

The Leadership Diet with Richard Neall

Pod: Pod here

I'm joined by Richard Neil, who is the group chief exec of one group construction group of companies in the UK, which is a group of construction logistics. And other related industries held under a holding group called one group construction.

Richard was born in Western Sydney area called the blue mountains in Katoomba and lived there until his late twenties.

When he then moved to the UK, what his girlfriend, Peppa, who later became his wife. We discuss his early days in his career in the UK. And after four years taken on his first MD /CEO role in a listed business. This was a major mistake. We discussed why it was mistake, why the culture of that organization did not suit him and is very public firing from that role.

One year later, however that led to an opportunity that arose, which led to him getting involved in a management buyout of his previous company, which is now where he is as the group chief executive officer.

We talk about culture. We talk about fun. We talk about staying healthy. We talk about the organization's vision and mission for itself, which is happy people making money.

We talk about his notions of leadership, including if you are the boss, you're always being watched as to do the right thing. More importantly, this is a conversation full of insights, fun, energy, and a bit of larrikin Aussie humor for someone working in the UK

A bit of disclosure here, Richard grew up in Katoomba where my wife grew up. They'd been lifelong friends and we discussed that relationship and how she put us together for this conversation. Thank you, Carole!

Richard: On the front page of our construction news over here and all that sort of thing, and it was horrific, but it was brilliant. It was brilliant. It was exactly what I needed for an overconfident young guy. Who'd never got a wrong to have your heart ripped out publicly and to come home and to have your wife go... it's okay....

Pod: Welcome to the leadership diet. I interview leaders and experts about ways to optimize leadership. What are useful habits and thinking patterns. What are the secrets to high-performance teams and how do they continue to nurture their effectiveness day after day? In other words, what is their leadership diet?

Welcome Richard, to this episode of the leadership diets. So great to see you

Now you're the chief executive of the group chief exec rider of one group construction, which is a very successful privately owned construction organization in the UK with 20 offices, over 500 people and multiple different brands beneath the overarching brand.

And I want to jump to how you came into that organization through an MBO in a few minutes, cause that's a very unusual way to end up in that role. But one of the things that we often do in this podcast is go back to the stories of origin and you, and I know each other through mutual friends and families in place called Katoomba and the blue mountains, Western of Sydney, where I knew you grew up in that area and your family was affectionately called a 10 pound Pom family.

And most of our listeners will have no idea who I'm talking about when I say that.

So let's start there. What is a 10 pound pom family? And what was life like for you growing up in the blue mountains?

Richard: Well, a bit to cover there. Yeah. You'll get me crying already in pod Katoomba was where I was born! Yeah.

That's definitely home world listed area and all the rest of it. It makes it sound a bit Flesher than it probably was to be honest. But yeah, I was born up there. The 10 pound homework I'm questioning whether it's 10 pounds or five pounds now, but that was my mom's family. And basically back in the fifties, she came out and left from till rebox, which ironically, we've done a bit of work over the years since.

Yeah, it's really nice. And uh, they pulled the whole family up and they moved out there. As I say in the mid sixties. So yeah, that's a 10 or five pound, whichever it is a hamam really. So yeah. I, you talk over here, you mentioned a poem and they look at you a little bit funny, but it's, I mean, it

Pod: definitely affects you.

It's a well-known term over here. And then my memory is, is of course I wasn't in Australia at that time as my accent gives away. But the memory, the 10 pound was the cost of the fare to get from the UK to Australia. And it was. It was used predominantly for folks from the UK, as opposed to other countries, hence the 10 pound Palm butter.

I think, I think the historical settlement of Australia continued long after the convicts were sent out. And when we use those fairs to get more people out here to help settle it,

Richard: I think you're exactly right. But I still play the convict card occasion here. They can

Pod: do my history. Do I have to have one to still get in

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Richard: depending on what's happening or I'll either play the conflict card if we're winning or I'll actually remind people that yeah, you'd beat us in the world cup or whatever it is, but my mother was English.

My dad was born on the boat or conceived on the boat on the way out there. So I'm as English. So like most Aussies I'll just play, which puts me in the best position.

Pod: Absolutely. I read an interview. You did a few years ago where you're talking about your background in Australia and you talked about. That when you were young, your parents separated and you ended up living with your dad and some of your siblings live with your mom, which had a big impact in terms of how it shaped you and how you youth think of the world.

Can you tell us a bit about that and how that influenced you then? And I suspect it's still mine today. It sounds

Richard: like you've been talking to my wife already. Yeah, definitely still influences me in a positive way now, but now my mum and dad split when I was eight and I had an older brother still, but a couple of years older than me and then two younger ones and they made the decision.

This was sort of mid I'm old now I'm mid seventies. So it was early days for people to get divorced. I remember in school, I was one of, I was the only one at my school who mum and dad were divorced, but within about five years, everyone

Pod: with the train continued,

Richard: but yeah, they, yeah, but they made, they made the decision to, to two of the boys, the two young ones to go with my mum and the two elder ones, myself and my older brother, Steve, to go with dad.

And yeah, I think we all still struggle with. Making sense out of that. And I think there's been a lot of guilt built up on all sides, mainly my mom's side, I guess, for letting that to happen, but what they did. And we'll probably talk about it later. I think it's the journey that shapes who you are and you sort of, you know, I think for me it ended up a positive.

