

# This CEO Leads With Vulnerability In Front Of His 8,500 Employees. Why Does He Do It Is There Value In Vulnerability At

**Jacob Morgan** 00:00

You are about to listen to an exclusive conversation with Raul investment. He's the CEO of Belden, an electronics manufacturing company with around 8000 employees around the world. This is one over 100 CEO interviews that I did for my brand new book called leading with vulnerability. I also surveyed 14,000 employees around the world to really figure out how leaders can approach vulnerability in the right way. Because one of the things that I've discovered is that if you're a leader, or not a leader, the way that you think about vulnerability and approach it and the impact that it has, is going to be very different. Actually, Adam Grant, one of the people who endorsed my book, gave a great quote, which I think summarizes what the book is about. And he said, This is a thoughtful, resourceful read, and how leaders can be more candid about their foibles and fears without sacrificing their effectiveness. So how do we balance, the competence, the confidence, but at the same time, the vulnerability needed to be able to connect with our people. So if you want to learn more, head over to lead with vulnerability.com, again, that is lead with vulnerability.com. So you're going to listen to the first part of this interview right now the second half, if you're interested, is going to be available at great leadership.substack.com. Again, that is great leadership.substack.com.

01:25

Hello, everyone, and welcome to another conversation on leadership. Today, my guest is roll of escutcheons, the CEO of Belden roll, thank you for joining me,

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I appreciate the opportunity. So for

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people who are not familiar with the company, why don't we start with a little bit of background information about what you guys do and how many employees you guys have.

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So we have about eight and a half 1000 associates are truly global, so less than 50% of the revenue is in the United States. But 60% In total is in the Americas, and then roughly 30% In Asia, and about 10 to 10% in in Europe, Middle East and Africa. So we make signal transmission products. So we built the infrastructure that helps customers on their digital transformation. So think in terms of cable connectors, but also active components like switches and gateways. And we serve three markets, the biggest market that we serve is industrial automation. Okay, so think of, for example, when Destler builds a plant or General Motors and builds a new facility for a new car, our gear is used on the machines on the

robots, as well as the communication from machine to machine and on the factory floor. So that's an example pretty cool stuff. It's a little bit more than half of our revenue. And then the other two segments that we markets that we serve. They're about equal size and revenue. One is what we call broadband and 5g. So those are solutions that we sell to, for example, Comcast or Charter Communications, to expand their network to satisfy the ever increasing need for data, right that we all have. Yep. And the last segment is what we call smart buildings. And that's connectivity solutions in buildings, such as hospitals, non commercial, real estate and data centers.

03:29

Very cool. And as we were talking about before I push the record button, you're in one of my favorite cities, St. Louis, the chess capital of the world. So you know, every time I go over there, I stopped by the chess club and see if I can get like a lesson or see if there any tournaments going on.

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So I have two children, a 19 year old daughter, she plays and I have a 17 year old son, who is a fanatic, and I drag him from tournament to tournament here in St. Louis. Oh,

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is he pretty good? What do you know what his rating is?

04:00

I don't know what his rating is. No, he tells me but I forgot what it is.

04:03

Wow, that's awesome that you have some kids who are playing chess. That's, that's fantastic. So today, we're talking about vulnerability and leadership. And I thought maybe we could start with a very broad question first, and that is when you hear vulnerability or the phrase vulnerable leader. What comes to mind for you? How would you define that?

04:26

Yeah, what immediately comes to mind is just being humble. You know, being humble vulnerability, to me, means that you understand that nobody has all the answers, so including yourself, and there is no need to cover it up, or to change the topic or bully authors until you get your point across, right. That's the opposite of what a good leader is supposed to do. So just being humble showing up in situations as a human being with gaps in knowledge and perspective, but showing up in full acceptance of those things and being open to learn from other people.

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I like that definition. Can you share a time or do any stories or examples come to mind for you, when you were vulnerable or kind of lived up to that definition. And again, as many stories has come to mind, feel free to share. I think that people love those kind of stories and examples of CEOs being vulnerable.

05:22

Well, in all honesty, I've been with this company for 16 years. And I took over a CEO almost exactly two years ago. And it's very interesting, because I've had a long path of being prepared. Before it is I was appointed CEO, which was not a role that we typically had, it was designed to facilitate the transition from the previous CEO to me, so I was as ready as I could be. But then you're actually in the seat. And if you're not humble or vulnerable before, then you most certainly are. And so what I did is I actually, as opposed to seeing it as a negative quality trade or being threatened by it, I embraced it. So I build a team around me that consists of the very best people that I could find. I have nine direct reports. And eight of those were not in the role two years ago. So when I took over, so the only person that's still there from let's say, previous team is our general counsel. Everybody else, all business leaders, all staff functions are replaced, to find the best people that I could find. Because I think it makes, it makes for better decision making. So again, like I said, I embraced not knowing all the answers, and I'm not threatened by the fact that people on my team are either more intelligent, or are subject matter experts on items that I'm simply not. And that's I think, just one example of where how I embraced it. I'm like, No, it's, it's this, this is actually a good thing. Because ultimately, the decision making that we do at Belden will improve. And that's ultimately how I'm being judged as well.

