

What Makes For A Successful Mentor-Mentee Relationship? It's All About Asking The Right Questions!

Jacob Morgan 00:01

Hey, everyone. Welcome to another episode of great leadership. My guest today is Amy Salcedo the president of Kindle in the United States. Amy, thank you for joining me.

00:11

Thank you so much for having me, Jacob.

Jacob Morgan 00:14

So for people who are not familiar with Kindle, why don't we start there, give us a little bit of background information about the company. And then we can talk a little bit about your background and how you got into this role.

00:29

Yeah, sure. So, solo kendrell. It may not be a name that everyone knows yet. But hopefully, it's one that people will remember after the so Kindle is actually the world's largest provider of IT infrastructure services to corporations across the world. So it was born out of a spin off. So that is a little bit of a unique nuance that, you know, not everyone gets to experience in their career, but I've been grateful for this opportunity. I was a long time IBM or so worked at IBM for a lot of my career. Three years ago, almost exactly like this week, IBM announced the intent to spin off a part of the corporation about 25% of a company. And you know, I elected to go for the ride on that adventure. And we've been independent for just shy of two years now. So our anniversary is coming up on November 4. And so it's been a tremendous opportunity to kind of get to be part of something new. And while the name may not be known again, so a lot of people I think the work that we do, and the customers we do it for, which is, you know, keeping planes in skies and keeping banks transacting money and keeping hospitals taking care of patients,

Jacob Morgan 01:57

all important things.

01:58

It's all things. Yeah, exactly. It's things that people use and see every day, even if they don't know that we're, we're behind it.

Jacob Morgan 02:05

Yeah. And how many employees do you guys have actually?

02:09

Yeah, so globally, we have about 90,000 employees running the US business. Yeah. So it's not a small company. And even just for the US business, I have about 16,000 people as part of my my organization.

Jacob Morgan 02:23

That's crazy. You're massive company. And we're all these people originally a part of IBM before.

02:31

I would say the majority. So we, when we brought over, you know, a large group of people, I would say, 90,000 people, but we've had a lot of change. Since then. We've brought in a lot of new people. So I've been really excited to see the people from the IT industry, and particularly from the IT consulting industry who've wanted to come along for this, this journey, as well. And so we've attracted a lot of new talent over the last two years, which for me, is an exciting sign. Because you don't know exactly what's going to happen when you start an adventure like this. Yeah.

Jacob Morgan 03:10

So obviously, you spent a lot of your career at IBM. And I think back in the day, a lot of people used to turn to IBM, and they said that they were sort of the the hallmark of leadership training and development. And IBM was, you know, thought of as this, you know, this big pillar in the business world. And some people still consider IBM to be that pillar in the business world. But having spent so much of your time there, what did you learn from working at that organization? In terms of leadership lessons, career advice, anything that you picked up during your time there?

03:49

Yeah, sure. I mean, as you said, I did spend a number of years there. And, and look, I feel really fortunate that I had the ability to take part in a lot of our leadership development programs, and I had a lot of really great mentors. And, you know, those were probably the things that were the best teachers for me was those mentoring relationships, that and actual roles, like, you know, I can think of one role in particular, that was, you know, I was leading an account of customer accounts, and that was a great teacher for the highs and the lows. You know, there's nothing more humbling than being in front of a client every day. So that's its own kind of teacher, but just from a leadership and career development standpoint. I would say it was really the the mentors that I had the opportunity to work with, and, and that, for me, was a big lesson because, you know, I think back to my first sort of, you know, very senior executive mentor that I had, and you know, who today is no longer with IBM, he's a CEO at a different company, but that just sort of tells you the kind of person This was

Jacob Morgan 05:02

like top secret.

05:05

It's not top secret Mark Lawton Bach is who that was who, you know, left IBM to become CEO at Pitney Bowes. And, you know, just a fantastic guy all around and a great leader. And he definitely challenged

me. I remember, you know, one of my first conversations with him, and he asked me what I wanted to get out of it. And I had like, the lamest answer. So, you know, I just gave the basic like, oh, career advice? And, you know, many years on I would, I would not say that now. But, um, you know, and he kind of politely said, Okay, that's a given like, now let's talk about what you really want to get out of this, like, what are you looking for? Where do you feel like you need help? Where do you feel like maybe you have things you need to work on and things you need to navigate maybe in the organization. And so he really just challenged me to think of the role of the mentee, we often think of the role of the mentor and not as much as the role of the mentee. And, you know, I do a lot today at Kendall around diversity and inclusion. And we have a number of cohorts that are really to develop, you know, I have a women's cohort, I have a person of color cohort, I have a number of them. And it's, it's really to make sure we're accelerating people, and a part of it is the mentors, we assign them all mentors, and and I'm always really clear that that part of it is their responsibility, right? I mean, yes, the mentor has to be available, and they have to participate in a thoughtful way. But don't expect the mentor to drive everything for you, right? Like you've got to show up, you've got to make the calls, you've got to do your homework in between, you got to be curious and ask good questions. And you've got to think about what you want to get out of it. And I think that that is a lasting lesson the that I will always take with me that, you know, I first learned when I was at IBM, but now I try to impart on the people, you know, within my organization, because I just think that that's a part of mentoring that probably doesn't get talked about often enough is really the role of the mentee. And it's, you know, it's not just, you know, you sort of reach out to a lot of people and you schedule time with them, and you have to be thoughtful about it, you know, what are the things you're trying to accomplish, and, and would like some help with and think a mentor could be could be valuable for,

07:52

I'd love to talk a little bit more about that. Because one of the things that I always tell people is that, especially if you're a new employee, and you're trying to take a job for a company, is to pay more attention, focusing on the leader that you're going to be working with, as opposed to the brand of the company or the culture or the money, like who you're actually going to be working with, I think makes the most difference. And so in your case, when you were working with him, what what role did you have as far as kind of the role in the company? And what role did he have? Was he like an EVP at the time when you were reporting to him?

