came out in 1951 and the author was describing the incredible pace of life, how it was hard to focus to carve out quality time for self and family. Almost 70 years on, we're still struggling with this issue and the distractions have multiplied exponentially and even with the countless devices that are supposed to help us be more productive. This is being called the age of distraction. People are wearing the term busy as a badge of honor, but studies show we aren't more productive, we aren't more happy or healthy and we aren't working less. The state of business has been downloaded to us by previous generations and it's time for every boot. Welcome to the makeup right podcast. I'm Janet Eastman and this week my guests are two gentlemen who figured out how to break this cycle of busy and take back control. Dave McEwen is a leadership consultant and the author of a new book called the selfie evolve leader and Kevin snuck is a leadership advisor and author of make it right. Five steps to align your manufacturing business from the front line to the bottom line. So gentlemen, I'd like to introduce you to each other and welcome to the show.

Speaker 1 01:21 Well thank you very much Janet. It's great to be back on with you here and Kevin, great to meet you over the areas.

Speaker 2 01:29 Yeah, it's nice to be honest. Well Janet and um, and Dave, you know I've, I've a big fan of your book and as I was reading through your book and to me it was really like, you know, looking into my own soul as well. So I think there's a lot of things that we have in common and it's going to be a great discussion.

Speaker 0 01:47 Excellent. So Dave, you're in California. Kevin, you're in Asia. I'm in Canada. So we're going to take this from a global perspective. We're really going to look at this problem, this, this busy-ness, this distraction problem. It's everywhere. Now can either one of you give me an idea of the financial benefit a company can gain from getting their business and their teams aligned and refocus so that we're not all running around like chickens with our heads cut off.

Speaker 1 02:17 It's a hugely important one. The issue of alignment of the reality is I think we are too quick in our teams and groups to get to a point where we think that we've made a decision and then we go out and start implementing. But the reality is that in most cases, just due to human nature, most folks walk out of that room with that slight different understanding of what it is that we've just agreed to. And so we go off and start implementing in different ways. And so what happens is we realize that, um, kind of like in a golf swing, when you get that moment where you strike the golf ball, if off by just a millimeter, the Gulf Ole doesn't end up a millimeter away. It ends off, you know, in the bunker in the rougher and my calls over. And so we as a team have to come back and we kind of assess where we're going or what we're doing or what we thought we were doing.

Speaker 1 03:15 Essentially relying on each other. And if you think about just the sheer amount of time spent in doing that, um, add up the financial impact of everybody's salaries and maybe the media room that we need to poke and maybe there's some refreshments at the cost of just realigning ourselves is, is, is really huge. And so, um, my perspective is always if you can slow dawning that moment of decision making so you can get on to implementing it quicker because you're more aligned, that's going to save you money in the long run. Kevin would love to hear your thoughts on that too.

Speaker 2 03:49 Yeah, and I love the analogy about the golf shot and it really is that idea around not only taking your time when you make the decision, but being very clear what your priorities are before you go into that decision making process. So for me it's around if you, if you're working on your priority, if you your taken the time to figure out what the company priorities are, what each individual's personal priorities are and you get them well aligned, then the decision making process becomes very easy. And Janet, you mentioned around, you know, what's the, what's the cost to companies with this? And you know, as I work a lot with manufacturing companies, those costs really go down to the bottom line. And um, I, I would say even for relatively, you know, if --

really in the millions already. And we've got plenty of use cases where whether you're working on scrap or EPOD reduction or just growing the business, um, we have people coming back year after year saying, Kevin, what's the next million dollar saving we're going for? And so it really is this, you know, we're really talking about huge money and when you look at the growth of a business, that's where it really starts to escalate.

Speaker 1 05:05 I guess people can't really see that. Can they, because they've been operating in a certain way and until you show them that there is this savings there and you can really make it happen there really not aware of how much money they're actually burning. Speaker 2 05:18 Yeah, well we've, we've become very used to what we're hanging around every day. And that becomes the normal. And one of the benefits of bringing somebody like Dave into your business is we can challenge those norms and he can look at it with a different set of eyes. And it's not that he's any smarter or he's, he's just seen more. He's seen more of these cases in different, different companies and can catch you outside of your own sense of dizziness.