I ended up having to pretty much look after myself. My dad always provided, but there wasn't a lot of love in the house really is not a natural sort of soft person. My brother was rat bag. He got in lots of travel. So that made me look good, which was good, but it meant that you had to be pretty self-sufficient and, and I guess that shaped.

A positive side for me, I had to get off my entire life. I was going to do anything. The negative side is I certainly didn't understand girls. I always had girlfriends, but I didn't understand them because I didn't have a mom in the house to say, no, no, no,

Pod: that's not what you do. And say that you must see

Richard: that occasionally you can pick the, you can pick the older children and you can pick the ones who've been brought up by dad.

So my wife's had a journey of. A hundred years, 30 years, whatever it's been, it's not quite 30 years of trying to shake me into it. She's not there yet.

Pod: I think all of our wives say they're shaping us into human beings and they always say, they're not there yet. So don't worry. You're not alone. Richard. I think, you know, my wife, I think you might have to understand.

She would say that every now and again. Yeah. I think

Richard: you're wise still shaping me

Pod: from before we jump into, you know, your arrival in the UK, in another interview, I read that you had done. Once you talked about a really important moment for you in the blue mountains, where you had started your engineering career.

I think you had already, I think you had a reply to an ad in the paper and went to Sydney university and started there, but you were in, you were dating a lady in Sydney who, uh, left you because you felt you weren't going anywhere, wrote a harsh judgment, I suspect. But nonetheless, it seems to stimulate you in, into taking action about that.

Richard: Yes. Well, yeah, it's true. As it sounds, we were very close to getting married and I loved it a bit. And like most younger company go on when I was 22, 23, I was a blue. I was oblivious to the fact that she didn't quite love me as much as I loved her, that the reason she gave me ended up being whether it was true or not.

I don't know. But the reason she gave me she'd just started a career in, she became an accountant and she was doing well. And I was a council guy, as I say, I'd applied to a job in the paper and told them the only thing I'd ever wanted to be was an engineer. And I didn't even know what an engineer was, but blank my way into this job.

And it was just because they hired me to go through university. So that was sort of nice. And I was sort of just plodding along and, and that was probably the kick I needed in a funny way. Probably the. Know, I probably would have liked from my family at some stage, but we were sort of left to sort of do our own thing really.

And that gave me a kick to say, well, you know, really, are you going to make anything in your life? Really? And I remember the next day I put a tie on the award title where we'll put a tie on laughable now, but I put a tie on and went to work and I got serious about what I was doing. And I got over it fairly quickly, but I hung onto the pain for many years intentionally because I said, we'll make this happen, but we will not prove somebody wrong.

Cause I still deep down, she was a lovely girl and I still hope she's in a great place, but I made it a motivation for me for, for quite a long time,

Pod: really MC on, on this podcast and indeed in my home career where I interview leaders every single day, most leaders who are successful have a, a moment of humiliation of some kind that they hold on to as, as a memory to remind them of that event.

Plus it's no longer painful. It sparked me to do something different than if I hadn't done something different. I still be back there as opposed to where I am. So how do I not lose that learning? And it sounds like for you as being, it was a really awfully painful moment at the time, but it really changed your whole life in the sense of not just putting on a tie and changing your fashion, but actually changing your whole perspective.

And then in day that led you to, to England a couple years later,

Richard: looking back at your career and what's happened, I guess you'd pull out individual bits that sort of make it make sense. If, if, if you, like, I think in reality, it's probably a combination, but me and other things that will probably be more important, but as a soundbite that helps you put it in perspective.

And I had several issues like that. And probably the biggest one that in reality is meeting my wife, meeting in English girl. Who's just still the most wonderful person in the world. And she had a massive influence on me as an individual and that. Yeah, that, that gave me a bedrock emotionally and as a human being that allowed me to go and do okay.

In the, in, on the, on the work side. Really. So that's, that's probably by far, far bigger influence, but yeah, some of the values and boy, we've had some events, some few, some of those failures career-wise has been massively influential and yeah, you've got to get it wrong. You have to get it wrong. It hurts.

But that's the stuff that really gives you the leaps in terms of progress of how you can deal with things. But you

Pod: know, that better than I do. You mentioned Pippa. And at the head of this call, we were talking about, you know, the amount of Australians who go to UK and indeed the amount of folks in the UK who come to Australia.

And, and I, uh, am I right in remembering she was here in Australia, you met her here and then you guys went to UK couple years later.

Richard: Yeah. That's exactly right. Yeah. She was tennis collection and she'd been playing a little tournament tennis and she took some time off to do some coaching out here. And how can you not play?

Typical Aussie score was really important. She was gorgeous. She was a tennis player. Yeah. The cast has died. We spent four or five years over here after getting married came back here, got married, went back to was that the game was always at some stage. We'll spend a little bit of time in the UK and then we'll decide where we're going to live.

She decided, you know what? The answer

Pod: is

Richard: just an idiot. And that was 97. Yeah. We came out here and been here ever since and just, just loved it really, really, really happy over here.

Pod: So moving into the work fund, then you, you joined organization called Jackson partners through a contact. You had met previously in a previous excursion to the UK because they were a contract engineering company. Then you moved into a, I suppose like a business development type role for them. Uh, sort of kinda, it was

Richard: early days in contracting there a group of contracting businesses.

