

-- Speaker 1 00:04 Make it right. The manufacturing podcast

Speaker 2 00:10 every day the makeup bride podcast shares a leadership quote on social media. These come from people from all walks of life and they provide a daily snippet of leadership intelligence. What what makes a great leader and how has that evolved over the centuries, the decades and how's it evolving now. Welcome to the mega ripe podcast. I'm Janet Eastman and this week on the show we're looking at leadership with Dave McEwen. He's the founder and CEO of Oakfield leadership and he's also the author of a brand new book called the self evolved leader. It's a step by step guide to elevating leadership to be authentic, focused and purposeful. David's always great to have you on the show. Nice to chat with you again.

Speaker 1 00:50 Great to be back again. Janet just loved talking with you about all things leadership.

Speaker 2 00:55 Well that's great cause we are going to do just that. So how have you seen leadership evolve over the last number of years because you've had outfield leadership for a while. What's been changing in leadership?

Speaker 1 01:08 I think that the overarching shift that we're seeing is, is one that's happening probably in connection and conjunction with just general societal shifts. And if I could sum it up in as crisp a way as possible, it's essentially that some of the old models of leadership, I find it in the sixties, seventies, eighties, maybe even into the 90s, were really focused around the, the leader as the center of the story. The leader is the hero, the leader, being sure about the direction that we're going in and, and, and society painting that picture of, of who we want to follow. And I think that we've seen a shift away from that. Um, kind of brought along by the understanding that really in today's world that moves so fast, nobody can have all of the answers. No one person knows a hundred percent the right direction to go in. And so actually what we're looking for in our leaders today is somebody that leads with a degree, more, uh, a degree of more vulnerability and empathy. Somebody who says, I'm not 100% sure that this is the right direction. It's my bass gas. What do you think? Wouldn't it be great if we went there together? Uh, and so I think that's a huge shift that's, that's happening, but it's not yet complete. We're sort of stuck between these two, um, these two phases of, of growth and development. So you're saying that, um,

Speaker 2 02:36 the performing of heroics isn't going to be one of the things that leaders need to do in the very near future? Correct.

Speaker 1 02:44 I, yeah, I think that in, in general, we have glorified the heroic leader and we take it from analogies like the military and sports and, um, superhero movies. The problem with using that as an analogy, we'll lose to one, the world's a sports movies and the military don't actually cross over well to all our organizations. And, and so as a result, what we're doing is we're painting a, a distorted image of what it really means to lead when we lead through acts of, of, of heroism and heroics. Um, and by that I mean essentially the hero or sorry, the leader taking the perspective. That's my role as a leader is to know the answers, tell people what to do. And to do, um, to, to jump in and save the day and make the diving catches if I need to. What that dog is in the long run is, um, it builds this sense of learned helplessness in our people.

Speaker 1 03:40 So if my boss is always going to tell me what to do or solve my problems for me, um, I'm just going to stop thinking for myself. I'll just, if I've got a problem or challenge, I'll just go straight to them. Um, and then secondly, it, it forces the leader to be the bottleneck, um, because ultimately all decisions stop with them and they become more and more overwhelmed by the work that they're taking on. And that all our minds to the number one problem, which is heroic, the leadership is not scalable on any level because we can't, you just can't scale heroism. So if, if we're moving away from that, um, and as a leader, you have people coming to you with that, you know, help me out. How do you turn that T the tables and you turn the tables and say, okay, well I'm not the hero here.

Speaker 1 04:27 So what is it a question of what do you think we need to do here when the leader is asked these things? Um, yeah, I think you're --

-- , you're, you're definitely going in the right direction. There are, there's some very tactical things that, that we can do. Um, things like, just taking a pause, which is a really powerful leadership strategy, uh, to many managers and leaders out there. They just start talking to thank and, and, and before they know what they've kind of issued their directive. And so just taking a pause, taking a beat before responding and then asking a question like, well, what do you think? Um, at the heart of great leadership is the ability to ask better questions, um, because that, that empowers our people to do some of the heavy lifting and to do some of that thinking. So somebody comes to you with a problem and instead of saying, well, I think you should do this, just taking a pause and saying, well, what do you think?