Speaker 1 05:44 I think you're right. I by no means am I any smarter than most people in the room, but, but you're right, cabinets. It's definitely a degree of pattern recognition. I think it's also, and I'm sure you've experienced this, there's, there's an element of unsexy Enos of by doing all of that realignment around, um, company priorities and department priorities and individual priorities that in a lot of instances people just feel like it's holding them back from doing the quote unquote actual work that we have to do. And for a lot of people who's a resistance to that initially and what you have to do, or what I tried to do is show them that in spending a little bit more time upfront looking at those things, then you get to realize those savings down the timeline and what you can do with those savings and how you can grow your business and how you can be invest. I'm sure you've seen something similar like that as well.

Speaker 2 06:40 Yeah. And Dave, you talked about the unsexy newness of it, that, that that's definitely true, but I think there's another part of it as well. And that is, um, CEOs and a lot of companies are designed to be entrepreneurial. They are looking at risk-taking, growing the business, driving forward, looking outside of the company. And what I've realized just fairly recently is that, uh, when, when somebody comes to them and says, look, we need to improve the internal structure of the company. They have, it's not only that, they have no time for that, they don't even understand that concept because there are different kind of beast. And as they're looking out, they're going out hunting, somebody else has to be back at home, you know, putting the structures and the systems in place. And that's where I see a huge difference between what the COO is doing versus what the CEO is doing.

And I think guite often we try to convert the CEO to be more open to the Speaker 2 07:31 people's stuff or the structure stuff. And, and when I'm, it's only fairly recently I've been realizing this, that that's trying to, you know, that's trying to make a lion eat apples. You know, it just doesn't work. What you need to be able to do is identify what they're really good at and get them focused on that part and then find out who else in the organization is really good at building the stability, the foundation. Um, and not putting, you know, the wrong people in the wrong places. Yeah. 100%. I think that's, that's hugely valuable and, and it's, it's also 08:05 interesting, um, dynamic that sometimes arises. You've got to make sure that there's a clear demarcation between those roles as well that, um, I've seen often that those entrepreneurial CEOs, they pay lip service to the internal process changes that are happening, but because they're still the ultimate decision maker, that can quite often just come in and like, um, an arsonist to start lighting fires to things like we're not going to do that anymore or I don't like that process or we're don't put that in place. And there's gotta be a clear designation of the rules and responsibilities between the CEO and COO based around what the company needs to grow, no

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-- t around what those individuals in those roles desire.

Yeah. And that's exactly the part where the struggles is putting those roles Speaker 2 08:53 and responsibilities in place. Cause again, that, that feels like it's slowing down the organizing. I just didn't get on. I just want to talk to some more sales people. I just want to grow the business. And so having that interruption pattern to the CEO's normal way of thinking. Uh, I think again, that's where somebody coming from outside can say, uh, you know, and you, you, you talk about several great examples in the book around, um, a lot of the way you structured the book is a conversation between somebody from outside the organization and someone who's caught in that inside way of thinking. And in just a matter of, uh, well we call it self awareness for quite often for self-awareness would be somebody else to prompt us on that. Um, but yeah, driving their self awareness and then knowing where those gaps are. Speaker 0 09:46 We talk a bit in, in these two books about maintaining focus. You've got to keep focus and focus is really hard to keep these days. So, and Dave, you say, write in the book, we have to break out of this cycle of mediocrity. So how do we get our attention back to focus on the things that are really important? Because if you say that the CEO is off chasing this one old idea over here, well you know, the COO is just trying to maintain the company but they can't get anything exciting happening and they're in this cycle of mediocrity. How do we bring this all together? What practices can you share with leaders to help them get their attention management back and get focused on the real job at hand that, that vision, that North star as you called it in your book.

Speaker 1 10:32 Dave? Um, yeah, and it's you, you teed up the, um, start of the conversation just brilliantly, which is we'd be talking about a version of this for 40 50, 60 years and we'll probably continue to talk about it for the next 40, 50, 60, a hundred years. Who knows? But it's just getting so prevalent and so fast and just that the sheer number of tugs on our attention on any given day from phone calls and emails and Slack messages and social media and news feeds and people walking into your office and you know, it's just wrapping up and to such an extreme P S and we have, we have over-glorified the hustle. Uh, unfortunately I, I believe we've sort of given more credence to this notion that so long as we're busy, so long as we're kicking up dust, we're making progress. And, and I think that that's doing us and our people a disservice because if you're a leader, that's all done.

