them over to me, and he'll just say, Hey, I made this tool. And I'll just be left with this like, well, what would I do? What Yeah, like, I don't understand, you know, because he's very technical, and I'm not. And so there used to be a time where before I would just say, can you explain this? And he would say, well explain like, What do you mean? And so now I'm very specific. And I tried to coach him and I say, look, I love that you're creating these types of tools. But when you create them, here's some very specific questions that I need you to help me answer. What is this tool renew? Why are we using it? How can it be implemented? Are there situations when I won't want to be using it? And so when I get very specific with that, then he creates these tutorials that answers all the questions, and it's very clear. And so I think that it can really be a game changer when you are trying to coach people to give them very specific feedback.



16:39

And I think timing matters a lot, too. So I think sometimes people wait too long. And then it's they've, they tend to forget exactly what it was about that moment that they wanted to coach and then it gets garbled. So I think the other thing I always try to do is do it as much as you can

close to the experience that you saw or had, so that they can create that connection to I think that helps also,



Jacob Morgan 17:02

are there some employees who are not coachable? Have you ever had somebody that you've worked with? And you're like, you know what, nothing I tell you is landing like it's just not registering? I have tried everything like we are done here.



17:15

Well, it's funny I this the same person I mentioned to you where I said, Is this a good time? You know, is this Are you are you in that headspace? I will say that person in my career, I had a very hard time getting anything to land. And so I immediately didn't make it about them. I made it about me. So I was like I'm something I'm doing is not resonating, like how do I change this up so that I can create a space that they'll hopefully hear what I'm saying. And perhaps we can create some better outcomes for it. So that was a journey, though, I will say it didn't, it did not happen overnight. It was something that I actually invested a good amount of time in to say, help me understand how I can help you. Now my only job is to make sure that I do everything I can to make you as good as you can possibly be. And there's so much greatness in there. And there's just things that we I know if we tweak them a little bit, that greatness is just going to continue. So how do I know when you're open to hearing coaching and feedback. And so I got them to sort of talk through what was a good space for them, what how they receive it and that person specifically back to you have to know the people wasn't somebody who could take it and react, they had to go away with it. And then they would come back and they'd be like, You know what I thought about it, and it would take them a couple of days to sort of absorb, and then we'd have an open conversation about it. So we we made actually tremendous progress. So I think that it takes a lot some people it takes a lot of work just to get them to, again, that space where they're free to hear. And they're willing to kind of open their minds. So it's work. I think sometimes there might yeah, there's probably some people out there who will never hear it. But I try to make it my responsibility, first and foremost, to find the way. Okay, it's a great little challenge. Yeah, you gotta challenge yourself to figure out like, I know they can I know they want to get better. How do I how do I help them?




Jacob Morgan 19:09

I wanted to share. So my previous book that future leader, one of the skills that I had in the book was the skill of the coach. And I wanted to share how I think about coaching and you tell me if it resonates with the way that you think about it? Yeah. So the challenging thing that I've come across, I don't know if you've seen this with some of your leaders, is that a lot of people think that you could just that coaching means you make somebody better. But the truth is, you could spend like a minute with somebody and make them a little bit better. Like just teach them one tiny thing their tiny bit better. And then you could say, oh, I've coached them. And the way that that I've started to think about it over the past few years. Is that really the skill of the coach the mindset of the coach is about helping make other people are even better than you are. Because that's what requires a lot of time and effort and energy and dedication and focus. And if leaders show up to work each day believing that their responsibilities to make

other people around on them better even than they are. I think that is a very, very different way to think about it. Does that model does that wave thinking about coaching resonate with you?

 20:10

I love it. And I think I haven't think about that when I'm hiring people. So So for me, I am very aware of surrounding myself or building teams that I think have tons of potential to be better than I am like, that's kind of the whole point, right? You know, that you really want to leave a place or a job or a role way better off than than it started. And that has to be with someone else who can step into that role, and do it better than you ever could. So I actually love that. And I think it actually, it also helps people think about and back to the people who may not be as coachable. You can't do that with everybody. So I think the reality is, there's both that deep coaching, that to me, is what you described, yeah. And then there is some tactical coaching that will occur as people are just performing their tasks or their their role. But I think if you're gonna go deep, it's it's that opportunity to see people just reached like, incredible potential. And I love that. I mean, that's, to me, what is like the biggest joy of my job, actually, is what you just described,

 Jacob Morgan 21:15

is there a difference between just giving feedback versus coaching somebody because, you know, there are a lot of, for example, training, programs around coaching, there's methodologies and methodologies around coaching. Like it's a very specific discipline. And oftentimes, we clumping together, giving feedback with coaching with mentoring. How do you define coaching? Like as a leader, what does coaching somebody actually mean?