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Do any stories come to mind that like when you had to ask for help, or admit that you didn't know how to do something or not even when you were CEO, maybe even earlier on? Or maybe it admitting that you made a mistake, and and kind of what was going through your mind and what that situation was like?

07:27

Yeah, I'll give you an example. Which is very embarrassing. So I spent four years in Asia. And when I moved from, I'm originally European. I'm from the Netherlands. And when I moved from Europe, to Asia, for the bell for Beldon, for the company, I had previously for previous employer, had spent four years in the United States. So I go to Asia, Hong Kong. And, um, the company offered me a cultural awareness class, cultural sensitivity class. And I'll never forget this, it was two and a half 1000 US dollars. So I declined it. I'm like, I don't need that. I mean, I'm European, lived in multiple European countries. I spent four years in the United States, you know, I don't need that. And then we had a specific example, where it kind of fit me. So we were in a meeting room. And somebody was projecting a team member was projecting that we're about, let's say, about a dozen people in the meeting room, and I was the the leader. And the projector didn't work. So my natural tendency came out. And I did two things. I rolled up my sleeves and started working on the projector myself, like, hey, how does this work? Why doesn't this work? And secondly, I made a sarcastic joke. Was that what was it? I can't remember exactly. But something like Oh, I wish, you know, I wish we had somebody dedicated for it or something like that. The IT person was in the room. Yeah. So then later there, I can give you a couple of other examples during that timeframe. But that later, my assistant came to me. I was blessed to have an assistant that was very direct. And she told me rule you cannot do that. You cannot you cannot do that. And I said why? She says I have no doubts that you are technically savvy and can potentially fix the projector. But you are taking away somebody's job. Somebody is proud. Our RT person is a proud Beldon associate and this is his responsibilities, his job. So by you rolling up your sleeves and doing it yourselves. You're basically saying you're incompetent, and I can do that job better. So it was very net but I didn't mean that. I just meant like, Hey, let me help solve the problem. Yeah, I thought it would be

arrogant to sit on the sideline. While other people were actually doing something So that's just one slight example where I'm like, No, this is this is not okay. And it's embarrassing.

10:08

What happened? Because that's probably a vulnerable moment, right? When you're doing something and somebody calls you out on it, you probably, you know, like, what was your response?

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Oh, I was embarrassed. Yeah, I was embarrassed. But then all of a sudden, the penny dropped. And some other things, all of a sudden became clear to me reactions of people became clear to me. So the point was, whereas I think in general, I do think I displayed his character trait quite quite a bit. In that instance, I did not and a bit in a bit me, I should have just taken the class. And this and I have a few other examples could have easily been prevented.

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So I guess the overall let me hear some of the other stories actually, I'd stories are ultimately what makes for a good podcast and what makes for a good book. So any, any stories on vulnerability are always awesome.

11:01

Well, this is a pretty classic one, but it happened to me. I'm very much on time. So I hate it when people are late. And I'm I'm very rarely, occasionally, of course happens. But even if I'm five minutes late, I send the message or call the person up saying, Hey, I'm five minutes out. Yeah, I'm the same way. So I noticed that when we go, yeah, so I noticed them when we can start at a meeting that was scheduled for nine o'clock. I noticed that up until 9:10 People were strolling in. And I later noticed, this was in China, mainland China, later noticed, never alone. There always at least two people that came in five or six minutes later, or 10 minutes later. So I said, You know what? Meeting starts at nine. So at 9:01, I closed the door. And we'll just have the meeting with without, with, like, 60% of the people. So I embarrassed him publicly for being a few minutes late, which in that part of the world is extremely acceptable. There's a different concept of time. So it's, it's very acceptable. And I so that was quite embarrassing. And I'll share with you one more, because these are these showed my positive intentions. I also learned that in some cultures, people just don't like to be singled out, even if it's for something positive, right? So when I had my Monday morning sales, leading sales sales meeting, and we booked a huge order that I would not on the agenda, I would call it out, I'd say before we get started this and this person I learned booked a \$5 million dollar order. And I think we should all recognize that and give him a hand a hand of applause. So that's also not something that they appreciate. They don't want to be singled out in certain cultures. So all of that could have been prevented. So nothing, no damage happened. I had a phenomenal run. And I loved my time there. But yeah, that was those are three slightly embarrassing stories,

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have you? Or can you think of a recent story where you've had to maybe ask for help or admit to a failure? Or admit that you don't know how to do something and and put yourself out there as the CEO is kind of like being vulnerable in a way where people might perceive you as being weak?