Speaker 1 11:30 It's just constantly taking up. Just the reality is that your team underneath your are trying to scramble like crazy just to keep up with that. And so I talk about a number of different practices that leaders can do. The first one at a really high level, um, is just to practice being present. And by that I mean really simple on a granular level, not having your cell phone OG when you're talking with somebody not having a laptop computer or an iPad. I essentially just want to move technology away, taking uh, a breath and just committing to be in front of the person that you're in front of and giving them the time and attention that they deserve and that they need from you. Um, I think that the more that we can practice that presence and just that state of being there, the more that some of the other parts will, will fit together.

Speaker 1 12:24 I think the second we'll find that leaders can do is start to build an implementation rhythm for themselves. And if you think about leadership, there are maybe three or four different horizons of focus that you have to think about. There's the longterm strategic direction of your organization or your team, sort of annual, three year, five years, that kind of timeframe. Then there's the more Lasser or sort of newer to growing level quarterly aspects. What are we doing this quarter and monthly? What do we need to get done? Then we can continually, the more that you can be specific about which horizon of focus you're working on goals, um, and to discuss that with the folks in front of you, the more beneficial that that can be. Because again, to go back to those entrepreneurial CEOs, they can talk at any level and people just believe that what they're saying is what we have to do right away. And they might not be s-

-- aying that they might be, they might be looking for some pushback against whatever it is that they're out there. So just trying to be really mindful of what horizon of focus you're talking about can be hugely beneficial.

Speaker 2 13:34 I'm fully behind that as well. And um, the, I think it was Peter Gibbons on the, on the podcast had talked about, uh, a suggestion from a CEO becomes an order. And I think that that's absolutely right. It's this whole idea around just because he's the boss, you know, he knows best and we've got to do whatever he says. I think being open, being able to open up the organization to challenge everything, um, is critical. And, and if you can use a tool like a prioritization matrix to actually have discussions around, Oh look, this is where we see the priorities. This is why we see the priorities as they are now. What are we going to agree as an organization not to do that one. That one just comes off the table completely and we don't talk about that for the next quarter or the next year. You know, whichever part of your planning process you're in.

Speaker 2 14:24 And so taking things off the table. The other thing I would say that is critical is just good old fashioned discipline. In a lot of cases we feel like we need to pander to the needs of people who want to have their mobile phone out in a meeting. And the answer quite often is just know that that's just not going to be one of the norms. It's not going to be one of the things that's acceptable, you know, in this particular, in this type of meeting or even in this company. And so what we want to be able to do is be focused on the, on the goal at hand, get that done and then move on.

Speaker 0 14:59 You were talking earlier Dave, about how um, entrepreneurs, you know, they come in with a great idea and they start kicking up dust everywhere and the employees are all kind of going, okay, he wants us to do this now. And I was reading recently where, Mmm, Speaker 0 15:15 this person was advising that if your boss comes in and you know what your priorities are and your boss comes in and says, I want, I think we should start doing this. That you're supposed to turn around and say to your boss, well, these are the priorities that we had laid out that I was supposed to be working on. Where do you want me to slot this in? In order to address this? What has to come off the table? And I think that this, this takes us to a conversation about both of your books. Talk about the need for employees to feel empowered and how do you make an employee feel empowered to turn around and look at their boss and say, well, I can't do what you've asked me to because you've asked me to do all of these things and I don't know what you want me to do that. So let's talk a little bit about empowerment. 16:03 Okay. So, so for me, the big thing around empowerment is go, goes in line with listening. Um, first of all, the boss, when he comes in with his, uh, his list of suggestions and his ideas, he's doing it from <inaudible>, from a good heart. I think generally people want to do the right thing. They want to come in, they want to make suggestions, they want to be helpful. Um, but having that list of priorities, very clear, having your action plan very clear upfront always gives you a frame of reference to go back to. So you're, you're right in saying that, um, Hey, look, where does that fit with everything else that I'm doing? And be able to have that conversation. The leader has to show a level of vulnerability, a level of not knowing all the answers usually is, there's some kind of issue with hidden, a hidden communication issue between the leader and the person they're talking to.