 21:40

Yeah, I think for me, coaching is a lot deeper. So I think coaching is something that is you're really sort of absorbing the individual and the work and the behaviors and the potential, I think feedback can be super tactical, and specific and direct. That kind of the example I gave before, around, you know, there's something very specific a person was doing, you can provide them feedback to tweak that. That's kind of more feedback. Coaching, I think, is all encompassing in terms of the individual, which is a little bit different than feedback, which can be very specific on a tactical outcome.

 Jacob Morgan 22:15

Okay, that makes sense. Yeah. And then as coaching, do you, as a leader need to get training for coaching are there you know, for example, a lot of leaders who are listening and watching this are probably thinking, Well, how do I learn to coach my people in the right way?

 22:31

Yeah, I think you do it, some people are natural like, but not everybody. You know, I think

Yeah, I think you do it, some people are natural, like, but not everybody. You know, I think some people just naturally are drawn to coaching and enjoy coaching and, and recognize the time because it's, it's a time, it takes time to coach. So I think that's, some people just know how to do it. Generally, though, no, I think that there's you know, we and even at Microsoft, we we sort of have a leadership philosophy of model coach care. And coaching is there are classes on you know, exactly how to do it? What's the right framework in which to do it? What's the experience you want the person to have? Absolutely. There's online classes. There's I'm sure companies, other people's companies give classes to, I don't think people should expect that they should know how to do that super well. I always think learning or taking an experience that will give you another point of view on how to do it is a good thing. It's a skill that takes time and energy and investment. So yeah, like anything that takes time, energy and investment. I think it's, it's something you can learn for sure.



Jacob Morgan 23:32

Who coaches the coach who coaches you. Yeah, I



23:35

think, look, I actually love coaching from my team. So I my boss, of course, coaches me, but I love coaching from peers. I love coaching from my team. I love coaching from customers. I love coaching kind of 360. So for me, I think about it in the context, I just had a conversation before this, where I was talking to it was actually an individual contributor here at Microsoft. And I do just mentor sessions and I said, I'd love you to coach me. So you've seen me in different environments. You've seen me in different experiences. I'd love you to give me some coaching as as an employee of Microsoft in my organization, what would you want from me? How could you coach me to be a better leader? How could you coach me to show up differently if you think I should be showing up differently. So when you can get somebody to actually really honestly give you that, that level of coaching. It's incredible. So I personally love it. From all sides. Some of my peers are some of our we are kind of collective coaches together. So we see each other environments and we often coach each other, which I think is pretty awesome.



Jacob Morgan 24:40

Does Satya Nadella give you coaching? Sure.



24:43

Yeah, of course. Absolutely. Yeah.



Jacob Morgan 24:46

Is he a good coach?





24:47

He's a great coach. He's a he is. He's super curious. He's obviously brilliant. And he's interested. So I think that's part of what coaching is about like you have to be Curious, you have to be interested. And you have to have a point of view. And I think that's, that's such a duty.



Jacob Morgan 25:07

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 help my culture.com and get access to this free eight part training series on how to create an amazing corporate culture. What about the balance between strengths and weaknesses? There's been a lot of debate on this right? Do you try to focus on improving somebody's weaknesses? Or do you focus on somebody's strengths? Do you do both? What what is the right approach there?



25:53

I don't know what the right approaches, I'll tell you what mine is, I think about both I think about both because I think people's strengths and you know, like you said, there's a million different perspectives on this. people's strengths are like their superpowers. So if they can, if they can really harness that superpower, that is what really can elevate them to a different, different level. So I love zeroing in on people's superpowers. And telling them, this is what I see as your superpower as your true strength. Like continue to harness it, continue to grow it to continue to develop it. So I think that's a great way to coach people. And then you also say, you know, depending on what the person is trying to do, or where they want to go in their career, where are some areas that you potentially have some opportunities to work on? Let's talk about those two, because if you want to be super well rounded in your business, you need to have all of that. So I you know, whether that's, you know, the right answer, it's my answer. I actually really think it takes both to be a really good coach, I think you got to do both.