13:24

Yeah, yeah. So the way that I think about it is on three levels. So first is on the level down towards my team, if you will, the second one is horizontal, so with other colleagues, and the third one is towards our board of directors. And I am very comfortable. Hence, for example, the example that I gave you on when I selected my team. I'm very comfortable showing the vulnerability below me. So with my team, I'm very comfortable. And I encourage other people to do the same. So whenever we're in a meeting, I said, and we, for example, have an engineering topic. And I say, well, that's not my background. So I'm not the expert here. So I need everybody to just do chip in because most certainly I will not be able to ask the right questions. And when I started a CEO, like I said, although I've had an phenomenal prep, and the previous CEO stayed on board, on our board of directors for a year to transition. There are things that you simply are not prepared for. I took over during COVID. And I took over during some social unrest that existed here in this region. So what I did is I quickly connected with a few other CEOs here in town, that are from different businesses, either banking or other types of technology companies. And I said I don't know how to deal with this So what are you guys doing? So just flat out no alternative motive. I said, Hey, I'm just want to learn, I would appreciate if you helped me. So I did that. And the other example that I thought was pretty interesting and pretty cool. Also, in complete openness is I received feedback from our chairman of the board. And he said, he says rule, the board actually appreciates it. If you say these are the things that keep me up at night, or these are the things that I'm working on that I don't have the answers to. And I thought that was pretty powerful, because I showed my vulnerability and acted in a vulnerable way differently towards the board than towards my team, and, and peers. So I thought that was pretty cool. And it actually helped me.

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I also read an interview that you did where I think it was the former CEO, he, he asked you what you wanted your career aspirations to be. And this was, I guess, much earlier on in your career. And you said, Well, one day, I want to be the CEO of this company. And that was what, like 10 or 12 years before you became CEO. I'm kind of curious. Was that 1012 years? 12 years ago, tell you, Okay, so what was going through your mind? Because that I mean, I would imagine is some kind of vulnerability there to be so honest of like, I want your job one day.

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I know it was, but it was tough. It was a tough decision, because it was tough, because I didn't want to lie. And I wanted to share my career aspirations, knowing fully that probably, the odds were not very high at that point in time. Right. So So putting myself out there, versus being perceived as arrogant. Yeah. Like, well, what do you know, what do you know? Right? You're just getting started. So I remember that very well. And I actually got help. I went to our regional CFO at the time, I was living in Europe. And I said, this is what I want to do. And this is what I think I should fill him because it's the truth. And I said, Do you think I can do that? And the coaching I received was, yeah, absolutely. Do that. So I actually hesitated. And I'm glad that I was true to myself, and put my indeed, myself out there. Because it was extremely well received. So the previous CEO looked at it and he says, Okay, well, then let's go work on it. And he wrote me a development plan that I very diligently followed up on. And I was very fortunate and blessed to be in a position that I was able to gather a lot of experiences that are now helping me in the job. So

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that's awesome. It seems like he had a supportive CEO.

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Oh, yeah, his name was John stroupe. And he was very instrumental in my career. Yeah, he prepared me for virtually everything. But like I said, when you're actually in the seeds, it feels different. Yeah. But yeah, very blessed.

18:00

One of the things that I think a lot of people struggle with is, how can you be vulnerable, especially at work without being perceived as weak? Is that ever something that has popped into your mind or something you've struggled with, either as CEO earlier on in your career? Like, how do I share about myself or ask for help without people thinking that I'm not capable or not good at my job?

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Absolutely. So yeah, 100%, I feel that, so what I do is I set boundaries. So whatever, we're talking about a certain topic or a certain market, then I say, Well, this is this is a certain element that, that I'm not very experienced in, or that I don't have certain thoughts on. But I would never say, fortunately, thank God, that's, that's not the truth. So what I'd have to say, but I would never say, Well, I don't know what I'm doing. Or I am, like, completely lost right now. And I need I need, I need a break, you know, stuff like that. So because that that I don't think sets the right example, people do want somebody that is able to keep a cool head. And it makes it makes decisions right at the end of the day make make decisions and with as much input and as best data as or as is available, and move on.

**Jacob Morgan** 19:21

By certain. Yes, sorry. One. One thing that I thought was very interesting about what you said is you see, you're never going to go in front of your company and say, I don't know what the hell is going on. I don't know if I should be here. Like, you're not gonna, you know, cause panic. But at the same time, what happens if you genuinely don't know what to do next, where you are struggling? How do you balance you set boundaries? How do you create those boundaries of like, still being vulnerable, but also letting people know that things are okay. And then you have that sense of optimism even when you're unsure.

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Yeah, so, you know, like I said, it's been two years. So the reason why a lot Have my job and by, you know, knock on wood. So far, it's been going reasonably well, at least most certainly, if you're looking at the share price appreciation, I do know what to do so, so that's good. So that helps. But I'm sure there are situations where I'm with my team, where we're talking about something that is, that is new, and that I'm not so familiar with. And then I just solicit input, and I solicit input from everybody. So then I tell them, I said, Guys, I'm gonna go around the room. And I'm going to ask everybody's opinion on this, because not only am I interested in hearing what you think, but also because I need your input. Because I don't know exactly how to tackle this problem. Now, that's I just say that flat out.