So they build things and I knocked on the door and I got along reasonably well with the guy who ran it. And there wasn't, there was one content much to my disgust because I hate the idea of context and old school ties. But I did happen to know one guy who knew. This other guy, Peter Andrews. So yeah, completely hypocritical in terms of my uncomfortableness with, with context, but he gave me a shot and he gave me a, a, a, a low level job.

I'd had a pretty good joke with the council. So that was, that was difficult. Really. I felt like I was going backwards and there was some tears, but Pivotal's a wonderful story about me crying out the front on my day, too, with Jackson's. We standing with my little briefcase and being all upset because I thought my life was ended and my career was over.

But then he gave me a job in, it was the early days when you started bidding for work on with the quality submissions. So you had to prove not only that this was a sensible price, but what were you going to do and how are you going to perform this particular contract and where with the local community and all that sort of stuff.

So I was, I was given a chance to write some things. I wasn't very good at it because we didn't win every job. And I didn't see the point in bidding work that we didn't win. It was my stuff setting. So they quickly moved me on and I just kept putting my hand up to say, yeah, I'll try that. I don't know how that works, but I'll have a go.

And that works quite well in most organizations because people

Pod: put their hand up. Yeah. Well, that's an interesting comment to make. And I know I saw you, you said something similar in an interview elsewhere where you talked about curiosity is a core trait and therefore putting your hand up and having a go is a really core tenant of your own success.

What is it about having to go that, that you are able to do? And what was the lack of fear you have? I suppose in having to go? So that's a very good question. I

Richard: guess it stems. Having now had a little insight into my, my past. I always had an underlying confidence if you like, and for me, that country sport, I was reasonably sporty.

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I wasn't particularly academic. I did. Okay. I forced myself to do okay. People like your wife were far brighter than me and still are, but I did. Okay. And sport was a good bedrock for the confidence that I came with. For me, I've always fought over confidence if anything, and I'm always quite self-critical because I hate the idea of being perceived as overconfidence.

But yeah, I'm pretty confident certain through, I'm not too scared of having to go as you put it, but there were definitely some moments when I came to the UK and I don't know whether others in listening to this sort of. I don't know whether it's an imposter syndrome or whatever. I met some pretty high flyers when I came over here and I realized they weren't very good.

That sounds, that sounds wrong. But I realized that I realized they weren't as brilliant as I assumed you had to be, you be a high flyer. And that was, that was an important moment for me because I thought, you know what? I can live in this pond. You know, I might not be there yet, and I might not have the experience and whatnot, but the things like the internet around with being prepared to certainly be curious, ask questions, don't be afraid.

You can have a pretty good go. And if you, if you underpin that in my, in my. The way I teach I'm a planner. I have to be organized. If I say I'm going to do something, you know, it happens. And if you're pretty organized and your project management skills are pretty tight and you actually do what you say you're going to do, and you're prepared to put your hand up in my experience in, in the businesses I've worked with you, you go up the ladder pretty quickly, because most of the ones at the top of that lack some of those skills, or even if it's just there, they're not that good at getting stuff done.

Whereas I, I can get stuff done.

Pod: My mentors years ago said to me that when you're looking at folks in, in executive levels of leadership, typically the balance between confidence and competence is out of balance. The folks who have got more confidence than competence tend to be promoted for are faster than the folks got more competence than confidence.

So I look for the ones who look more confident and follow them. And I think that goes to what you just said.

Richard: Yeah. I think, and, and fake it to make it, whatever that expression is. I think you grow into your own shoes, but you know, and I'm sure I speak more to talk a little bit later about this old guy have become, but after a while, you can just do it and you find yourself not needing to be as brave on the outside because you actually sorta know the answer before you start, but that comes with experience and it comes with making, you know, having got a lot of things wrong over the years, but yeah, I D I just, when, when we came to the UK in particular, I'd gone, gone backwards in a big way.

And I just thought, well, I've got nothing to lose. And I got myself organized. I documented every person I met. I said to them who they were, where their families came from. I, I didn't



understand any businesses. So a lot of work research on businesses and I played the Aussie card regularly. I would say, look, I don't know how this works over here, because I'm a foreigner.

Can you explain it to me? And, and, and I've kept that my whole life. And, you know, I, I love just asking people about how things work, you know, whether that's them personally or their business.

Pod: I find it fascinating to be foreigner. It goes to a peer to me. I don't know how this works. I'm a foreigner. Can you please tell me?

Yeah.

Richard: Now that I don't even sound Australian anymore, it gets harder, but yeah, not, not so much, but yeah, the habit of a lifetime and yeah, I just find myself and as I say, if we were just having more general chat, you would be good being grilled. And I wouldn't be deflecting every question because that's,

you're far more interesting than me and I use that. I use that a lot, but that's just who I am. I'm just that person. And you know, if people really try, I'll let them, I'll let them in a little bit, but I just don't think I'm particularly

Pod: interesting. There's something you sent me. I know you do say when you are working with young engineers or you're doing presentations and I read it jumped out at me, but when I read it and that is be confident enough to take advice from anyone.

I love the juxtaposition between be confident and taking advice. Cause it kind of a, an irony that sits with that yet my own experiences, folks who are really, really confident themselves are very, very happy to take advice. And it kind of goes to what you just said about asking questions yet. I'm my experience.