Speaker 1 05:19 Or what have you tried or what's worked and what hasn't worked and help them come to their own solution rather than, um, uh, telling them how to do it. Obviously underneath all of that, there's a behavioral shift and that can be more difficult to do than just, you know, mere tactical, um, uh, things, you know, tools and tips that you can do on a daily basis. So how do you help people become this self evolve leader when it is completely a different mindset that they have to come into? Yeah, you're, you're absolutely right. They're, the first point that you have to address is this mindset shift. Like any behavioral shift that we want to make, whether it's working out more, eating more healthy, or not drinking as much or being <inaudible> during compassionate to our family. All of that starts with a mindset shift. And so the overarching shift that I teach folks is to move away from this notion of being a heroic leader towards being a self evolved leader.

Speaker 1 06:20 And at the heart of being a self evolved leader is this mantra. My focus is to help those on my team achieve our shared goals. And in doing so, to help them become the best version of themselves. And essentially that is the starting point because there's no room for heroic leadership in there because you're essentially saying, my goal is to help my team sat and achieve our shared goals. But in achieving those goals, they have to grow and develop as well. And so that means that I have to empower them. I am to to take a step out and solve their own problems. I have to give them the support and the guidance to do that. And I have to give them the room to fail and to learn from that rather than leading through a heroism or fear and essentially putting padding around my people.

Speaker 1 07:09 I think that at certain times in a company's history or in, you know, the history of people in general, we run into these situations where we look like it's like there's a looming crisis or we are in a crisis and people do turn to the leader for that leadership. How do you handle that as a self evolved leader? Uh, and, you know, interesting times we're in at the minute. Obviously I'm with the worldwide pandemic that's, um, fixated us for the last number of weeks and months and will likely continue to do so. Um, it's, there's been an interesting response out there that I've seen. Um, some folks have come out and tried to lead with certainty. Uh, so they say, you know, don't worry, I've been through this before. I know. We'll be all right. We'll get through it. Uh, some people have led through fear and so they kind of just try to shut everything down and, and reduce it to its lowest common denominator.

Speaker 1 08:09 And, and try not to, um, just basically try to reduce all of the risks that's happening. Some people are trying to lead through opportunity, so they go, you know what, we're not going to be a victim. We're gonna make this our greatest month ever or our greatest year ever. You know, we're going to, um, ensure that this is our opportunity. And unfortunately, what that does is in order to succeed in that, um, aspect, you've got to pray on other people's fear. And so where the most positive response is coming is those leaders who are leading with vulnerability. And by that I don't mean weakness. We often conflate vulnerability with weakness. What I mean is the ability to stand up and whether it's at a governmental level or a business level and say <inaudible> and saying something along these lines. Yes, this is a crisis that we are in.

Speaker 1 08:57 Yes, it is tough. Yes, this is difficult. Um, I --

-- know that this will be a long journey for us. I don't know all the answers. Here is what we do know to DNA. This is the information that we have here is our best gas to where it's going and here's what we are putting in place in order to get us there. This will likely change over the coming weeks and months and we will react appropriately. And so it's those leaders that are stepping forward and being sure about the things that they know that they can be sure about and being flexible and agile elsewhere. There's true vulnerability in doing that. And I think those leaders are having the best impact at the minutes and in any crisis. And I guess if you admit as the leader or you state outright, you know, I don't have all the answers that opens the door for other people who may have some good ideas or may have an answer to come forward without fearing that there, I dunno, for lack of a better word, stepping on your toes.