08:26

No, I wasn't, he wasn't in my reporting structure. And I will say as a side note, I think that is another important piece of having a mentor, often, especially in a large corporation is to have somebody who is outside of your reporting chain, so that they can give you more unbiased advice and counsel. I mean, I always look at it and I tell people, hey, like people in my my reporting chain, you have me, I'm part of your reporting, saying, that's a given. Now I need to find you someone outside of that to really help you and be a place that you feel safe. And you can have a sounding board and you know, it doesn't feel like you're talking to your boss's boss's boss or what have you, right? So, so I think that's a first important part.

Jacob Morgan 09:17

You all know that I spent a lot of time talking about themes like leadership in the future of work. But there needs to be a company out there that's actually powering the future of work, a company out there that's designing, building and managing the systems that the world depends on. Without those types of companies. There is no future and there is no future of work. And that's why today's episode is sponsored by Kindle. They are a technology services company that advances the vital systems in the world depends on every single day. Kindle is the heart of progress. At Kindle progress starts by standing up for something with intention, being pro something with your whole heart. And those of you who've been listening to my program I know that I talk about being able to take a stance for something, being able to fight for something, and not just being passive and playing in the gray areas. So one of the things that I love about Kindle is they are pro something. Kindle stands up for progress by committing to help their customers digitally transform technology systems with a global team of curious and diverse minds. Again, both themes that I have talked about on this show quite a bit, because there's nothing better than taking a step forward together. You can learn more by going to kindle.com. That's kyndryl.com. Yeah, so what was that structure? What team or department? Were you in? What you already did you have? And then where was he? And what was his seniority level at a time?

10:51

Yeah, so I wasn't very senior, I was not yet an executive in the company. And so I was sort of at that cusp, where I was, like, reaching for it, right, I knew it was my next role was to become an exec. And was one reason it was so important for me to have a mentor sort of guiding me through that, that period of time. And so I was, I was in a role where I was similar to what I just alluded to, I was leading an account, so I was leading a client relationship. You know, I was sort of living and breathing there with my client all day, every day. And I had a, you know, I had a team of people, but they, it was all in service of this, this one specific client, and not a broader sort of leadership responsibility at that time across the company. And if I remember correctly, because he had a couple of different roles, he was leading, like a large organization, right. It's like one of our sort of silos, one of our pillars, you know, one of the lines of business, if you will, and so a very big job. So there was a lot of distance between us in terms of sort of, you know, reporting levels and that type of thing, which also, you know, it first made me feel a little bit intimidated and not quite sure how to act within which maybe why I gave such a sort of lame answer, when he asked what I wanted out of it, but he just was

Jacob Morgan 12:24

like a formal mentee mentor, it wasn't kind of like, Hey, coach me, it was an assigned relationship. Okay,

12:32

it was, and I had lots of the others, too, right. Over the years, I had, you know, more than I can count of just other amazing people who would lend an ear lend advice that I could tap into. And those are necessary as well. And, you know, the other thing I'll add about mentorship that I think is so important is, it's not enough just to be a mentor, you really have to be a sponsor, especially for people who are at that sort of CUSP, like I was just describing, where I was really trying to get to that next level really trying to become an executive. And, you know, it's, that's always, to me, that's the hardest one, that first sort of executive job is, in my opinion, the hardest one to get. And it's often where we don't have enough pipeline of diverse candidates, right, leading into that sort of next executive role. And, and so

for me, that was just, you know, it was great to have both the formal and the informal. But what was more important maybe was the mix of the formal and informal sort of behind closed doors, advocating for me and saying, she's ready, she can do this. And that is really invaluable. So

Jacob Morgan 13:51

what did that relationship look like? So for people who are listening and watching, whether they're the mentee, or the mentor, can you explain a little bit about what that relationship looks like? So for example, did you meet once a week and go through like a specific set of questions? And if so, what were those questions? Did he jump in when you were struggling? Could you go to him anytime with anything? Like, how did that relationship actually work for the mentee mentor?