My experience is a lot of leaders want to show up knowing as if they know the answers and then therefore they are less open for other people's perspectives. But what you are saying is the opposite. Be very confident in asking for advice and therefore multiple perspectives completely,

Richard: completely, I guess, where that comes from in my regard, I'm a bit of a reluctant.

I don't think you can sign it eras we've been in, in a relative way being re relatively successful. We're happy. We're healthy with we've got nice stuff. And however you want to measure that it's worked out really well in terms of work. You know, I've been in a senior position for sort of ever our first, I was running a business, a reasonably large business before our management buyer first buyout in 2004.

So for the last 20 odd years, I've been in a pretty senior position. So I've been the boss for long enough that it doesn't matter anymore. You are the boss and you act like the boss and

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you, when you go to events, when you go to places, when you sit in meetings, when you talk to people, you are that person already.

So the smart thing to do is not need to be the boss because you are already, and you have got more experience and you have, you have got a way of looking for things and you've got that weird wisdom thing. And I don't know where that came from, but you've sort of got that. And so the one thing you definitely don't need to do is be the one.

And I find that that disrupts the landscape terrifically because people go, Oh, this person is prepared to listen. You know, I can't be out a lot of what I say was the water. What do I know? But from my perspective, it feels like something like this, what are you guys thinking about this? And that's quite disarming, but it also changes the whole dynamic and the businesses I'm involved with.

Don't have hierarchies, don't have, I'll make the call. I'll always make the call, but it's after we've had the discussion, we've heard what people really think. And I know you've worked in America and work with that side of the pond. I feel uncomfortable in that sort of world where people sort of jump in mind as they tell the boss, whatever he wants to hear and then walk out a meeting again.

Yeah, God,

That was stupid. I feel is not the boss's or Chair of any meeting or as a more senior person in any environment, you are duty bound to actually make sure that people can actually have an opinion because that's the engine room. That's where the smart stuff's going on. All you're doing is sort of shoving it all together in a, in a way that actually means you get some results out of this at the end.

But yeah, feel very strongly about that. Don't don't be the boss. You

Pod: are in it. There, there, there is a beautiful wisdom in what you just said, and I'm going to jump to this too. I was going to come this later on, but you you've dumped it already. The thing that really jumped out at me, when I read some of the presentations you make to young engineers is you are always being watched.

So always do the right thing. And the work that I do, many leaders who become the most senior leader in their organization or in their country, if they are an affiliate of a multinational, or if they become a CEO for the first time, one of the things that they takes a while to get used to is that they're on show the whole time.

And the initial reaction is it's unfair because I'm on a human being and then gradually they realize, well, that's just part of the job. What you're saying is just realizing day one, you're being watched and they forward us do the right thing. And then I think it will be flying,

Richard: I guess, two fold there as an individual.

I'm I don't like any skeletons, very uncomfortable skeletons. And I think I'm probably my own biggest critic. I use a lot of cliches, but I really am. I self-analyze myself to bits and all the rest of it. And I hope on the outside, people think I'm this laid back Ozzie, who doesn't worry about anything. I plan what's going on.

I think a lot about where we're going, what's happening. I retrospectively think about conversations I've had with people and I worry that I would ever upset anyone unfairly on an emotional level. You know, I'm, I'm prepared to go and swing some punches, but I would hate to think that I ever upset you when it goes to the level that stuff is, is, is, is, is worries me, but in terms of who I am and how I tick, I am very open and I don't have too many.

I don't like having anything to hide. I would never hide any new people. She's pretty safe. And she, she, she tells me she'll go and have an affair and I'll have to let her off. She knows I'll never have an affair because I'm just not built that way. So it underpins from a point of view that I'm watching myself pretty hard and I have very high.

Standards individually, but there was a moment, there was a moment of you talk about moments that make you think about things. There was a moment of work and we have in the office that I'm basting. We have some big stairs and it's all very granting glass. I got overexcited when we build that anyway, I tend to run up the stairs and it's just my thing.

Um, I, I like that. That's who I am. And somebody said to me one day, because I'm a chatter, I'll go and talk to whoever I'm one of, one of the young engineers or whoever it was said, do you know if you don't run up the stairs, we think the business is in trouble. And I said, wax. I said, what? And they said, yeah, yeah.

They said, you know, we think it's gone horribly wrong. And we start worrying and all the rest of it. And, and that was a penny dropping for me pod. And initially it was like, it was sort of funny. And then it was a bit like a grief cycle initially. It was funny. And then it was, Oh really? And then it was, but that's okay because.

You know, I'm pretty straightforward. And, but what I try now and what I, what I've tried subsequently to do on that front is just make sure everyone knows me. And sometimes I'm just tired it's because I went for a bike ride at a hundred miles a day before I'm just worn out. There's nothing wrong with the company, but yeah, the openness is probably, yeah.

And people are watching and that's good because you know, that's our job. We get paid loads of money and we can Swan around and pretend we're working. Well. The reason we get that privilege is because people depend on us when, when the times are tough. And part of that is be up, be up. Why wouldn't you be, it's not fair.

You work with a load of people and they come to work and that you get the privilege of them helping you do things. And we're going to do is give them some money. It's this thing's bizarre to me. It's a great deal. So why is it not fair that all you got to do is pretend

Pod: everything's fine. It's not that hard.