Speaker 1 09:54 Absolutely. And that applies not just in a, in a period of crisis, but at any time. Um, you know, a leader has a degree of experience, uh, and a degree of knowledge on a set of skills that they have developed over their life in their career. And that is valuable and we, and, and it's important, but it's not the whole picture. There are other people that have their own experiences and their own set of skills and their own way of viewing the world. And when we put our blinkers on as a leader and say, I've been through this before in any circumstance and this is how we're going to get through. We're sucking the energy and the oxygen out of the room and we're really, for the most part, stomping, dine on creativity and innovation, which ultimately come whenever we consider more than one person's viewpoint.

Speaker 1 10:44 So Dave, you say in your book actually that you believe that becoming a great leader should be the goal, not the means to some other outcome. And I guess it's just an evolution, right? So as you go through your leadership, you are learning, um, how to do this and how people respond to you in every situation probably brings you, um, a new way of approaching your leadership. <inaudible> uh, yeah. I, I, it's funny whenever you just look at the sheer numbers of people that are in managerial and leadership positions across the globe and how many of them just stumble into it because they believe that, um, going upwards is the best thing for it. But the reality is being a manager or leader and, and, and overseeing a group of people is very different than add your functional ability to do the job and actually being able to say, you know what, I'm, I don't want to manage people.

Speaker 1 11:42 I don't want to lead people. I'm quite comfortable doing my job and just staying at it and finding a career, um, at that aspect of it chose a huge degree of emotional. And I worry that too many people just accept promotions in leadership positions because either there's pay attached to it or because they just feel it's the right thing to do. You should view leadership as a part of the legacy of your life that you're building. Being a great leader just for the sake of being a great leader is, is the goal. It's not to get to an end. It's not so that you'll have more profitability or sell more product or, um, have a greater impact. Just the nature of character and being a good leader. We don't value that enough. Uh, and so I am for anybody that's listening to this, if you're in a leadership position or you want to be in a leadership position, ask yourself why to what and, um, w it's sort of character you're trying to build for yourself.

Speaker 1 12:40 I wonder, like in your experience meeting leaders and it goes to this question we just discussed, are the people that are the really good leaders, the ones that really want to be the leader? Yeah, that's a very interesting point in that there's a degree of ego that goes in there that actually the best leaders have an ability to suppress. Uh, and so folks that are driven, um, for success, power or authority often find themselves in those leadership positions, uh, when quite often the ones that don't seek them out are better leaders. And I hope that our organizations and culture on mass are making a shift to recognize, value, appreciate and reward some of those last ego-driven leaders, um, to, to give them a greater voice and a greater seat seat at the table. Can you talk about some people that you've been working with --

-- that art are on this journey to becoming a self evolve leader and some of the challenges that they've had, like share some real life stories with us?

Speaker 1 13:51 Um, absolutely. The, the biggest challenge that comes for anybody really making this shift is the fact that we have these years worth of, um, signups is that we've grooved in our mind in the way in which, um, we show up. And so just trying to unpick that and rebuild food habits over the, the top of that. Um, it's just, it's just tough. And so I've spent about three years working with the president of a retail company, um, who started out very much as the heroic leader as the person who knew all of the answers. And over the last three years he has worked really hard to build a leadership team or wrong Tim that, um, are, are, as a result, the team is running the business. They have their hands on the wheel and they become less and less dependent on him. But the problem and the challenges as you empower a team on a group, when you can see them potentially going in a direction that you wouldn't necessarily have taken or that might provide the opportunity for failure to not want to dive in and to, to save the day is a, has been a real hard struggle for him.

Speaker 1 15:13 And so I've been working with him on just, um, making that decision. Is this big enough of a challenge that if it were to go awry, it would be problematic in which case he had them. We have to have a conversation with the team versus the likelihood in most cases is this is just a preference aspect. This isn't the direction that you would go in. So let the team make the decision, let them implement it, and then use it as a learning lesson for everybody. And, um, that's just a hard shift to make because you're used to acting in a certain way. And so we're just teaching and training new behaviors and habits, um, to, to help them overcome that old way of thinking.