14:23

Yeah, and I'll expand it beyond just that one relationship, because I've had others and I would say, there's kind of a consistent theme, which is back to what I said it was, I really believe the mentee has to drive it right. So if I had wanted a regular weekly call, I could have asked for that. I did not. But it was really, you know, for me to kind of figure out what, what worked and where did I need help and when did I need help? And so I think everyone is a little bit different of what works for them. For me that sort of regimented. Gosh, now I have to prep for my weekly mentoring meeting like, that wasn't as appealing to me as just sort of saying, okay, like I've, I've hit this situation, right? Like I like real time I'm in the moment, I've encountered, you know, this difficult situation, either internally or externally. Can you help me navigate it? Or can you recommend somebody who maybe has been through something similar that I could bounce some ideas off of? And for me, that was more effective? I think, again, though, that's where it's so important for each mentee to not assume that there's sort of one way to do the mentor mentee relationship. And it's, it's really customized, I think, to again, I think, mostly to the mentee of what what do you want to get out of it? Right, at the end of the day? That's the question,

Jacob Morgan 15:57

how much of it was you coming up with problems and him suggesting solutions? Versus you coming up with problems suggesting the solutions and then getting feedback on your ideas? Because I think sometimes people think that you go to the mentor with a problem, and it's up to the mentor to solve the problem for you. Right? I mean, because that's you right there. Hey, I don't know how to do this. What do you think I should do? So what? Yeah, situations? How did you go to your mentors?

16:32

Yeah. So again, probably some mistakes I made early on was to go with that assumption, like, Hey, this is the problem, aren't you gonna solve it for me, or at least tell me how to solve it myself. And again, that's not how it works. And I would say, you know, now that the shoes on the other foot, and I've been a mentor to a lot of people, you know, I've sort of refined over the years, what I ask of the mentees who I have, or who come to me, which is, you know, bring me your ideas. Like, don't don't come and sort of laid on my seat. If you're dealing with a challenge, or you're trying to figure out a next step, you know, come and tell me what you're thinking about. And tell me sort of how you are contemplating approaching it. And I can help you think through whether that's going to lead you down a path to an answer, or if it's just going to keep you sort of spinning in place where you are right. But yeah, I think whether it is a mentor mentee or just sort of a hierarchical conversation, because I would say the same

thing to people in my reporting structure, I want to help, but you can't just sort of come and lay it on my table and expect that I'm gonna sort of, you know, take it on and solve it. It's really about just giving the right guidance and trying to help you solve it in the best way possible for you, which might look different than then how it would look for me. Right? So you're all we're all different.

18:12

So I took a couple of notes here that I thought would be really interesting. If you were to think of maybe the top three questions, that as a mentee, you shouldn't be asking your mentor, or three or five questions, whatever you recommend, what do you think those top three to five questions would be? Because I think we've already established that simply going to your mentor and saying, I have a problem, fix it for me, we're expecting the mentor to drive the relationship is not the right approach. So you've been the mentee needs to be active. So what what sort of questions should you be asking? And what sort of issues or problems should you be going to your mentor with? I mean, is, is there anything that's off limits? Or not appropriate or not relevant? Or is this just kind of there for for any help that you need?

19:04

Yeah, I'll start with that piece. And I look, I think it depends on the personal relationship between the mentor and the mentee and maybe even the organizational culture to some extent, there are boundaries, right, like the the mentor is, is not your therapist. While therapy can be extremely beneficial, I can attest to that. It is not it is not the role of the mentor to sort of guide you through, you know, like, personal situations outside of work, or even just interpersonal dynamics inside of work. If it is like, you know, something that's not really relevant for a mentor kind of conversation, right? So now, if that interpersonal relationship is with your boss, and it's problematic, and it's keeping you as an employee from thriving Then fair game for a mentor conversation, right? I think that it is, it is about kind of knowing where that line is, though of not getting overly personal. But obviously still being able to talk through the things that are impacting your ability to be successful in your role and to, you know, help you really start to mature and grow and learn in a way that's going to catapult you kind of into those more senior executive roles as you as you go forward. So, you know, as for like, the three questions, you know, I think, for me, I, I'm going to start the opposite, because, as a mentor, one of the first questions I ask people is, what are you passionate about? What's that thing that makes you really excited? And we all know what it is, if we just tune in, right, we all have tells my tell is I talk faster and louder. And I use my hands a lot more even than I am today. And it is it like we all know those things that like really get as excited. And I really asked my mentees to tune in to that because all too often I've had mentees come to me and say, like, I think I'm supposed to check this box. Next, right? I think this is like the next role I'm supposed to do. And that as a mentor. It's just like a horrible thing to hear. Because I I truly don't believe that there's one path that everyone takes that same path, right? I think, if you're not, if you're not doing something you're passionate about, you're also not as likely to be successful at that. And so I think, you know, are we going to love every single part of every job we ever have? No, and I'm not naive enough to think that's true. But I do think if you stay grounded, and what you get excited about and how you want to be spending your time all day, every day, and the goals that you have is part of that. I think that always serves you well. Right. And I know it has served me well, in my career. And so you know, I think with that you also get a level of authenticity. Like if you're staying true to yourself and staying true to the things you're passionate about. I think it just makes you more