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How much of vulnerability is people knowing about you as a, as a as a person outside of work like about your family, your passions, your interest? I know that you're like a very avid guitar player. So how, how much? Or how important is it for people to know, the personal side of role besides just the kind of the work side?

21:07

I'm pretty open about it. Because I have received feedback early on in my career, that I can be perceived as arrogant. Interesting, just initially, in a very first conversation, I'm pretty big. I'm six, four. And people tell me that I have a certain type of presence, right? So that's the opposite of what I want. I 100% do not want people for me to be perceived as arrogant. So yeah, so. So that's it. So I'll deal with that. I'll, I'll make sure that people know that I'm just a human being like everybody else. And I have hobbies. And I like to spend my time. I'll say, for example, which is obviously the truth. I say, Yeah, I love to play golf. But I'm a horrible golfer. I'm terrible. I don't have to say that. But that makes it a little bit more human. I think. So. Yeah. It's important. It's important that and it's, you know, we, we have a tendency, you know, what, Jacob, we have a tendency, certainly people in my role to make ourselves even far more important than we are. I mean, that being a CEO. First of all, it's something temporary. And it says nothing about who I am. It says it says nothing about him. It's a job that I'm fulfilling at the time, I'm very blessed to be in this position. But it doesn't even scratch the surface as to describe who was rule questions. So, you know, not just CEOs. But I see that a lot with colleagues, where we we depict ourselves to be, you know, more and far more important than we are. And I hate that. I don't like that at all. So I think talking about your personal life helps. Yeah.

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Can you overshare? Can you Can people share too much about themselves? Can they do you think, ask for too much help? Or?

**Jacob Morgan** 23:05

Because I would imagine if you show up to work each day, and you're just like, you know, hey, I'm rule here that I'm sharing everything about myself. And what I here's what I had for breakfast. And you know, I don't know what I'm do, you know, people are going to see that vulnerability is indeed a weakness. So how do you balance the vulnerability piece with making sure that people don't see you as being weak? Or how do you even set those boundaries? Like, who do you share? What do you share? How do you figure that stuff out?

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Yeah, I think that's I think, you know, I think that's intuition. I think it's intuitive. I think you feel right, you feel the room you feel the people that you work with. If you have a long relationship with people, then I think it's easier to, you know, let your guard down, for example, right or share, if there's people that you just started working with them, probably it's not that appropriate, because they can't place it, they don't understand it, how you think. So it has to do with the depth of the relationship? I think, and it has to do with the circumstances. So if we're in a meeting, where, you know, we need to make tough decisions, for example, in terms of downsizing our cost structure, or tough decisions in terms of, you know, disciplinary actions, or our statements towards diversity, equity and inclusion, for example, those kinds

of things, then it's probably not appropriate to overshare to say, How was my weekend and what I did, and you know, because that's not what we're there for. Yeah. And if it's a lighter meeting, and it's a good atmosphere, and you know, the major decisions have been made and the business is going well, so then probably it's a little bit more appropriate. So I think it depends on the circumstances and the depends on the depth of the relationship that you have with the other people.

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When you think back during the course of your career has there been a particular moment that most shaped who you are as a leader of an experience, a moment a situation that most shaped who you are

25:04

I find that hard. What I do remember is when I was a little kid, I set my dad's car. And we drove through town. And we drove past the largest employer. And I'm originally from a very small town, 30,000 people in the Netherlands and we had one large employer. And I asked my dad, I said, Do you think I will ever be a CEO?

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How old were you? When you asked us?

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I can't remember. But if I were to guess, I probably say 1213 years,

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okay, it's pretty, um, I would guess,

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which is in so his reaction doesn't really matter. But I learned later that the fact that I was thinking at that point in time was intrigued me. Because my dad was in public office, he worked in a nursing home for 24 years. And then he rolled into public office on a regional, local, and then on a regional level. So, you know, business and working for cooperation was not something that how I was brought up. And for me to recognize that that's what I wanted to do at a very early age. And also my point of view, in a very risky environment, like I wanted to become a CEO in the United States. I'd never been on an airplane before, like I said, when I first moved to the United States, but that's always what I wanted to do. I think that was really putting myself out there. And I knew intrinsically that that's what I wanted to do. So, moment with the dad, like, I think I when I looked back, I started my professional career, I look back, and for some reason, I'll never forget that moment. And that was a huge driver for me. To to climb the corporate ladder.

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What did your dad actually say to you remember what he said?

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I think he just wanted to protect me for from failure. So I think he said something like, Well, I don't know, son, or that's, you know, probably not or something like that. He He did not say, Absolutely, you can set



your if you set your mind to it, you can achieve it. Absolutely not. And it was more, I think he was more trying to help me and protect me for failure, which in turn motivated me because I'm like, well, I'll show I'll show him and I'll show everybody.