Speaker 2 16:57 Each of us go into a conversation with something in our mind. And quite often that's not true about the other person. I've, I've done a lot of studies within companies that I've worked with and um, when I asked when it asked one level of the organization, what do you really want to achieve, they tell me, I asked the next level what you really want to tell me. And he's exactly the same. But when I asked them what the other lab, what you doing, they say completely the opposite. And so really it's being able to have that open conversation and be able to listen with very generous years when you hear something that you are initially don't like. Speaker 0 17:34 Yeah, I think that the do some great stuff in there. --

-- Um, it's interesting, I, I hear quite often from, from leaders, uh, from folks at any level of the organization that you mentioned, Jonathan, which is the, comes in and says, I need 17:50 you to do this. And most people have a tendency to just say, okay, and then try to figure out how they're going to fit it in. And that just adds to the Bernard and the, and the, um, the stress that they, that they have is they're taking more and more on. The reality is that if we're looking for empowerment, empowerment can really only come from within. I mean, um, you know, you can, you can teach people what empowerment means. You can give them the environment in which they have the ability to, to feel empowered, but it's, it's really going to come from within. And I think one of those acts of saying, Hey, uh, really like that idea, here's my current to do list, would love to talk about, you know, where are those priorities can shift as Kevin mentioned, that's, that's building self empowerment and the people underneath you. 18:40 And, and, and to Kevin's point, the leader has to have that degree, all foam durability not to feel like they're being pushed back against. Um, and I think that's one of the key transitions that we're seeing happening in the world of leadership where we used to think that our, the years had to be so sure and called in where we're going. You know, there's that old adage that leaders know the way, show the way and go the way the hell he is. That in our context environments, our leaders can't know everything. And the people that work from them knew that. And so what we're moving towards in this world of vulnerability that Kevin mentioned is for a leader to say, Hey, I don't know 100% everything. This is what I think. This is where I think we should go. What do you think? Do you want to come with me? I think it's going to be a heck of a ride. Okay, let's go and do it together rather than you feeling this need to be a under percent confident, this is going to be the right thing for us.

Speaker 2 19:41 Yeah. See one of the key roles of leaders is to develop other leaders and you can't develop other leaders by telling people what to do. You can only develop it by asking great questions by getting with things for themselves, by allowing them to try things and fail occasionally and then have a supportive environment where you look at that together and say, okay, how do we review this? How do we make sure that we get the right steps in place so that doesn't happen again next time? And so it really is around being, um, much more authentic, much more vulnerable. And one of the first things I say when I go into any company and speaking at each level of the organization is, I don't know this company or this business or your job as well as you do. It's just that there was no way I could possibly know that if there's somebody running a production line, they're there every minute of the day. I have no idea what their struggles and their stresses and their, and their challenges are. They need to be able to tell me and they need to be the ones to drive the answers to that what I'm there for as a facilitator to help them ask questions that they may not have asked it themselves.

Speaker 1 20:45 Yeah. And I think it's interesting, um, one of the dynamics that I see happening on there because we're moving so quickly, um, I feel that and there are so many variables, I feel like most leaders believe, you know what, if I can just tell you what we need to do in this instance or if I just help you out a little bit, if I just do this for you, we're going to get through all of this stuff together more quickly and that comes from a good place for them. Let's try and achieve our goals in as fast as way as possible. Um, but like you said, Kevin, you can't, you can't scale building leaders off of that because you are therefore responsible for that. Every time that there's a problem, somebody is going to start to, to begin to develop this sense of, Oh, I've got a problem.