authentic as a as a teammate, as a boss, as you know, just a human being. And I think that that is, you know how I want to show up to work every day. And I think it's how most of us want to but but I think that you know, given given that I think as a mentee, you know, questions that are really fair to ask a mentor are, of course, first and foremost about their own personal experience and kind of what has guided them. And I think that can be useful just as a reference point, because again, we're not all the same, right? We haven't all had the same set of experiences, we don't all handle things the same way. And it can be really useful to get a different point of view about things. And, you know, I know that, you know, when I have these conversations about what makes you passionate, people are sort of surprised because they, they assume that that's not part of the formula of you know, what you're going to hear from your mentor about how to like, make the steps in your career. And it to be fair, they've probably heard a different kind of set of questions or talking points from someone else, right, but so it's, for me, part of having a mentor is not just having one, you need a broader set of perspectives. And so I think, you know, asking your mentor, again about their experiences, and what did they find that worked and didn't work for them? It's a helpful just sort of starting reference, right? It doesn't mean you have to adopt it, it doesn't mean that it's necessarily going to apply to you. But I think it can be useful to start to kind of hear just those different points of view. Right. And I think, you know, from there, you can kind of get into a little bit more. You know, another question I have often asked is just, you know, I'm about to do this thing that I've seen you do, right? So for example, if I come into a new role, and I'm going to build a team, you know, and I want that team to act like a team. I might ask one of my mentors, okay, I've watched you do this, where did you start what you know, how did you start to think about the different sort of pieces of this puzzle? Because I'm the kind of person that like I need to See the whole puzzle right before I start just making individual moves, because, you know, if you make individual moves, you can get a lot of fantastic individual contributors, but you might not get a team, you might not get that whole, you know, puzzle put together. And so that's that's one that I feel like it, you know, you have a real problem, not just a problem, but I mean that building a team is kind of a major piece of being a leader, right, and picking all the right parts, though organizing it the right way with the right roles, the right people in the roles. And so that's one where I have personally asked that question like, okay, you know, tell me your thought process? How did you go through this? How did how did you get to the other side? And are there things you would have done different now in hindsight, right? As you as you look back and, and that can be useful. And if you have a good mentor, and they're willing to be really open and transparent with you, you'll probably learn that it didn't all go perfectly. And there is some, you know, security in knowing that, like, it's okay, if it doesn't go perfectly, because really, almost nothing ever does. Yeah. And I think that I think as a mentee, that that's an important aspect. Because it's really tempting to kind of look up to a mentor and assume that everything is sort of perfect, and they got where they are by, you know, just everything executing

Jacob Morgan 26:34

perfectly. And every No, no issues,

26:37

sadly, never any issues, never any, you know, sort of things that they would change if they could do it again. And, and that's just not reality, right? We all have things that that we learned from and for me, that's one of the most helpful things is really learning from someone else's experience, both the good and the bad. And what you know, what they would do the same and what they would do different. And

even if I choose to take a different path, it's its good input. And I think that's a really important part of this mentor mentee relationship is its input. It's not instructions. It's not it's not a manual that you go

27:19

through the important thing is,

27:23

it definitely is because you still have to be you at the end of it. Right. And so it's about taking the inputs from your mentors, and from your, your own instincts, and intuition and, and just learning and experience and sort of triangulating all that into the thing that feels most authentically you and feels like the right you know, the right answer. Yeah. For what is in front of you. Right, but because they weren't in front of the same exact problem that you were

Jacob Morgan 27:55

Yeah, so it's kind of like using chat. GPT, right. I mean, I think a lot of people use chat GPT they put in information and whatever chat GPT spits out sometimes they think, okay, that's what I'm gonna say. But you still have to take right or Meishan that you get from a platform like chat GPT and make it yours and put your spin on it and evaluate if it makes sense or not, and bring in other sources. So I think the viewing your mentor is kind of like a chat GPT for career and leadership advice. Similar, right? You have to know the right questions to ask like that. And then when you ask the right questions, you'll get valuable outputs. But you still need to make sense of those outputs. Right? Because if you ask your mentor, what did you do? They give you advice, you do the exact same thing. And then you say, Hey, didn't work for me. But what the hell? That was like the worst advice you've ever given me? Your accountability of? Yeah, you're not them. Right? Different personality, different circumstances. Exactly. Different team. So I really liked that approach of separating kind of the rules from the X, you could call it the rules from the the message maybe the rules from the

29:07

Yeah, well, as a mentor, I always kind of give that disclaimer, right? That's kind of what it feels like a little bit of a disclaimer that says, like, this is what I did, it doesn't mean it's the right thing for you. But I think you can learn from it. I think you can learn from my experience coupled with your own experience, you can then make an informed decision. But it still has to be your decision. Right. And I think that's another piece of the mentor mentee relationship that you have to kind of be careful of is the mentees that you don't start using your mentor as a crutch. You know, you kind of go to them and think oh, I have to talk to my mentor like something bad just happened or I have a big decision to make or they're not there to make all your decisions for you and think for you. They're they're there to help you know sort of guide you and and help you think through through things differently based on their own experience, as opposed to just sort of handing you, you know the answer on a platter and you just go execute.

Jacob Morgan 30:11

It's kind of like having, you know, a flashlight or something in the forest, but not having the path laid out from you. So the the mentor is not going to put out the path for you to follow. But they'll give you the flashlight that you can walk around and find things the right way and discover things. And it's I think it's

an important thing to have. Getting back to those three questions, because it sounds like there's a lot there. So one, sort of the personal, what worked for you. You also mentioned a lot of other questions. I don't know if you would bucket them all under this or if those are all separate questions. Right. So what, what worked for you in the past? What didn't? What was your decision making process like to get to that point? Any other questions that you think are useful for mentees to ask their mentors?