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I'm sure it's a little bit more than just that, but yes, your honor, the, the, the, the signals you send as a more senior leader are profound and, and people are watching for those and indeed making sense of those rightly or wrongly they're they're watching.

Richard: Yeah. And I think the caveat to all this is, and the long rambler, the start of that conversation about not having too many skeletons myself, I think it must be exhausting if you are not that person, it must be exhausting if really you're winging it, or your life's a mess on your own fire at home or stuff isn't right.

Or whatever. And I guess my advice to that type of leader might be, well, maybe the whole open leadership. Thing's not for you, you know, do you really need to run this organization or perhaps just doing the bit that you're in at the moment, it's got some sort of walls around it and you can keep home. In a good place and you can manage work at that level.

Maybe that's a better place to aim. And maybe, maybe some of the ones that run, you know, just to have that desire to take over the world at the expense of their home lives and their families and all the rest of it. Yeah. I feel that's an unhappy place to be. And I'm definitely not like that. I would give it all up tomorrow if, if it meant, you know, if it was jeopardizing my home life and who I was and who my family were, cause it's

Pod: not, none of it study.

We hope you're enjoying this episode of the leadership diet. Feel free to hit the subscribe button on whatever podcast player you are listening to this on reviews on iTunes and Spotify. I greatly appreciate it. I want to go back to when you, when you first joined Jackson partners and, and you, you, as you said, you put your hand up, you did lots of different things.

You tried different things. You were very successful, very fast and within, I think a short period of time, like within five years, you were approached to take on a major role in a different organization, quite a public organization with what you did. And then in many senses, that would have been a, you know, a dream come true.

You know, you you'd left Ozzie. He has been promoted very, very fast. You joined your head headhunted to join a large organization, and yet you said it was a big mistake. Uh, first of all, why was it a mistake? And what did it take for you to admit for yourself or realize for yourself, this is a mistake.

Richard: It was a mistake within, I would say, half an hour of getting to the organization.

It's sort of really funny looking back. And it was one of the best things that ever happened to me, but, you know, that's my nature to most things look positive somehow, but it really was. Yeah. So I hunted away someone got through the, through the barriers and. Got me on the phone and told me I was brilliant.



I met them a couple of times. I'd done reasonably well with, with Jackson at that stage. And it seemed natural maybe on the back of the sort of conversation I was just having, it seemed natural that I go and take over an even bigger business Jackson's at that stage where a listed business. So they were a public business and a private business.

And I didn't know the difference between the two. And I went to an even bigger one. And then the penny dropped when I had not been to their organization because it was one of these ones where they parachuted me in. But the guy who I took over from wasn't aware during the interview process, that he wasn't going to be there.

And I feel terrible about that. I will never be involved in one of them again, because that was wrong. But anyway, they told me he was rubbish and I was brilliant. And I went down there and I remember they had, I was in one of the directors suites of the organization and there was another one for even bigger directors and they have a punch code on the door.

Right. And I sat down and I went, this is uncomfortable. And I sat for about quarter of an hour and I spoke to, to my, whatever PA secretary at the time and which I feel again, I'm old school. You don't have any of them anymore. I said, where's the gang. Where, where are my people? And they said, really? They said, Oh, well you could go up and talk to some of them.

And I was later told that the boss had not been on that for, for something like 18 months. Wow. And I went, Oh, so yeah, it wasn't, it wasn't a leap of faith to realize, wow, I am in the wrong place, but I knew they'd find me within a year, which they did in those days. It was, you had a year before you had to pay loads of money.

And I took the year to meet so many big in the industry. I met a lot of people. I still hung onto the hope that they would love me eventually because secretly I wanted them to love me, but they didn't. They hated me. They fired me in an old school, public hanging. They made me March out of the office with my box, the front page of our construction news over here and all that sort of thing.

And it was horrific, but it was brilliant. It was brilliant. It was exactly what I needed for an overconfident young guy. Who'd never got it wrong. Okay. Have your heart ripped out publicly and to come home and to have your wife go it's okay. We're fine. And that was a big moment because we literally, we shot too, but we changed our shopping habits.

We didn't spend any money. And I launched the MBO attempt on my old business, along at that stage, which we managed to pull through in just under a year, we made that happen. And you know, I, all my Christmases come at once ever since really to, to be a private business and own that business when it's got a bit of scale to it is in my opinion, as good as it gets.

So, yeah, but it was sort of horrible, but yeah, you can laugh now.

Pod: You weren't laughing at the time, but if you have anything that you've said, I want to double down, he said, you realize pretty quickly is the wrong place for you. And that that's one thing. You also realize there's a high chance of that.

You'd be far within 12 months and at the same token, you, you were able to go, what can I do to optimize why I'm here, knowing that they made, they have to probably are going to fire me. That that's an extraordinary way of thinking to be able to stop and pause and go. This is going to end badly. So I might as well make them also while I'm here, I guess, from the

Richard: outside.

But if you know me, I'm reasonably good. I hope I'm reasonably pragmatic about things. I guess there's an underlying, and I say this to people all the time and it's really hard, but we are where we are. We are where we are. I'm not very good at looking back. And that's why this sort of conversation is sort of vaguely interesting.