Jacob Morgan 26:54

Yeah. And I tend to agree with you, I think there's a little bit of a, of a blending of both kind of needs to go to go into it. You know, we live in a world now that's changing so quickly. Yeah. How do you even coach in a world that is changing so quickly? And maybe coaching is even more important in today's environment? Because it does feel like things are changing so quickly. And in fact, even recently, you probably even saw this right? The how many people came out and signed against slowing down AI? Because it's moving just so quickly? Yeah, it just seems like we're on this treadmill of change. And humans are just not able to keep pace. So how do you coach in that kind of an environment that's moving so quickly?



27:37

I think coaching for me often is back to the basics. So I think a lot of what we we coach around are also behaviors are also ways people show up the way people think about work. So I think a lot of that although the world is changing fast, a lot of the basics don't change. And so I try to ground people in sort of what is always true, or what is always important, and that is always you the way that you the way that you collaborate. That's a great example for us. So like, especially in a company like Microsoft, that is such an important skill, it doesn't matter actually, it's most important as things move quickly. But it's a it's a skill that exists and is needed and in every scenario. So I think I try to filter out too much of the noise, and try to center in on the things that are really important for that person, in whatever success they're trying to accomplish, or we're collectively trying to accomplish for them. So I see is the change sort of slats in, but I don't think it necessarily changes the basics of what you want, or you're trying to do with people. Now there's always technical aptitude and capability and things like that, that are both a combination of skilling, which is different than coaching. And people can keep working on that. And that's great. But there's still the aspect of coaching and development that I think is deeply critical, regardless of how fast things are changing.



Jacob Morgan 29:03

It's interesting that you mentioned collaboration, because as you know, there's been this big like, duel between in the office versus virtual and some companies are like we've had enough you're coming back in and we need to collaborate and even recently, over the past few weeks, just so many big companies are announcing that. And then you made me think of I can't remember I think it was Microsoft, and I think it was Satya Nadella. And I think this was at some point last year, you can correct me if I'm wrong. But he said something along the lines of You know, working in a virtual world has been great as far as productivity, but it has hurt innovation, because we miss out on that collaboration piece. So where do you stand on that? Like for me personally, I think there's still a lot of value for in person work. And I think there's a big difference between being productive and checking things off a to do list versus being able to think strategically and creatively and being able to create leadership presence. growth and development. Like those are very different things. Yeah. And it's true that a lot of people can work from home. Like, for me during the pandemic, I was giving a lot of speeches. And the the question became, well, can you give a keynote from from home? Yeah, I can. But as impactful and as powerful, staring at a screen versus being on a stage, talking to people afterwards and sharing ideas, right, you give a keynote virtually, and then you're done. And it's like, right, you click a button, and it's the right person, it's Oh, thank you, you know, you talk to a lot of people, you meet people you grab, like, it's different. And you get different things from that. It is. So where do you stand on that collaboration, virtual hybrid world debate? Yeah,



30:44

I mean, I'm a firm believer in hybrid, and I think hybrid is here to stay. And I think some things require in person and some things do not. So I think for us, and we're great. Microsoft's a great example of this. I mean, we are hybrid, you know, we absolutely have remote and in person. And we think about it in the context of what you're trying to do. So to your point, innovation, you know, strategy, work that is kind of deep and requires thought and energy and that connectedness in person, there's a lot of stuff that you can do that doesn't require you to be in person. So I think we're learning and I think we're all going to learn through this I, I think a hard stance on one or the other, is is alienating to employees. My personal opinion, I think giving employees that opportunity to help decide what requires in person and what doesn't, I think is

really, really valuable. So people crave connection, we know that and I think there's there's that opportunity to create those connections and in person experiences, but doesn't mean you have to do it every single day. So I think that balance if we can all collectively find that right balance, and it'll take us it might be different for people. But I think it's it's a super opportunity for us to continue to let people think about how that work can show up and the right way to do it.



Jacob Morgan 31:58

Yeah, I totally agree. I think hybrid. And to your point, I think sometimes when people hear hybrid, they mistake hybrid for virtual, but they forget that hybrid doesn't mean just virtual, it means there's a blending of both, which is ultimately I think, to your point, the best scenario, right? You come in when you need to and when things are relevant and whatnot, you know, you have a bunch of meetings you need to do in from home totally fine. Right? And



32:22

we see that with our customers to actually it's interesting. So you see where your customers are deciding, these are the types of meetings I want to have in person versus these are the types of meetings that I would, I'm happy to have and actually would rather have virtually, and that's actually it's kind of neat, it's been a neat experience, sort of figuring out how different organizations work and what they expect.