31:01

Yeah, well, I also think, I think one of the things a lot of people struggle with is they sort of move off in their career is just is, you know, navigating sort of all of the political, I guess I'll call it or pressure. Office pressure responsibility, how they Yeah, exactly. And balancing between running a business and being a people leader, you hope, I hope every day that I find the right balance of integrating those two things, but it's it, they sometimes feel at odds, you know, and you have to kind of look for ways to make them less at odds so that you can fulfill sort of both of your roles as a business leader and a people leader. And I think just I think those kinds of questions around just navigating certain situations and, and that finding that balance when because as leaders, we're all asked to be and do multiple things, right? You're never just sort of like single tracks. And so I think it, you know, as a mentee, those are certainly, you know, similar questions that that I've had, which is either based on a situation I was in as the mentee, or something I observed from the mentor, but, you know, just trying to understand, like, how do I navigate these different personalities? You know, how do I come out of this? Having hopefully, you know, progressed my cause and not offended anyone or made any enemies along the way that that interpersonal dynamic is one that, you know, I know, I get a lot of questions about from from mentees as well.

32:52

Those are great. I think some of the feedback in sort of the tactical and strategical aspects of being a good mentee is important. To your point earlier, a lot of people just assume it's, you know, the mentor carries it, but it's actually the mentee that carries it. So let's shift that now to the mentor, because a lot of people are also mentors. One of the questions that you mentioned is that you asked people what they're passionate about. So yeah, you know, a couple things come to mind. So first, curious about the other questions. And then the other thing is, what do you do with the question when you get the response? So let's say you asked me, Jacob, what are you passionate about? And I say, Well,

Jacob Morgan 33:33

I mean, I'll say I'm passionate about chess, or I'm passionate about I don't know, content or sharing ideas. What do you then as a mentor do with that information? Like how do you turn it into something?

33:50

Yeah. Well, look, I started asking that question, because I had so many people come to me. And, of course, most people want to talk about career progression as a mentee. And, you know, I would say, Well, what do you like to do, which was probably not the right way to phrase the question, right? Or what do you want to do? And so I've learned some as a mentor as well, because that question always elicits a response, or at least for me, historically, has elicited a response that was a job title. Yeah. Right. And, and a job title, while directionally helpful. It's not. It's not really like going to lay out a path. So I want to just sum up try to encourage people. Yeah, exactly. And, and it's, I always tell people, titles

can change, job roles can change, organizations can change. But I firmly believe what you're passionate about. While it can evolve. There's probably like a route in there that stays somewhat consistent. If you can learn and grow, I'm not saying you're one thing always in forever. But it to me that is a better indicator of what someone really loves to do. Because otherwise mentees, and I've done it myself, as I said, show up at a conversation with their mentor, and they, they talk in terms of, again, I think this is supposed to be my next role. Or I, you know, I see all these other people that have been successful went through this one role. And maybe like, sometimes there are certain roles that are good developmentally for you to make progress in your career. But to say that there's just one path and every single person goes through that same path. Not only is that not true, it would be really boring, because then you would have just, you know, a lot of people with the same exact path, the same exact set of experiences, and you, you wouldn't have people bringing a lot of diversity of thought to the conversation, right, and that wouldn't be good for your customers or your business. And so, you know, for me, personally, I think it's good that people take a variety of different paths, you may end up in the same place, but the different experiences that got you there are going to drastically, you know, sort of differentiate your opinions from one another and give you really good sort of, you know, debating topics, as you think about, you know, kind of what is what is it that I want to do next? And, you know, I want people to think about that diversity of experience, I don't want them to think they just have to follow like, there's one defined path. And, and that's it. Yeah.

Jacob Morgan 36:51

So what are the questions? Do you as a mentor, ask, obviously, you you mentor, a lot of people besides asking what they're passionate about, or interested in? What are some of the other questions you ask them?

37:02

Yeah. Well, look, I mean, that's a big one. And you'd be surprised how many people haven't thought of it. But so that one is, especially in a first call or two, that tends to take up a lot of conversation. But But look, I mean, going beyond that, then it really is, you know, trying to get to the heart of, again, in our relationship as mentor and mentee, are you looking for help? For career progression? Are you looking for help in tackling real life problems that are happening today? Often, I find that people lean more towards sort of that career progression, or at least that's been my experience, I want to know, everybody kind of wants to know, the magic formula for for getting to the next level, or, you know, what did I do, and what I did do, or what I did to get where I am, is, is relevant. And it's an interesting part of the conversation. But again, that sort of implies there's just one path to get there. So I just think that, you know, once I really have a better understanding of them as a person, and what they're passionate about, I really try to get them to think about like, the roles they've had before that they loved, hopefully, they've had roles they've loved, and the roles that they've had that they didn't love as much. And I actually encourage people, and I do it myself to really kind of write these things down, like, the things I've loved. And the things that are on my kind of never want to do it again list and then that sort of group in the middle that like, Okay, I'm willing, I'm willing to negotiate on it if I have to. And I go back to that list. And I'll be honest, it doesn't change that drastically anymore. It's kind of refined at this point for me. But I find that a lot of people just haven't taken the time to sit down and even kind of think in those terms. And it's not that that says you can or cannot take a specific job. It's just good self awareness. I think, you know, being self aware of our, our passions and our strengths, and the things we want to do