Cause I never think about this stuff because it's not who I am. I'm very interested in where we're going and what's happening and all the rest of it. So most of the time I end up at that point reasonably quickly and certainly more quickly now than it than even then. I was on the floor when they actually fired me.

But for the year before and the context I created and the friends I made and the things I learned about myself, working in a very difficult environment, working with difficult people, working with people who didn't take the same way. I wouldn't say it was easy, but it was, it was healthy. And it's been a bit of a bedrock moving forward.

But, yeah, it's just the way I take really. I it's, it's all you can do. You are where we are. I couldn't afford to walk a day in those days. I didn't, I didn't have any money, any real money. So I had to see it out and it still hurt really badly. Cause I don't like failing and I don't like, like a lot of people who've been done.

Okay. In business, you know, secretly the fear of failure is there for all of us. So it didn't like that. But yeah, I think, I think we managed to turn that into a positive, but you know, people, people was really important to that. And one or two mates who jumped on the phone straight away and said, now come on.

If we come in and play golf and say, I'm not playing go. They hate me. The world hates me. And they, when you come to Blake golf, I'm coming around to your house. And yet

Pod: you're back on the horse. So strong family support friendship from, from other folks what us grounded you are sustained. You joined that transition when you were exiting there and before you actually had gone into the MBO.

Healthy,

Richard: as I said, the only problem is somebody

Pod: who's

Richard: very quick to criticize themselves when it goes wrong, you can get lost in that criticism. You can be lost in the, if only if only you're finding the truth was it was fundamentally wrong. And I knew that within, within the assistant to you half an hour of being in place, it took a little while to believe in myself and go, you know what?

That was never going to work. Once I got to that point, I was lucky that the MBA became an opportunity. I'd had a chat with the guys who own Jackson's before I left. And I said, if you ever want to do a buyout, if you would ever be interested in a buyer. And there was a gentleman by the name of David Jackson, who was a tough guy, but he said, look, I'll give you a chance if there, if we ever get to that point and the fact that I could knock on his door and I'm pretty good at not burning bridges, I gave David a call and I said, look, any chance.

And he said, yeah, you can give it a go. You've got to be in the, you've got to beat against the rest of the world and all that sort of stuff. But it was a reasonably big MBO for us. And I just got immersed in that. And that, that brought me back. I was back in my place and we were pitching to people and trying to get money out of people.

And, you know, there was a for, for awhile, there, there was a lot of faking it to make it as well. Again, you know, there was sort of, there's a bit of jazz hands when we're trying to get money out of people. Whereas on the inside, I was still really hurt. But you soon get back to where it was. And then the MBO was one of the best things when we actually did it.

And we completed, that was just a fabulous moment and

Pod: changed my life forever. Let's jump straight there. MBA was fraught with danger. The often does, they often don't work. In fact, they don't work more often than that than they do. When you think back to the early days, it was all signed and sealed. And now suddenly you're in charge of this business and you're now, or one of the owners of this business, which is, you know, your first time in that, what, what, what are some of your memories of those moments in terms of, Hey, now I'm in charge and by the way, we owed desk to some banks who will hold us accountable to it.

Richard: If I'm honest, I didn't worry too much about it. I've always been worried about cash, but any decent manager understands that the money that you've got to understand the money. So I already did that. I understood what made the thing tick the pressure I felt, okay, how do we do that? The smiley face part of me loved the fact that we had.

Read ourselves of the corporate I'm gonna lead this way a bit. The corporate rubbish that goes with a lot of the organizations. You know, I think you've probably realized by now, we're not very good at all that we don't do the politics thing. We're very, very open. And, and we don't like anyone who goes down the corporate route and if they come to us and they were overly corporate, we either beat them into shape or they go because that's just not us.

So fabulous. Fabulous to be away from all that a little bit scary, but. I'd already run the business for a fair while previous anyway, before I left. So I knew how to run the business. We had some guys who back the MBO was the other half of our group now, which has called sch group. Um, and they'd back. They put a lot of money into it.

So I had a fallback. I had another mentor on that side who subsequently we bought out in. I bought out in 2014. So it was a combination of two groups. So we had some stability on that side. We bolted in our NBO bit. The only real pressure I felt and have ever really felt is for

Pod: the people we have. You mentioned, we've got.

Richard: We've got five or 600 people. If you do the multiplier on that, I can lose sleep at night. I think your family is, I think of the people that rely on us as a business. That's the only pressure I've ever really felt called that if I really screw this up, there's a lot of people relying on us. Now, the truth is they probably go off and get another job somewhere, but that's, I can't look at it that way because I think we provide a pretty reasonable place to work and we have some fun and we try really hard and I want them to have a wonderful life and I want their kids to come and work for us and have a wonderful life.

And yeah, that's, that's a big motivator for me. So yeah. When, when you suddenly got the MBA on your own, that rings in your ears a little bit more particularly when you, you miss some stuff up. We did a bit of that.

Pod: As the chief exec, you are not the only person, but you play a big role in setting the culture and setting the future direction for the organization.

It came out of a different business and, and you realize culturally that was dramatic, the wrong place for you. So what were the lessons you, you, you took and, and how did you go about setting? What is now the, you know, the, the organizational culture in, in either overtly or just the way you behaved and then, and, you know, leave the organization.