Jacob Morgan 32:42

Yeah, and I guess, kind of building on that point. You mentioned learning and trying to figure things out, you know, when you were presented with COVID. And you were probably presented with a lot of challenges over the past few years that maybe there was no playbook for things that you've encountered you as a leader, when you are confronted with something that you've never seen before or never done before. Do you personally have a certain way that you like to approach uncertainty and to try to come up with solutions and ideas?



33:10

Yeah, I think for me, I am. Back to the vulnerability point, I think I'm the first person to say like, I don't know the answer. So, you know, we need some brainpower, you know, to kind of come together and start thinking about this. So I actually, it's, it's been a, I think the last two and a half years or whatever, two and a half, three years of my career have been the most interesting and the most fulfilling I've ever had. And I think it's because I feel so much more comfortable just saying that just saying, I don't know, like, I know, you're all looking at me, because you think I should know, I don't know. So like, how about, we all kind of get in this thing together and start to figure out what the right answer is. And like watching what Microsoft did during that, the first minute that everybody kind of everything shut down. And you know, we did stand ups every day. And it was incredible to watch, like, these brilliant people come together and just slip and it was all virtual spitballing ideas and saying, Okay, what about this? And could we do that? And anybody have any ideas here like and it just, I don't know, it felt very fulfilling in a lot of ways where you thought like, you don't have to be the one that has all the answers. And I

think people actually appreciate that you're honest about the fact that you don't know. So I approach it with the standpoint of and this is just a personal thing for me. I tend to be a glass half full person. So I will look for possibility and uncertainty. That's just sort of how I'm wired. So I always think, okay, we don't know what's going on. This is super uncertain, it feels really, really uncomfortable. But there is possibility here and we will find a way and so collectively let's think about it. Like what's it going to be in and we ran all sorts of kind of groups of people just off thinking about, Okay, what if we did this way and what our customers need right now and, and so I think that's how I think about it is just, it's there's possibility and uncertainty. It's okay. A to be vulnerable, it's okay to say I don't know, and go rally the smartest people you got around you because they're usually the ones that have the answers anyway. So I'm not the kind of person that shuts myself in a room like thinking I can come up with the, you know, the answers. That's, that's not me.



Jacob Morgan 35:15

But the culture also, I think needs to foster that, right. So if you look at like, for example, a lot of people cite the case study of Microsoft under Steve Ballmer versus Microsoft and IKEA Nadella kind of the very different environment that it created. And so and you obviously, don't you weren't there under bomber, but a lot of people would say that, you know, it was under Steve bombers reign, and if you were to be vulnerable and ask for help, I, you know, you'd get a chair thrown at your head or something to be extreme. But like the the leaders matter so much when it comes to creating that corporate culture. And I've talked to a couple employees over the years who are visibly, you know, like, it's palpable. The difference in culture between someone like Steve Ballmer versus Satya Nadella. And so I guess the question then becomes how do you make sure that you have that right culture that supports that openness? Because, you know, maybe not every leader is comfortable with something like that?



36:15

Yeah, no. And I think that's, that's a great question. I think part of it is having frameworks and you know, like we talked about earlier with kind of this model, Coach care framework, that's actually really grounding for the company. So when you think about the culture, collectively, all the way through, you know, all your modeling the behaviors you want to see, are you coaching people through the things that are hard, whatever it might be? And do you care? Like, I think care is the part that is makes all of it easier, like if you can center people around kind of the caring aspect of it, it sort of shifts people's mindset, but it's work culture is work. And I think that you can't just land a framework and be like, yeah, here we go, you know, I think you, you have to model the behavior over and over again, you have to put yourself in super uncomfortable positions. So people will see that you're actually walking the walk. So you step into something and admit in front of 3000 people, you know that you're conflicted on what to do, or you got something wrong, like I do that I step into it, and then I get, it's amazing, you'll get like, 20 notes from people you don't know, who've just said, you've changed my outlook, because I saw you do it. And I know, it took a lot of risk to say that on that call. So I think it's just, it's constant. You've got to keep reinforcing the culture, you got to keep modeling behavior, and leaders matter tremendously. So if you're not seeing it in your leaders, you got to ask the question, why not? So why don't they feel safe, and you got to dig into it. And we do a lot of culture conversations and roundtables and things like that to really get a pulse on, are we just talking about it, that people aren't really absorbing it? Or are we really letting it happen?