Speaker 1 21:29 I'll just go see DF. He's going to tell me what to do or he's going to help me or he's going to be the one that's, sure. Um, and, and that over time our people develop a sense of learned helplessness, which is rather than trying to solve my own problems or feeling empowered and just going to go to the boss cause they're going to tell me what to do anyway and they'll get a sort of a sticky mass. It' --

better questions. And as such, the crux of a great leader these days is asking better questions. But again, that's a big mindset and behavioral shift for many people because it takes a lot longer. There's a lot more sense of risk in it and there's just more of that vulnerability in it too. Speaker 2 22:07 Now, Dave, you work with a lot of entrepreneurial companies as well, like I do. And, um, I, I see that there's not that many big companies, you know, we've got a lot of small companies and breaking that barrier between being a smaller company and then really starting to accelerate the growth. I think this is one of those key factors for me. The, the team is the dream. And so if you're not developing the team, you will never dream and you cannot be a big company with one person in charge. You have to be able to let that go and build the team capability in order to be able to reach your dream

22:44 hum. 100%. And also I think just to allude to what you were talking about earlier and the distinction between the CEO and the COO, there comes a point in which you've got to stop viewing the individual goals in your organization from a head's business. And you've got to think about it in terms of the hats. So too many companies are running around and their job descriptions are just whatever the person does and not job every day. And there's the sense of of things can fall through the cracks and at some point there's got to be this transition of just talking to a client today I bought it where essentially tick you sort of say, right, we're going to put the work chart to the side. We're going to start with a blank sheet of paper and we're going to start to say what does this business need to run them to scale to grow so that it's not dependent on individuals or personified success, but that it's built on something that's more akin to a system or a drum beat and you've got to redesign your chart for what it needs in its growth. Yeah, and Carla Mason, I was talking a lot about this on the last podcast as well. Journey around having those conversations with the employees and finding out what really turns them on at work. To me, this is, this is another key part of it. Each time we go through this organization appraisal if you like or or looking at the roles and responsibilities, it gives us an opportunity to fit people into the roles that are giving them strength and helping them feel empowered and making them feel like at the end of the day they are fulfilled in the work that they're doing. And so, uh, we don't have an organization design and then that sticks forever. We need to be continually looking at that, the roles and responsibilities and the people that we have. uh, in order to be able to find the right fit for each person

Speaker 0 24:25 on wait, so, well when Cal was talking about that in that previous podcast, he was talking about how when people finally find that position that is the perfect fit for them. They get into a kind of a nice flow. Now, Kevin, you and I talked about flow recently on other podcasts. You talk about flow in the work environment, Dave and your book. Let's talk a little bit about what flow can feel light for an organization that's really got it happening. Dave, tell me what you've seen with a company that's really got flow.

Speaker 1 24:59 Sure. And, and funny enough it's, it's essentially a summary of a lot of what we've been talking about. The one word for me that sticks out whenever I think of a flow is clarity. Um, so first of all, it's clarity on direction, on that vision, on where we're going on those, um, uh, priorities that we have that Kevin mentioned. Um, because that gives us the most solid. We all know where we're supposed to be headed and we can be as our decision making our mind that, um, secondly then is just clarity on the, on the rules and Volvos in the, the outcomes required. So if we know that we're going to enter a new marketplace, okay, well what are the rules that are going to get us there and what are the outcomes required from each of those roles. And then the third one and one that I think is, is missing from a lot of organizations is that clarity around decision making.

Speaker 1 25:46 So we know that drum beat, that rhythm of decision making. We know when we can address somethings from a strategic --

that point, where do you know what you're saying as an organization if we're not going to rope you that for another six months or another 12 months? Um, I think that that's so important because there's a tendency to want to drop those new exciting ideas and then every time we drop a new exciting idea and you scroll over, we're going to chase or something that we're going to go after. We pull everybody, we, we reduce that clarity and pull everybody back into plate slot ball where we just run a roll. I'm trying to, to find a soccer ball and we kicked up a bunch of dust. And so we lose that alignment, that focus that we had. And so for, for me, a low, it doesn't mean that everything's absolutely smooth every single day. It means that we understand how to address the problems in front of us and harder, hard to address changes to, um, the external environment or what we're working on if we need rather than just teasing that sense of chasing the ball everywhere. That to me as well flew in the workers.

Speaker 0 26:58 What's it look like for you Kevin?