Richard: Good question. And along the way, some things I've got some things wrong and that shaped who I am, but I don't do a lot of sort of self management coaching or any of that sort of stuff. I think I was a very poor engineer, so I couldn't build a thing. I couldn't design anything, but I'm not too bad with people.

I quite like the detail of understanding how things work. I'm quite curious. And if you combine all that and you get a lot of luck along the way, it sort of works. But I guess the culture of the business, because I've been in charge for so long, Particularly the bits that I'm very close with, probably reflect my sort of open approach to management, friendly stuff.

We have lots of fun. I mean, our vision statement, if you like, I'll call it that, but we don't call it. That is happy people making money, happy people because life's too short to be grumpy and making money because we have to pay the bills and that reflects on the whole business and people get that. They remember it.



It's simple. And it's just true. It's just true. So in terms of cultures and whatnot, I think it probably reflects who I am and I'd love to pretend it was more sophisticated than that, but along the way you learn and you see the way others do it. And we definitely didn't want to do any of that stuff. We just want to keep it simple.

Pod: That sounds like it works

Richard: well. Yeah, the stomach, if you measure it, however you measure it, we're all pretty happy and that's a good

Pod: stop and the money will take care of itself. Absolutely. You mentioned some mentors in Graeme, you meant there's another person called David Branwell who was a mentor for you earlier in terms of how to work with boards.

I'm interested in that notion because in your, in your role, as, as group chief exec, you've, you've got a range of different companies under the one construction banner, and they're all led by different MDs. What's it like being the personal and the business relative to now running and leading other MDs or running a series of businesses.

How did you transition from, from one, from one level to the more senior level. I think the most

Richard: important bit in that aspect is not being the boss. I think when you get these hierarchical business and you've got a group chief, chief exec, and then you've got MDs or, or chief execs or CEOs of different departments or different parts of the world and all the rest of it, that the ego thing can get in the way, because you've got the big boss in that local region.

And then you're a bigger boss. And then you've got this weird dynamic of, I can't work with him or her or whatever. And whereas they know a bit, like I was saying before, they now I'm the boss. I don't think of myself as the boss, but I'm naturally the one. Yeah. Probably probably take some slightly more helicopter view of things because that's the way my brain ticks and what that allows us to what happened is the local MBA MD can still be the MD cause that's really important, particularly in front of their boards.

So I get lots of board meetings and we chat and I try not to talk as much as I've told you today, it's hard for me. And I try and let the M D chaired the meeting properly. Now I do let the MD chair, the meeting properly and run it. And I'm a visitor. Who happens to be an owner of the business and what not, but I'm definitely a visitor in their world.

One-on-one slightly different because I'll sit down with some of those MDs and knock some heads together if we have to. And, and I'll ask for that same feedback. Straight back. I'll say, if I'm wrong, we'll have that discussion. But my job is to make sure that we'd be successful and that we manage this well.

And on this particular one, this is what I want to do. So I think you've got to put slightly different hats on, but I quite like it. I love the fact that I can go from quite diverse businesses. We've got, you know, obviously lots of construction businesses. We've got a logistics business, we've got a retail business, we've got quite a blank on divert.

We develop, we build houses, we will grow to build all sorts of things. And I love the fact that I can bring snippets from those different businesses and share them in, in each board and just sort of get it out there and say, well, these guys, cause each businesses have a slightly different stage in terms of its evolution or its uh, the dynamics of the team or the X six session.

You've got some with younger teams, quite keen on young people in senior positions. I love that. So you've got a real blend of sectors and teams of challenges. And I think that works well for both me to be able to share some of those things. You know, very open and try and try and translate and make it simple.

I think if you're not careful, if you've got a young board and they've got somebody coming in or a very complex explanation of what they should be doing it just, whereas we can sort of dumb it down or rip it up and they can also share resources with we've done most things somewhere. So we can say, Hey, we've done this.

Don't worry. I'll give you a starting point. And that, and that nurturing part of me that that's, I love that part of my job and seeing those businesses then turn and do really well in the individuals in those businesses do really well. Yeah. Incredibly satisfying. So yeah, I had to change. I had to become less the boss, but I, I, I don't really want to be the boss anyway.

So it wasn't that hard.

Pod: A few things that you said, I like to have a young people in senior positions. Now I can. I think I know why, but tell me your reasoning as to why that's something that's attractive to you. Young, because

Richard: they're still pulling up trees. A lot of people who are just ribbon things out of the ground and let's go try some stuff, let's do some stuff and then I can be the old guy going, Hey, well, let's just make sure we manage that risk and commercially, it makes sense.

And we're dealing with the right sort of people before you go ripping out trees. Young because they are still making mistakes. The last thing I want to do is work with people. Who've never done it wrong. So I liked the fact of working with ones that while they're getting it wrong, I can keep an eye on them, pick them up when they're down and the learning that comes with that.

So you end up with a very strong team of experienced people at a younger age, young, because they're more fun. So guys really, you know, they've got more to gain. I've gained everything. I just want to be surrounded by people who are just a bit over-excited and get it

wrong. I say that it's a blend. We've got a blend like everywhere, but I'm, I guess I'm not afraid to promote early and nor should Julius B.

Why not? Why not? You, you were probably given a chance and if you not careful, you get older and you start getting your team going. They're not ready. They're ready.