And we will always have work to do. I mean, they're just some people, we're never going to feel comfortable, being vulnerable. That's the reality of some personalities, right? So I think that's okay, too. You know, everybody's got to be who they are. I think the authenticity piece is the most important of every aspect of everything. But I think that's, it's just modeling what you hope for, and then reinforcing, reinforcing, reinforcing.



Jacob Morgan 38:16

You mentioned being uncomfortable a few times. And quite a few leaders that I've talked to on this podcast over the years have said that one of the reasons why they became successful is because they keep embracing the uncomfortable and doing things that nobody else wants to do. Can you share time? Or does a story come to mind where you had to either take on a project or do something that made you feel really, really uncomfortable?



38:38

Yeah. So it's funny the story I was mentioning, then this goes back away when I was probably the first big thing I did that I thought, oh, what should I have done that. So when when I was at Stanford register, we were a geo based company. And I felt so strongly that we should show up to our customer in the industries that they serve. And I had, I happened to be covering an area where I had two leaders in New York. And they were just covering geos. And I thought, like, this one knows a lot about financial services. And this one knows a lot about health care. I'm going to break this thing up and I'm going to go into a vertical structure. And it was like mid year. And I remember calling my boss and saying, I want to do this. And of course, he asked all the right questions, you ran through the plan everything else and he said, Okay, he goes, it's on you. So if it fails, it's on you. And I remember being like, Oh, wait, you know, and I thought, no, no, I'm going for it. But I felt sort of sick. Honestly. I was I was like, Should I've done this? Like, do I really believe in it? Am I wrong? I might be wrong, like this might fail. And we went for it. And it was it was like so freeing. I think it was one of those things where you just you trust your gut and you you do the research. It's not just good, you know, you run through the data, you do your research, you make sure you you have a clear plan, but mostly strategies. You got to execute the strategy. So like the strategies are never going to Perfect, but if you can execute, I think you can overcome a lot of things. So that was one very clear example that will stick with me forever. And I'm grateful for him. I'm grateful that he left he let me take that risk.



Jacob Morgan 40:10

But what if you had failed? Yeah, it's good question.



40:13

I mean, you know, there's others that I have. I mean, there's others where I've just said, you know, what, if we organize in a certain way, and we think we can be better, and it doesn't work, you just say I that was wrong. Like, that didn't work, I for sure, yeah. I'm a big believer in admitting that you did something wrong and just said I, because people will be like, well, you thought, blah, blah, blah. And I'll say I did. And I was wrong. Like it was wrong. So we got to fix

it, like made a mistake. Here's why I did what I did. I learned from it, and we got to keep going. So I guess I've been lucky that I've been in environments that allow that, like, and not all environments do. And I know that I know that not all environments do. I think I've I'm sort of probably drawn to work at places that I feel like I can be my best. And that do give me some space to do those types of things.



Jacob Morgan 40:59

Yeah, it sounds like failure is not always a bad thing.



41:02

No, I think it's the biggest learning you'll ever get. Yeah.



Jacob Morgan 41:05

Yeah, this culture of perfection that a lot of actually, I don't know how many organizations have it, but I think quite a few of them have it where, you know, you don't admit to a mistake, don't ask for help. Don't share any failures, people are gonna think you're weak. And it's that usually never ends well, for anybody.



41:23

Let's just and all it ends up doing is hiding a lot of things. Yeah. And that's terrible, you know, that just creates an environment where things are hidden and held back. And that's just, that's a shame, because that's just wasted opportunity.



Jacob Morgan 41:36

Yeah, couldn't agree more? Well, before we jump into the last 15 minutes or so to talk about authentic leadership, I thought we could just do one more question. And that is really just getting a sense of what your day looks like, and how do you structure it. So obviously, you're running a \$67 billion business, is there a way that you structure or plan your day to be most effective and productive?