and don't want to do, it just helps us have a game plan for for how we tackle whatever job we're in, right. And, again, it doesn't shut you out from anything. And it doesn't necessarily mean you're the perfect fit for something either. It's just, you know, I am a much more self aware person now than I was probably, you know, at the beginning of my career because I've, I've sat down and I you know, I've spent the time really thinking about this and I didn't do that in the beginning. I just sort of put one foot in front of the other for a while. Until, you know I got to a point where I wanted to be more concerted about my my steps and my my career and the things that I wanted to do. And, and now that that kind of grounds me right, and I just I just did this exercise recently with my my leadership team that's just directly reporting to me. And, you know, we sat down with help from a facilitator and kind of all talked about, you know, what, what are those things for each of us? Like, what are those things that are our values, our passions? And, and how does that influence how you work with me, right? And we kind of each had to say, like, here's the things to watch out for, when you're working with me, because these things, you know, I really don't like to do these things. So they kind of set me off if you asked me to do them. And I just think it's that self awareness. And, you know, candidly, my team, I think they thought I was a little crazy when they found out this is what we were going to do for half a day. And they've told me that so if they're listening, they absolutely are probably nodding their heads. Yes, they are like, oh, yeah, we've all done team building, right. And this really wasn't as much about team building as it was the self awareness individually to be able to call out, you know, the pluses and minuses or I don't even want to call them pluses and minuses, but just the, you know, the things that are important to me, like so for me, empathy, authenticity, those are always going to be at the top of my list so that I can give learnings to someone who's trying to work with me to understand that if they come at a people problem from a very sort of dry financial only kind of perspective, it's not that conversation isn't gonna go, right. Like, we're gonna, we're, we're gonna be like on different pages. And so just finding those, that self awareness so that you know how to how you're going to act and react in certain situations, I have found to be incredibly valuable.

Jacob Morgan 42:09

This episode is made possible by Kindle, they are a company that is designing, building and managing the systems that the world depends on, there is no future of work without companies like Kindle that are out there making all of these things happen. Kindle is a technology services company that advances the vital systems that the world depends on every single day, they help their customers digitally transform a global team of curious and diverse minds. You can learn more about them by going to kindle.com. That's ryl.com. I must say, I didn't even plan on having such a long conversation about mentorship and mentees. I think this is so useful and valuable for people out there. Both who are Mentees and mentors, that I'm glad that we're spending all the time on this because there's a lot that even I'm learning about this. A lot of the time is people talk about mentee and mentor ship relationships kind of high level, but you're actually giving some very tactical and specific guidance around how to make that relationship work, which I think is super useful for anybody inside of an organization. But a lot of what we've been talking about has been on maybe official relationships, right? So somebody says, Hey, you have a mentor. Now work on that relationship. What happens if you're in an organization that doesn't have that kind of an official mentorship program? How do you? How do you navigate that? Like, do you go up to people and say, Hey, can you be my mentor? Because that might also be a little bit off putting? Like, how do you do that if that official structure is not in place?

43:55

Yeah, I would say I have been really pleasantly surprised that a lot of people, I would say sort of not exactly new in their careers, but maybe less experienced in their careers are more bold about that than I ever was. So I, I would never have walked up to somebody and just like my mentor like and maybe I should have right but I have had a lot of people reach out to me to the point that sometimes I have to, like politely say, I'm tapped out. That's another thing as a mentor, you can't take on everybody, but I have someone else that I think might be a good fit for you. So I always I mean, I completely encourage people to reach out if they want that. But again, you can't expect somebody to take on you know, 100 or 1000 people because then it's it's not good for you as a mentee either, quite frankly. But I do see people being more bold about that, I also see people in my organization, sometimes execs, sometimes not execs that are building their own kind of set of mentees right, and bringing those mentees together. So, I also think that, you know, that's very empowering. When someone says, I'm going to mentor that person, right, just sort of in a very unofficial way, and reaches out to them and builds a community. And I hope she doesn't mind me saying it. But my, my previous chief of staff, she, she was great about this, and she's gone on to be an executive, and she, she has this group, she calls them her mince. And, and they, you know, they, they speak with her one on one, they speak together as a group, they, they do things together, like it's created a sense of community and learning, not only from her, but but with each other. And, you know, they're, they're all relatively new in their careers, and she's really helping guide them through that and, and she, she really leans in, you know, she, she was at a client recently, and the CIO was still there, like kinda late at night. And she introduced her to, to one of her mints, and, you know, the, the, she was a little, I think, nervous. But, you know, that's like, taking that extra step. And just being again, back to my earlier point, being more of an advocate, not just sort of a passive mentor, but I think

Jacob Morgan 46:38

you got to ask, it sounds like. So let's say you do ask, and you obviously get turned down. But the mentor does say no, or you can't, because I think that happens to a lot of people, right? Either they're scared to ask and be proactive, or maybe they ask, and they can do it. And then they think, well, now I'm alone. But it sounds like your advice is there are people inside of your organization who will be willing to mentor you, you just have to find them in the way that you find them that you ask around. And probably the way that you can find a good mentor is I mean, I'm just going off of what I've heard, but you kind of look for qualities that you want to emulate you look somebody who's in a position that you would maybe like maybe one day like to get into, you look at somebody who maybe makes decisions that align with how with values that you have, you also need to be pretty picky about who you ask to be your mentor, right? You don't want just any just because somebody's a VP and you're not doesn't necessarily mean that they're gonna make a good mentor to you. You also need to know who you're approaching and who you're asking there. So any advice or guidance on that? And then I have maybe one or two more questions that just kind of popped into my mind as you were talking.