**Jacob Morgan** 27:21

What do you do to build self confidence or confidence in yourself? I should say? Because it seems like part of what allows you to be vulnerable is you have to have that level of confidence in yourself knowing that you, you know, you're able to steer the ship and still do a good job. Do you do anything on a regular basis to build confidence? Or maybe earlier on in your career? Have you always had confidence?

27:43

Yeah, self. So lack of self confidence has never been my issue. But what I do do Jacob I do quite a lot of mindfulness, reading and meditating. So because that calms me down, and I know my process, I know what I need to do. So if I need to make decisions, I'll give you a very specific, very recent example. When the war in Ukraine was, I think, don't quote me on this. I mean, I can, if you ask me, I can look it up. But I think it was less than a week old. And there was not a major corporation that has said, we should stop supplying to Russia. And the US government had not made a statement yet. And I felt that we needed to do something. So I didn't panic in that. And I didn't ask because we're all in the same boat. So who's right and who's wrong? I just felt that I saw I did a lot that evening, I did a lot of reading. And I meditated, and a lot of reading, and I woke up and I said, today we're going and setting myself up, it's 5:30 in the morning. And I said, today we're going to say we're not we're going to stop supplying Russia. And we're going to look after our sales people there. And we are going to launch an initiative to help the people in Ukraine. So I went to the office met with the legal counsel got the team, my entire team on the video. And I said, Listen, I think we need to stop supplying to Russia. And I feel very strongly about that. So in this case, I'm not asking for your opinion. I'm asking what is the financial impact so that we can manage the financial impact? And I did. And then the next morning, we made the decision, send it out, publicized it and the next morning, I was working out and I was listening to I think it was CNBC and they noticed that a lot of big corporations came out like Samsung and I think Apple and said we should we're gonna stop supplying to Russia and I was very proud. But I know what process to go through for myself and those type of decisions needed to be made.

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So it seems like the confidence piece is something you've always just kind of had. It's not something that you you had to work on.

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Yeah, yeah, I think that's true. I can't remember looking. You know, I, of course, as a kid, I got nervous for tests. Yeah. But you know, and there were years where I had bad grades this House Trust me. But, but but I never lacked any no real real confidence now

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what about self compassion and self compassion? I refer to as kind of like, having positive self talk. I mean, it seems like you meditate you exercise? Maybe you can walk us through a little bit of like, what

is your self care routine to take care of of yourself? And how do you how do you talk to yourself when you make a mistake? Or if there's a failure? Or if you're struggling with something? What's your internal voice? Like?

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Yeah, that's a great question. So I work out six days a week. And fairly diligent, it's very rare that I miss a date. And then what I tried to do, and it's three days, it's it's one hour a day, and the other three days, it's only half an hour, 40 minutes today, and one day I rest. And what I tried to do is spend much as much time on the mental side as on the physical side. So I try for 40 minutes or 60 minutes at night to eat or like I said, meditate or read read books about mindfulness and happiness, etc.

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4060 minutes a night.

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Yeah. Wow. That's what I tried to do every I have a

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hard time doing like a five or 10 minute meditation.

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Yeah, well, yeah. But once you really get in the rhythm, it's awesome. Yeah. Yeah. So at least I find so so. So I do that. And then what I've learned over the years, is to not beat myself up too much. Because I used to have a tendency to beat myself up. So if I failed at something, it would, it would, it would be hard for me to get over. So I learned how to deal with that. And I've always learned, I've learned to always, always, always look at yourself, what was my contribution? What how can I improve? Not what did i What did I do wrong? But how can I improve? How can I can do even better? And then, you know, I think there's a saying that says if you if you blame others, you have a long way to go. If you blame yourself, you're halfway there. If you blame nobody, then you've reached a certain state. Now, I don't believe completely in that because people make mistakes, I make mistakes. But never blame the outside world always think what could I have done differently. And I try to really build on that and create that as an element of the Beldon culture. So we are fairly good at setting KPIs appropriate KPIs, and then following through on a monthly basis, and measuring our progress towards the KPI. And if we are red, we call it so for missing our number. Then we require a what we call root cause countermeasures. So ask the five why's ask, why did why did this go wrong and go as deep until you got the root cause and then fix the process. And I tell people this all the time, it is never a person that is to be blamed. It is a process. And then I say even if it's a person, then it's then it's an HR process, then we then it's a recruitment error, or we overpromoted that person, or we didn't see that that person had temporary personal problems, whatever it is, it's always a process. And I think that helps. I think it helps people to deal with what I used to do beat myself up and blame myself and look at things objectively and thinks No, how can I improve? Well, how can I do better next time and learn from it?

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Maybe we can unpack that a little bit like, can you think of a time or mistake that you made or a failure that you've had like earlier on, you know, the younger rule? And what your internal voice would have said and what you beat yourself up over versus how you talk to yourself now?