41:58

I try again, I'm very much a work in progress on this one. I try incredibly hard to block my mornings until 10am. Okay, and even Microsoft is a West Coast company. So I work late, but I try to say, I need to do my own work until 10. Like so. And that might include personal things I want to work out, you know, I want to make sure that I'm prepared for the day I've done on my preps you for whatever's coming in that day, that this does not always work. But this is what I shoot for. My goal is to say, I don't want a scheduled call on my calendar until 10. So if I can make that work, then I feel really prepared for the day. And I can tell the difference. Honestly,

when it's like oh, shoot, like that day, I had something started at 830. It throws me off a little like I can tell the difference when I'm not as kind of organized and planned. And, and kind of have my day set. So I normally it changes whether you're traveling or not traveling. So you know, traveling is sort of my my mindset on when I'm in the field or I'm traveling is like your day is just your it's gone. Like assume it's gone. From the minute you wake up to the minute you go to sleep, you know, packed with seeing customers, seeing employees, etc. And I'm a big believer, everywhere I go, I see customers and I see employees, I always want to spend time with our employees. And I always want to spend time with our customers, I think it's incredibly important. If I'm in office for an example, I make sure that I I always have customers on my calendar every week, I feel really strongly about staying connected to what's happening in our market. So there will be periods of time where I might see five to seven customers a week virtually. If I'm in office, I will there's always internal things going on. So I try to block stacks of time where I'm seeing customers. And then when I'm doing things internally, I also try really hard to follow the rule of not 30 minute meetings 20 year 25 Not hour long. 45 You'd be surprised how much that helps. So if you can just create a little more space in your calendar to just stand up and step outside. So one thing I've been trying to do also is I mean, I'm not exaggerating, like if I can literally just stand outside for five minutes. It's amazing what air and sun can do for you. So that's a good,



Jacob Morgan 44:17

that's a pretty good leadership pack. I like that.



44:19

Yeah, just if it's just five minutes, and you're we were talking before we started recording, we both have dogs. So if I can even just pop the dog out for five minutes or 10 minutes. It's it, I can feel it like sort of refueling me, the sun, the air, all those types of things. So that's what I try to do all the time. And I'm a pretty big advocate of getting workouts in. So if I. So that's why I shoot for the mornings. Sometimes I have to do it at night if I can't get it in. But that's sort of how I do it. So I think about it in the context of personal like, what do I need to be successful in my day, and I think that's really important. And if there's anything I hope people listen to, you got to make space for yourself. You have to whether it's getting there, whether it's hopping on a bike, whether it's by breathing, meditation, whatever it is, like create that space for yourself, because it's hard to do all the rest of it if you're not feeling your own energy. And I think that's deeply important. So my days can as, as you can imagine, can get crazy sometimes. But generally I try to keep control over them. I have an amazing team, an amazing team. So I feel like my admin Jen, I truly believe she looks out for my life, and my well being so she's like, manages things exceptionally well, to try to make sure that I find that space where I can. She's amazing.



Jacob Morgan 45:33

Yeah, I have a similar practice where I also try not to do meetings or anything before 10 Because I take the kids to school, and then I like to work out for the first hour and a half, two hours of every morning because if I don't, I'm the same Interviewer I feel like it disrupts my

day. And I just don't feel nice. I mean, you get the you know, the get the endorphins, you feel good after you exercise in the morning, eat a healthy breakfast, and then you kind of start your day. And without that I just, it feels off. I know exactly what you mean.



45:58

Yeah, it just feels off. Yeah, very weird. Yeah, the



Jacob Morgan 46:01

last last few minutes, I want to talk about something I know that you're a big proponent of and that's this idea of authentic leadership. And we could look at specifically what that means how to do it if it backfires anything of that nature. So sure for you What does Authentic Leadership actually mean? The conversation with Deb continues for subscribers of the podcast, either on Apple podcasts or on Spotify. If you subscribe, you're gonna get a bonus episode right now, where Deb talks about authentic leadership. And we break this down specifically into what Authentic Leadership actually means. How do you do it? What happens when it backfires? We also talk a little bit about this theme of leading through change and how to create a safe culture where you can actually be authentic. And how do you talk about some of the difficult and tough topics that are so prevalent inside of organizations today? Again, that's only available for premium subscribers of the show. Again, it's available on Apple podcasts or on Spotify. And when you subscribe, you're gonna get a bonus episode every single week from one of my amazing guests. And most importantly, it's what helps support the show so that I can bring in a more amazing guests like Deb. Thanks again for tuning in. I'll see you next week.