Speaker 2 15:52 And how do you pull somebody's butt like that back from the ledge where they wanna jump in and say, Oh no, we can't do it that way. How do you pull them back? You remind them of the, um, 18 hour days that they had. They used to have to work, um, because they were doing that all of the time and remind them that they've been able to take weekends and holidays over the last year and that actually,

Speaker 1 16:14 uh, you know, the end result is the, is the place of where they want to get to and to keep going. They're not for some people. Um, and that's the sign of a, of a self evolved leader, right? The ability to understand who they are as a leader and to not necessarily try to make the negative aspects go away, but to understand whenever it pops up and to say, okay, that's how I would typically approach it. You know, I understand that that's there. Here's a different direction that I'm going to go in and to be very intentional about their approach. Self evolve. Leaders are very intentional about the decisions that they make about when they're going to pull back some of those natural instincts and when they're going to use them to their advantage. There are some folks who struggle to make this transition because the reality is even though they pay lip service to understanding the transition, at the end of the day, they don't want to make it because they just want to be the King maker. They want to be the person that has all of the authority. At the end of the day. That's where their ego gets stoked and and in some cases some people just don't ever make that transition

Speaker 2 17:21 <inaudible>. Now for those of those leaders who do want to get away from, from being the King maker and do start this path of self evolve leadership, and they do start to find all of that free time because their team is actually doing their job, what are they able to achieve now that they're not being the hero?

Speaker 1 17:44 That the key value that a leader will add when they can make this transition is the ability to think about the medium and longterm direction of their team and the development of their people. And when you're operating as a heroic leader, you spend so much time in the weeds pursuing crisis, making up crisis, firefighting because that's where you get your endorphin rush and you spend not enough time or certainly not enough proactive time thinking of body, the medium and long term direction of your team and the development of your people. And so when you go through this proc --

-- ess, you find that you've got the time to proactively review the next, it's 12 months, the next quarter, the next half of a year, and you've got the time to make more intelligent, informed, innovative and creative decisions about the direction that you're going in over that period of time. And you've also got more time to stand alongside your people and to give them longer term, um, uh, mentoring and coaching to help them develop.

Speaker 1 18:49 Uh, um, so, so those two aspects meet in longterm direction of your team and then the time to develop your people. And what does that team look like? Once self evolve leadership starts to take hold for a team that's led by a truly self evolved leader. Ultimately, anybody at any time, any individual could step away from the team and their role could be filled with somebody else with minimal disruption because we're building in our success, uh, um, on our collective efforts, not on any one individual. Secondly, a self evolve team has the ability to take shifting priorities, uh, new inputs and to subsume it, put it into a course of action and kick it out at the other end in a result, in a way that feels smooth and forward moving. Whereas as I'm sure you and a lot of listeners, um, uh, feel currently when a priority shifts or we get a new opportunity or a new initiative, there's this, this tendency to kick up a big dust cloud and everybody in arches from side to side to try to figure out what's going on and how to keep up with that self evolve.

Speaker 1 19:59 Leaders build teams that have the ability to deal with those sorts of shifts in priorities and the inputs in a much more seamless way. It's not perfect, but it's a lot more aligned and focused. So in history or even now, who do you see that as embodying the traits of the self evolved leader? I think there's a couple of folks out there that are, that are, um, coming to mind. I mean, ultimately for me, a good sign is anybody that aims to leave their organization or their community in a better way than they find it, that they're driven by the human side of leadership rather than the, um, you know, maximize shareholder value side. All that. And a couple of years ago, a guy called Dan price who runs a tech firm up in, in Silicon Valley, or maybe I'm called gravity, I'm sad that he understood that the living wage in the area that he lived was about \$70,000.