47:55

Yeah, sure. One of the things I have seen from my team lately that I think is great is So, you know, part of being a relatively new company is we've spent a lot of time on culture. And part of that culture work has been around creating inclusion networks, right. We call them our kendrell inclusion networks, kins. And, and I have seen there's so such a sense of community in these groups in the in the inclusion

networks, and I've seen a lot of mentor mentee relationships, get their start there. Because it is a place where it's very organically because there's events, there's opportunities to get together, either in person or source tool. They're, yeah, they're exactly They're led by senior people on my team. But the participants, it's, you know, it kind of flattens the organization, there's participants at all levels of the organization. And it creates more, I think, a sense of safety and comfort, where people do feel confident that they can ask, and they won't be sort of chastised or if they get a no, it won't be like an ugly, no, it will be you know, a no, but let me help you find someone else or have you talked to this person. And so you know, that I have seen a lot of that happening, which has been really encouraging to me that those inclusion networks have created such safe spaces that people are really willing to kind of take that chance and lean in a little bit and ask, you know, somebody to be their mentor or to help them find one. And I think, I think that's a good example of versus sort of just maybe cold calling somebody you know, that you've never actually talked to,

Jacob Morgan 49:41

yeah, that that approach probably doesn't make sense. But it's also a little bit of a tough love approach because essentially what I hear you saying is, you can find them, you have resource groups, you have networks in your company, you have people that you work with, you have leaders like you can find them just put in the time to find them and don't Just assume that a mentor is just gonna pop in your lap all of a sudden, how important is having? So let's say you have that relationship, right? How important is structure on it? And I know this is very tactical. But for example, do you agree to meet once a week? How many mentors should you have? How many mentees? Should you have any guidance on how, you know, to just tactically structure that?

50:26

Yeah, well, I think how many mentees you should have is sort of governed by your time? How much time can you spend at it? And look, my, my team would tell you, I would spend all my time doing that if I could, but, you know, I have a multibillion dollar business to run. So sadly, as much as I I get so energized from those conversations, and would love that to be my whole calendar every day. I know I can't, right. So I

Jacob Morgan 50:55

did two hours a week for you maybe like two hours a week or something.

51:00

Yeah, sometimes more. And if I'm traveling maybe a little bit less, but if I'm traveling, I'm usually going somewhere where I am having some of those kind of one on one conversations with employees and other parts of the organization and world as well. So sometimes it's just a one time thing, right? It's a one time conversation to maybe kind of get them down a path and then maybe get them you know, to find a more regular mentor that they can work with. But if it's somebody that I work with on a regular basis, again, I leave it to them, how often do we talk and, and what do you want to talk about? And, you know, I let them set the agenda, right? I might say a few words at the beginning to kind of just see check in and see how things have been, but I really say okay, the floor is yours, right? Like this is your time you asked for it. If it's going to be productive, it's going to be because you make it

Jacob Morgan 51:59

meant to you drives kind of like is it? Okay, if we meet together once a week? Maybe I can send you a couple emails. So you probably as a mentee, if you're looking for a mentor should have a sense of what exactly you're looking for. Right? Because if you if you just go and say, Hey, Amy, can you be my mentor? And you say yes, yeah, it's kind of like, Okay, now what? You I need to come to you and say, Is it okay, if maybe we just chatted for 1520 minutes a week? Can I send you maybe some ideas like email every now and then. So having an idea of what you as a mentee want that relationship to look like is crucial. And then I guess, as a mentor, you can provide guidance on that you can push back and say, Well, I can't meet with you every week. But I can respond to emails and maybe some texts, and maybe once every other week, we can spend an hour. So you got to kind of work on that relationship together.

52:54

Absolutely. But the mentee definitely drives as far as I'm concerned, right? You've got to know what you want to get out of it. And look, it has happened to me where I've agreed to meet or mentor with someone and they show up and I kind of, you know, do a few niceties at the beginning and tell them a little bit about me. That's often the question number one, tell me about you know, a mentee will ask me Tell me about your path. And but but then, you know, in this one particular case, I said, okay, the floor is yours. Like you, you know, you asked for the time. So you you guide us here and you know, I basically kind of got like a five minute commercial on this person, right? Here's everything I've done. These are the great things these are my accomplishments are sort of like a, you know, CV speed dating session

Jacob Morgan 53:45

doesn't help anybody. Right.

53:48

And it doesn't help anybody because it wasn't actionable for me. And, you know, I even said that at the kind of end of the commercial, I said, Well, what would you like to get out of this? And the response was, Well, I just wanted you to know, me and

Jacob Morgan 54:07

me for a promotion or kind of something like that.

54:10

Yeah, exactly. And look, I mean, awareness and visibility is important. There's no question but you know, if you're, if you're gonna get time with a senior executive, have a have a plan, have something that's actionable that you could sort of take away from it and work on yourself or maybe you ask the mentor to work on it with you. But you know, you have to it has to be a little bit more engaging than sort of just like, here's who I am. I want you to know all about me, because I can read your I can read your CV.

Jacob Morgan 54:48

Totally agree. I love that. Well, we have been talking for just over 15 minutes on this which has been honestly I think probably one of The most in depth mentor mentee conversations we've had, which is, again, absolutely fantastic. Is there anything else that you want to wrap this conversation with on either the mentee or the mentor side that we didn't touch on? Any additional advice, exercises, anything that you want to make sure that we touch on before we wrap up?