No, that's a, that's a great um, description of it. And I think the, the side to Speaker 2 me is that in, you know, in manufacturing you have daily business, regular daily business, which is, you know, making the products and allowing them to go out smoothly and within that kind of environment flow is relatively easy because it's, it's, it's consistent. You may have a maintenance ship or you may have something else that, that, uh, that you need to be able to find a way to schedule and, and, um, plan effectively. But flow in that example is fairly easy. Where it becomes much more difficult is where you introduce a new initiative to where there's some kind of disruption. And what I've found in organizations that don't have very clear roles and responsibilities, very clear roadmap of how to achieve things, um, then they get in a huge mess during those disruptive times. Uh, the ones that are in flow, um, it's almost like a pleasure. It's a, it's, um, it's an exciting addition to the work rather than a frustrating, uh, interruption to the work. Uh, and that really is, you know, Dave mentioned their roles and responsibilities, absolutely clear gateways for each different stage of the, in this case at the, at the initiative being developed, uh. making sure that people have some discipline and following the process. Um, and again, this is where structure and discipline, uh, enhance freedom rather than rather than restrictive, I guess ultimately what's the 21st century? And the messages usually come 28:31 from the top down. So it has to start with the leader. So from both of you, I'd like to hear your sense on what you believe is the ultimate role of the leader. Dave, you're calling your book the self evolved leader and Kevin, you talk about aligned leader. So what Dave, in your opinion, is the ultimate role of a leader?

Speaker 1 29:00 Sure. So for me, it's to resist the urge of heroic leadership and instead, uh, to help your team achieve their common goals. And in doing so become the best version of themselves. That for me is what it's all about. It, you know, it mirrors exactly what Kevin said earlier. The team is the dream. We're not building on people in what we're doing then we're not really leading. We're just kicking up dust.

Speaker 0 29:27 And what about you Kevin? The aligned leader?

Speaker 2 29:29 Yeah. For me, the, the two of the steps in the align process are absolutely critical. The first one is aim from the heart. Um, and that is have a very clear vision with the organization that, uh, you could keep going back to, to show that clarity that Dave was talking around around this is where we're going guys. And there's a sense of excitement and team, uh, alignment towards that. The second part then for the leader is to give help and support. And the role is not to be telling people what to do is to be watching what they do, watching the way the organization is functioning and then seeing where help and support in different guises, uh, needs to come in. Um, so set a very clear direction and then get the team to help and support that they need to be successful.

Speaker 0 30:15 I guess ultimately when we all go to work, we really want to know what we're supposed to be doing and when we don't really understand --

-- or if there's some confusion around what that is, that's where the problem is. Yeah. People are people. I'm a good people. I've never, I've never met an Speaker 2 30:29 employee who intentionally came in to do a bad job that day or to have a crappy day at work or to go home and feeling unfulfilled. There's, I've never met anybody like that. Well, we need to be able to do as leaders is to, is to bring the very best out of each individual and setting the environment to be able to do that. And then, um, making sure that as they go through that journey, you know, we, we talk about a very clear direction. Um, there's never a final goal for a business. A goal wants to keep it. A business wants to keep evolving and keep growing, but there needs to be some milestones along the way that we can celebrate. So having that opportunity to be able to give people the recognition and support that they need as they move ahead, keeps the work fulfilling. And for me, that's a critical factor of continually growing. Speaker 0 31:27 I appreciate both of your time. We're almost at a time, so I think we better, I leave it there. But gentlemen, thank you so much for, uh, joining me to talk in a rather engaging discussion and I think we probably should do this again sometime if you're both up for it. Speaker 2 31:41 Absolutely. Thank you, John. I really appreciate it and Canada's great to have the discussion with you. Yeah, I really enjoyed it too, Janet. And, um, it's great when, you know, we have people to bounce ideas off as well. And I, there's a few notes that I've taken that, uh, that I want to go back and look at as well. So it's fantastic to have this kind of conversation. Speaker 0 31:59 Thanks again, gentlemen. That's our show this week. I hope you enjoyed our leadership discussion. Dave McEwen is a leadership consultant and author of a new book called the self evolved leader, which is in stores now. And Kevin Snoop is a leadership advisor and author of makeup, right five steps to align your manufacturing business from the front line to the bottom line. Kevin is also the sponsor of the make right podcast. You can find his book on Amazon. Please check out our Twitter and LinkedIn feeds that you'd find on our podcast page at <inaudible> dot com and also subscribe and share this podcast with your friends and colleagues through iTunes, Google play, Stitcher, Spotify, and YouTube. Until next time, I'm Janet <inaudible>. Thanks for listening to the makeup ripe podcast.

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