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Yeah, I can think of an example. I can think of an example when I took over my first general management role. I had very little experience in factories. This is a building. This is a building. Yeah, I had very limited experience in operations. And now all of a sudden, I had I think six factories that our were under my responsibility. And I held I wanted to learn so I was in one factory in Europe, every day twice a day. So in the mornings, and after work, and just to learn and observe. And I thought, you know, hey, there's a certain way of working with a certain sell. We call it a guidance. So really solve a problem and team in team and for five days straight. And I remember participating in a guy As I remember, not being so good at vulner, showing my vulnerability at the time, because I wanted to hide that I had nothing to do that I didn't understand operations. So I made a certain decision. That was actually the wrong decision. And as a result, we had quality issues out of that sell. And, and I didn't understand why at the time, why I made those why I did not just trust the process. And my I wanted to desperately show that I could do it, as opposed to show him our vulnerability and say, Well, you know, this is completely new to me, and I'm here to learn. So that's a very specific example. And I would beat myself up. And in that case, I think it's correct. And it's rightfully so. But as opposed to, hey, this is this is what got to me. This is the thought process that led to me making that decision. Okay. Now, I know it's not going to happen again. Dust myself up and Monday morning, I'll start over again. Well, why didn't you

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want to show the vulnerability earlier on? So like you were mentioned? Because?

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Because at the time, because at the time, I thought that was considered weakness? Yeah, I thought that was weak. No,

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was it the the culture like back then as well? Because I feel like for a lot of companies, you know, you go back 1015 20 years ago, vulnerability wasn't mentioned in the workplace, really, you had your personal life, you had your work life. And you had to know all the answers, like you had to just otherwise people were very upset. So do you think you didn't want to show the vulnerability was just the culture at the time? Like, just nobody was doing it? Like it wasn't modeled for you by your leaders?

36:43

Yeah, probably. Yeah. Probably. Certainly, the local leaders at the time. Yeah, I very much think so. And then later, you realize, and that's how we started this interview later, you realize that's, that's BS. That's not how life works. It's impossible to know all the answers. So I very much Think Cultural, there was a cultural element to it,

37:04

what made you get that realization of why that's not a great way to lead anymore.

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By seeing people fail, by seeing people fail, and by relying on your gut, because if you're, if you're doing those exercises and performing that part of your job, and you position yourself where you lead people to believe that you're better at those desks than you really are, you're lying. Yeah. And that will come out. So so you're lying. You're either you're lying to yourself, or you're lying to them, or both. So when you say, so I realized that by witnessing other people doing it and failing, so when

37:45

you say other people doing it and failing, so you mean people who would pretend that they knew all the answers, and they would, you know, they wouldn't want to be vulnerable. And they would just go go go, and they would fail. And you would look at them and just say something like, If only that person would have asked for help, or if only that person who would have said, you know, they don't know how to do something, instead of just going with it. Is that kind of like the right like you saw that happen a lot and decided, yeah, okay.

38:09

Yeah. And 100%. And you lose credibility as a leader, right? Yeah, you lose credibility. Because then if you if you make 10 decisions, and nine are the right ones, and when you're just winging it, and that turns out to be not the right one, then people forget about the other nine, because they're like, Oh, you lose credibility. So yeah. So it's very much a cultural element that I tried to inject into the organization adult.

38:35

Okay, so you see, you remember getting that that experience of seeing other people fail? Do you remember when this is probably might be a hard thing to to answer, like, do you remember the first time or the first situation or around the first year, where you started being vulnerable? And you know, asking for help? And you know what the impact was like, because you said you were scared of doing it before, so something must have changed in you. So what was the moment?

39:05

Yeah, what it was around that time, it was around the time when I had my first general manager job. And that's when I realized, after a couple of mistakes, I'm like, this is not gonna go well. I knew for a long time that this is what I want to do. I want to be an all round manager. I don't want to be very specific to a certain area, either technology or HR or finance. That's what I want to do. And I'm like, my, my dream, I'm not going to be able to realize my dream. If I continue down that path, so most certainly, that's what I learned. I think another time where I really had to be vulnerable is when I first came to the United States. So this was in 1998. So I was 24 years old. I'm born in 1974. And I thought I knew English pretty well because we got English taught in high school. I just went to a local school in the Netherlands and I And I started a job with my first employer for three and total Belden is my third with my first employer. And I was a consultant. And I remember writing down the words that I people that use that Americans used, that I did not understand. And I was, I was, so I was scared, I'm like, I, you know, there's so many words, I wrote them in the back of the page. And then at night, I looked them up, I'd studied them, I'm like, Oh, this is what it meant, or this is how it went. So try to improve. But I felt

talking about vulnerability, I felt extremely vulnerable at the time. And that was also good, I think for myself confidence, because you realize that, hey, if you are working with people that don't command the language to an extent that you do, or it's not their first language, then they struggle, they struggle more, and it has nothing to do with the intellect has nothing to do with their how the depth of expertise, or skills that they have, they simply can't express themselves. So I thought that was also very learning moment for me.