55:20

Yeah, well, look, I mentioned this exercise I did with my team. And like, you know, the things that are important to me are empathy and authenticity, right. And I, that's kind of, that's what I shared with them. It's what they already know about me, because they, they see how I operate every day. But I think, look, both mentor and mentee, you, you kind of have to understand each other that way that I was explaining kind of with the exercise I do with my team, I'm always going to come at a place from empathy and authenticity. And as a result, I expect maybe a strong word, but I hope that you as a as a mentee will do the same. And for me, authenticity is linked to something you talk a lot about, which is vulnerability, and like, and just overall transparency and building trust, right? You mentioned building trust, earlier, but it's like those things to me are so just linked, right? Like, and I know and I share this, with every mentee I have, for me the moment in my career that something kind of clicked. And it was probably a mix of personal and professional things that made the click happen. And I realized, like, I'm just going to show up as authentically me. Like that was the moment that my career really started to accelerate. And, you know, I share that with Mentees, because I think it's important. Like, I want people not only do I want people to feel that they can show up as their their whole selves every day, because that's incredibly important. But I want them to feel they can show up. And just be authentic not you don't have to be someone else. It's kind of like that same idea that there's this specific job that I'm supposed to go do next and check that box. I think sometimes I find in my mentor mentee relationships, people think they're supposed to act a certain way, or say a certain thing, particularly in the confines of that relationship. And I would say, you know, that doesn't always like get you to where you want to go, right? Because if you're sort of just putting on a veneer and think we'll all say the right things, I'll say what I think I'm supposed to say to you know my upline, or to my mentor, like, you're never probably going to get as much out of it as you could, if you just sort of like, tear down some of those walls and, and be authentic, and really talk about what you want to do. Like, you don't have to say you want to go do that thing that you think you're supposed to want to go do to help you progress in your career. There are ways to have amazing careers and to progress to really senior levels without doing what you've watched someone else do. And I think, you know, for me, that is kind of at the crux of any good mentor mentee relationship is, you know, is there that kind of shared authenticity and, and not just sort of, you know, having a mentee who holds back or a mentor, quite frankly, who holds back, a mentor that acts like they never had any bumps in the road, along the way in their career is really no different than a mentee who acts a certain way because they think they're they're supposed to, right. So you've kind of got to peel that back if you if you really want that relationship to be fruitful and to yield what it's supposed to which is hopefully progressing somebody in their career and getting them to a place where they're, you know, successfully doing something that that they love doing and they have a passionate about it.

Jacob Morgan 59:16

And so I think it's a kind of a both people benefit, right? I mean, the mentee ideally progresses forward and the mentor knows that they're helping you. But obviously, if you're not doing anything, and you're not progressing as the mentee and the mentor is kind of like well, am I not a good mentor? Like, you know, what's going on here? So the mentor also has an invested interest in you succeeding and doing well too.

59:39

Absolutely. Yeah. Because honestly it also as a mentor you think, Hmm, should would somebody else do better buy this? Yeah, like, you know, should I find someone else to mentor them? Would they be a better fit or? Or is it just you know, sometimes it may be it's just not the right the right chemistry You're not it's not a good match, you know that that is a reality. Like you have to be able to have a certain level of that, you know, chemistry that comes with, you know, wanting to have these deep conversations about like, what kind of where you're going in your career. And if it's, if that connection just isn't there, sometimes it is better to move on, quite frankly,

Jacob Morgan 1:00:23

totally agree. Amy, this has been an absolutely fascinating conversation. Where can people go to learn more about you and Kindle? Anything that you want to mention for people to checkout?

1:00:38

Yeah, sure. So first of all, Kindle. It may not be intuitive, but Kindle is k, y, and DRYL. And you can go to kindle.com. If you want to learn more about the company or me, I'm highlighted on the leadership page, or of course, you can find me on LinkedIn.

Jacob Morgan 1:00:57

Very cool. Amy, thank you so much for taking time editor day. I really appreciate it.

1:01:01

Yeah, thank you, Jacob. This has been fantastic. I've loved the conversation hopefully comes across that this is a topic I'm really passionate about. Yes. Especially because it wasn't it wasn't the topic. We were gonna talk. No,

Jacob Morgan 1:01:14

not at all. No. We were gonna talk about like,

1:01:19

transformation and custom, totally unrelated stuff. But this actually ended up being far better. So I'm really glad I kind of went down this path. So thank you again, thank you, everyone, for tuning in my guest again, Amy Salcedo president of Kindle in the United States. I will see all of you next week.

Jacob Morgan 1:01:40

I hope you're enjoying this podcast. But if you're looking to step up your leadership game, if you're looking to go even further in your career, to create a future ready organization, and to create a culture where employees genuinely want to show up to work each day, then head over to great

leadership.substack.com This podcast is kind of like the appetizer, but great. leadership.substack.com is going to be your main course, your dessert, your coffee and your tea. It's going to give you everything you need to become the leader that your people need, and want. They'll teach you how to excel in your career. And best of all, all of the things I'm going to share with you are based on actual CEO interviews on data on research, so you know that everything is backed up, and it's credible. Again, head over to great leadership.substack.com