Speaker 1 20:55 And so he took a pay cut to ensure that everybody on his staff received at least \$70,000. And at the time everybody thought it was madness. They thought it was a form of socialism and that the company was going to, you know, they were gonna collapse and they've gone from strength to strength and they've grown year on, year in, year out, and he's built a team that is willing to give back into the organization because they're getting something from it. Uh, and then another great example is the CEO of Patagonia. Uh, Patagonia is an interesting company to watch. They have, um, this notion of impacting their community in positive ways, built into the vision and mission of the organization. And so you look at little things like for the last couple of years, they've closed on black Friday, July their staff to, to have the day off to spend with their family.

Speaker 1 21:46 What a great sentiment to say, you know, what the biggest sales day of the year that's for our team to recharge with their family because they're going to come back and they're going to kill it for the rest of the year. And they were one of the first organizations, um, as the coronavirus on them, it started spread who closed on all of their stores and said, we're going to pay our people because that's most important to us. So aspects like that, um, folks that are truly leading with empathy, with vulnerable ability, um, building the human side of the connections that they have with their team, with their partners, with their vendors, with their clients, uh, and with their community around them.

Speaker 2 22:23 So what are some key takeaways for, for how people can get started on the path to self evolve? Leadership, I guess the first key takeaway is buy the book and have a look through it because honestly, Dave, you tell some great stories. You, you described some great scenarios in the book that I think most leaders would recognize and you walk them through that process. But just off the top, what would be some key takeaways to get people started? And thank yo --

-- u very much for saying yes <inaudible>

Speaker 1 22:50 that Johnathan by the book, I wrote it to be as accessible as possible to as many leaders as possible regardless of the position they're in. The first step is to make that mindset shift that we talked about. So to make your focus, um, helping your team achieve your shared goals and in doing so to develop into the best version of themselves. And then from there there's a set of steps that you can walk through that are simple to describe, but they're a little more difficult, um, to do in practice. The first one is to recraft your vision for your team, with your team involved. So make them co-conspirators and painting the picture of where you want to be 12 months at, where three years from now, and then you sort of work backwards and you say, okay, if that's where we want to get to, what's the, what's the implementation rhythm that we need to walk through to ensure that we get there?

Speaker 1 23:37 So how do we set a series of annual goals to get us closer to that vision? How do we break that down into 90 day sprints? And then how do we break that down into the daily actions that everybody takes every day? So you've built this vision with your team of where you're going. You've got, you've charted the course with this implementation rhythm. And then there are a set of, of, uh, I call leadership disciplines to build, um, which are those behavioral aspects to really help you chart that course. Uh, and I talk about, um, those disciplines in, in the book, but there are things like, um, making sure that you're being intentional, that you're taking a pause whenever you're being asked to value the assist situation that you spend time coaching your team rather than telling them what to do. Um, but ultimately just having that focus of how can I make these people the best version of themselves rather than me taking all of the glory.

Speaker 2 24:28 Hmm. That's a good, that's a good point. Dave. I really appreciate having you on the show. Again, it's always good to talk to you. I always learn something and good luck with the book. I think it's terrific. Thank you so much, John. It's always fun to talk with you about these things. Hope you have a wonderful week. Yeah. Same to you. So David McKeown's book is called the self evolved leader and it's a really interesting book that has little, um, exercises at the end of it and connections that you can go to links from the book to, to learn more and to try out other things. It's a great tool for the leaders. So if you're interested, you can find it, uh, at self evolve leader.com and on Amazon. Dave McEwen is the founder and CEO of outfield leadership. He has discussed the Arctic leadership on make it right a couple of times with us episodes 46 47 and 89 so if you want to check those out as well, they are there for you. That's our show this week. Face check out our Twitter and LinkedIn feeds that are on our podcast page and subscribe and share this podcast with your friends and colleagues through iTunes, Google play, Stitcher, Spotify, YouTube, and the make it right podcast is brought to you by Kevin <inaudible>, leadership advisor and author of the bestselling book. Make it right, five steps to align your manufacturing business from the front line to the bottom line. Until next time, I'm <inaudible>, thanks for listening to the, at your bride podcast.

--