41:07

What are some of the variables that you think and kind of a two part question inside of an organization or four leader? What do you think some of the variables are that encourage vulnerability? And the flip side of that, what are some of the things that actually kill vulnerability?

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I think encouraging is, first of all, leading by example. And secondly, when you see somebody struggle, or when you on a certain area saying, Hey, buddy, it's okay. In front of a group. It's okay. Just share what you think. And it's probably not going to be perfect, because this is not your background. But we're all interested in what you think. Yeah. So by definition, that cannot be wrong. So say it, I think that helps. What can kill it is if you then take advantage of it, if you then say, Hey, Bob had said that this in this meeting, and obviously, he had no idea what he was doing. So you know, that would obviously kill it. Or make a sarcastic joke about it like, Well, okay. I said, you could say everything, but obviously not that, you know, then you do, then you really hurt somebody, I think it

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has that ever happened to you reach back? Has that ever happened to you? Or have you happen?

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No, I, I, I can't remember that. So no, I don't think so. I can't remember a single instance of where that happened. People encouraged me to speak up or do something and then use that against me. I can't remember. Have

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you maybe seen it happen to somebody else? Or somebody make that comment? Like, you know, you say whatever you want, just not that?

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Oh, yes. Yeah, I've seen that. Yeah. Yeah, I've seen Oh, yeah. I've seen that. We've We've, yeah, I've seen I've been in meetings where people say, Well, I guess it's possible to indeed overshare like, Oh, I wish I could I wish you hadn't shared that. Or yeah, that's just, that's not a culture that we live here at the company, for sure. Because, because you want people to speak up, especially in this day and age, right? If you a lot of us, us being a corporate America, talk about diversity, equity and inclusion. But that also means I think that very much ties to vulnerability, because it also means taking the time respecting other people's opinions and inputs. And sometimes that can be a little frustrating, because you might have to repeat yourself twice. People might come from a very different angle. And it is so wrong to then say yeah, but that's not what I meant. Okay, forget about it. I'll ask you next time, let's go to somebody

else. But taking the time and saying no, what do you mean by that? And what makes you say that and just, you know, making sure that people feel valued. And that they really feel that their opinion, different matters, that their opinion matters, and that it's actually appreciated, and constantly preaching that in this particular case, in the case of diversity, equity and inclusion, that we actually want to hear different opinions, because we believe that it is not only the right thing to do, but also that improves our decision making and ultimately will have better products and better financial returns.

44:07

What about some people who say, Well, you know, it's easy for a rule to say, right? I mean, he's the, he's the CEO, he's an executive he can he can say whatever he wants, nobody, nobody's gonna question him. But, you know, I'm an entry level employee, or maybe I'm a mid level leader. I can't be vulnerable, because it's, you know, I'm not the CEO. So what do you say to people who, who might kind of push back and you know, they're early on in their careers, they're not the CEO, you know, maybe they're mid level leaders at best. Can they still be vulnerable?

44:38

Yes, yeah, absolutely. And well, how I do that we have quite some communication. We have a publish a letter four times a year. And I talk about that not every letter of course, but I talked about it and we have a recording just like this, but then with a you know, a whole bunch of people associates Did that live our values in a certain quarter in a certain way? Or did have one major deals, et cetera, et cetera? And then I bring it up, I talk about it. And I say, it's not possible to know all the answers. And certainly when I started, oh, boy, that I make mistakes. Yeah. So that's, that's how I encouraged them. One of the things I say, for example is, it's interesting is talking about younger people. It's interesting, when you're at school, you are encouraged to not make any mistakes. As a matter of fact, the system is designed that you don't make mistakes that you pass your test, and that you get A's. Then I say, well, now you're in the real world. Now you're contributing. And certainly when you start your career, I am encouraging you to make as many mistakes as you can. Because if you don't, you're not giving everything you've got, you're not experimenting enough, and hence, you're not growing. And you can only do that, if you have a culture where that's indeed, being appreciated. And people understand that. So that's one of the things that I do I give a speech to students that we bring in from universities all over the world. We call it our early career Leadership Program. And every year when we have a new batch, a new year, I tell that story consistently, like now, change your mindset. Now, you need to experiment as much as you can, and, and obviously, perform your job, but you're gonna make mistakes. And that is, okay.

46:26

What happens if you want to be vulnerable, but the culture that you're a part of where your leaders are not vulnerable? Because this is something else that I hear from a lot of people, right? They, they want to be open, they want to be transparent, they want to be vulnerable, but they don't feel like the environment that they're a part of, is going to support that, like their leaders are not going to support that or their peers. What do you do?

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You Yeah, I think that's very tough. I think that's very tough. I think the number one reason why people leave their job leave their employer is because they don't get along with their with their manager. And number two is culture, right? So and this is very much an element of culture, if that's if that's who you are. And that is important to you. And that's a character trait that not only is not appreciated, but you you can't show it, because it'll be used against you. You probably don't fit well in that company, and you probably won't flourish in that company.

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So I guess in that situation, it's okay to get out of there.

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Well, I think so. Because, because then if you're not, you're not true to yourself, right? Yep. So you know, the things that you can control that you can change, be very positive and and follow your follow your heart, the things that you cannot control, in this case, company culture, because you're not in charge, you know, then draw your conclusions.

47:54

Alright, and we only have a couple of minutes left. So one question that I had were a couple more questions. One is around advice for people who want to be more vulnerable at work and you know, maybe maybe leaders, maybe entry level employees, you where do you begin, obviously, you're not just going to show up tomorrow at work and say everything about yourself to everybody. But if you want to start becoming a little more vulnerable, do you have any suggestions like, where did you start, for example?

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Well, I think I've shared the let me deal with the second part of the question. First, I think I've shared my example in when I first came to America. And so that certainly helped me realize that. Yeah, I honestly don't know any answers. I don't even know the language. I think it's it's leading by example, Jacob. And I think it's making sure that you create an environment in the company, where that is not only accepted and understood, but appreciate it. I think it's all about that as a leader, creating, creating the environment, and how do you create the environment, like I said, by displaying certain character traits and yourself and talking about it using the various communication methods that we have in a company to to make sure that people know you're authentic, and that that's okay. I think the other thing that maybe I'll mention is, when I talk about it, I very much link it to teamwork. Okay, so, we succeed through teamwork is one of the six values we have at Belden. We asked every associate to rate themselves at the end of the year, how they live their values, and the manager provides his perspective. And that's 50%. That's half of your annual performance review is tied to how he or she lives. The value interesting. So we succeed together. Teamwork is one of them. And it's okay to show that you're vulnerable. It's okay to say there are certain elements that I don't know because we solve Problems in teamwork. And so you

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actually make vulner. What was that principle? Again? You said,

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Team teamwork we succeed together. Yeah. And

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invulnerability is obviously a part of teamwork. So you you make that a part of people's performance reviews?

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Yeah, yeah, every associate has objectives, right, SMART objectives, specific, measurable, etc. And that and then you're being evaluated against the performance. But that's only half of your performance review. The other half is give me examples on how you lived the company values. And let's talk about those. And there's a rating system associated with that. And that's the other half. So yeah, we attach phenomenal, great value to help people live their values in order to drive the culture that we want at the company.

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Do you have a, I guess you could call it a leadership hack, a tip or a strategy that you've used over the course of your career that you think has helped make you a better leader? Obviously, you got the CEO instead of other people. Right, you got the role? So what is it that you're doing that other people haven't figured out? What makes it unique to rule?

51:12

Well, yeah, no, but that, but the only other thing that I would mention probably is the advice that I give to people in the company. Don't try to don't do this land grab or power grab, stick to your function stick to your role, the smaller the better. And just do that extremely well. Don't Don't don't shop for more work. And then perform mediocre at your all of your responsibility. Stick to something, an Excel over exceed. And the second thing I would say, Jacob that I tell people is always think from a customer's perspective, always thinks from a customer perspective. So when we're making investments, is the customer willing to pay for it? Yes or no? It's fascinating to me, if you think about that, and if you instill that in your thought process, how much time and resources you save. So I'll give you a very silly example. We are here in St. Louis, Missouri, this is where our headquarters is, we're in a beautiful building on the 15th floor, and the building as just transferred ownership a few months ago. And the first thing the new owner did is the he painted the elevator doors. The elevator doors were I think goldish he painted them black. And I'm thinking to myself, is a customer, in this case, me willing to pay for that? Does that attract more customers? No. Will there be a reason for me to accept a increase in the lease rate? No. So why do you do it? So and that's what I tried to instill that part of the culture in the company, if the customer is not willing to pay for it? Or if it doesn't improve the associates, the employees life, wellness at the company, then why do we do it? So that's what I tell people always think about it from that perspective and

53:08

love it was a great. Anything else that you think we need to touch on when it comes to vulnerability? Any any other stories that come to mind for you? Or is there any question that you think I should have



asked you, but didn't? People love stories? So bonus points if you got even more stories floating around somewhere?

53:27

Yeah. Well, not that I can. Not that I can think of, no, not that I can think of at this point in time I, I just really appreciated the opportunity. I hope it was helpful, Jacob, and you know, just very blessed to be in this position and, and provide value for the eight and a half 1000 families that we support at Belden and appreciate the opportunity. Yeah,

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thank you very much. I love the the insights in the story. So I'm looking forward to sharing this with the world. So thank you again, so much for taking time out of your day. I know you're super busy over there. So thank you.

54:08

Okay, thank you.

54:09

And thanks again, everyone for tuning in. My guest again has been rule questions. The CEO of Belden and I will see all of you next time