Pod: Well, where's twist talks to your own background. And in terms of, you know, you, you came to England and within four years, or you were running a list of business.

So, you know, people gave you goals and then you jumped into it. And I, you said you made mistakes along the way, but you learn phenomenally fast.

Richard: Yeah. Yeah. And how can it not be fair for you to give people the same opportunities that you're given? The only caveat to that is a young me thought that everyone wanted to run every business and that everyone, anyone that sort of was striving to take over the world and I sort of felt that's what you're supposed to be doing.

And I remember I took a year off before I went to university before I decided what I was going to do and pretend that I wanted to be an engineer. I was working in a, in a Hi-Fi shop at Lithgo. So Western Sydney, middle of nowhere. And I remember chatting one day to a guy who used to come by once a week and sweep the footpath and I'll talk to anyone.

And I was chatting to this guy. I said, Hey, tell me, tell me about your job. What's what's it all about? He says, I, well, I, I sweep here and I'll do this. And I said, well, what's the favorite thing about your job? And he said, on a Friday, the pie shop, they, if they have any leftover pies, they'll give me a couple of pies.

He says, I can take it home. And we can have pies for dinner on a Friday night. And I said, I said, you've got a great job only you should have. I've got the best job in the world. And I was like, ah, I get it. I get it. And that's the only code. The point of that story is if suddenly I understood everyone wants to get to different places and there's always somebody more successful and made more money and drives a faster car.

And, and there's more better looking and got a more beautiful family. And you know what? None of that matters, it's about finding your place in life and finding a place where you're content. This individual was very content. And the point of all that random Jap is don't just assume that promoting people up because they look like they want to get there as the right answer.

You've got to know them well enough and you've got to go, are they ready for this? Or are they a sworn on the outside pretending to do the corporate thing, but underneath they're struggling. So be careful about, and give them a way out, give them a backward step. Don't do the all or nothing. So say, Hey, well, why don't we try you in this area?

And if you don't like it, you can go back to your old job or work hard on that. Easing the mill. And I think if you do that nine times out of 10, the good ones will get there. But if you throw



them in the deep end and that's what the big corporates tend to do to like, they throw them in. And then within six months, I go, well, they're not brilliant.

As far as I'm concerned, that's your fault. You're not nurturing them and not putting

Pod: them into the room. Yeah, exactly. Right. Probably the wisest CEO I ever worked with setting, if an executive fails within the first year of the business, that's my fault. It was the second year of the business, then that's their fault, you know?

So yeah. I love what you said there about everyone. Once just to find what they love to do. And it doesn't mean that it's promoted the whole notion of, you know, do what you love, I think is actually overrated. And it's more about love what you do, because the more, if you just love what you do, you're going to have fun anyway, whereas you may never find what you love, but whatever you're doing, just love it.

Completely agree,

Richard: completely agree. And that, then that reflects in the way you, your podcasts, your tone, the way you talk about business. And I think that's one of the reasons why I love listening to your stuff, because there's a, there's an underlying tone of, well, why wouldn't we talk about this? Cause it's fantastic.

It's really interesting things. And I hope I'm the same in, in what I do. Yeah. I'm a bit overenthusiastic and sometimes you get to listen to a lot of words to, to get the content are still struggling, but I hadn't been better educated by ticketing. I probably could have said what we've said in the last hour, in the last five minutes, but why wouldn't you be excited about the opportunity?

And for me, it was just the bit that I happened to be okay. Ed was a management type of thing. But if that had, if I hadn't been. A bit more pride where I had a liked. You know, a different sort of job in a different part of the organization or whatnot, I'd be just as happy, but I'm just, wasn't very good at that.

I couldn't

Pod: pretend to do it. So you, you, you, you found both what you love to do and you love doing it, which is that the magic place really, you mentioned a few minutes ago, the support of, of your family and how important family is for you. And I know you to be someone who really values fitness and health, and that's a core part of, of helping you be you can you, can you just give us a bit of insight into the routines you have in order to keep yourself quite healthy?

And then this was a second question is given the schedule that you have, and you've had for quite a while you had all these, you know, 20 offices, et cetera, how do you maintain that schedule and work would try so hard to take over your new routines.

Richard: Yeah, definitely routine, but by nature and my car keys live on the hook.

And if they're not there, I can't item because that's the only place they can live on that sort of guy, much to everyone else's discussed. I'm sure people lose as a keys on purpose just to why me out pretty good at routine and pretty good at not missing things. So, you know, I, every day I have to do something physical, I have to go for a bike ride or go for a walk, go to the gym, and I've got a bit of a schedule of how I do that.

Probably deep down. Don't want to get old. I want to live forever. I'm a bit like that. I've always. So as I watch my body crumble, I don't like that. So I'm fighting it, but I'm just enthusiastic about stuff. I'm a, I'm a keen, I love skiing. So I've got to be fair when you go skiing, because it's just fabulous and you're there, but you've got to be really fit so you can feel day.

And then I do it as much as anything because I just feel so much better being in a fit place and being healthy and not carrying too much weight and all that sort of thing. That's not to say it's right or wrong. It's just how I'm built. I force myself to jam sessions in. So if I've got board meetings in the morning or afternoon, I'll make sure that I top and tail it and go and do that thing because I feel if I'm physically, I've done some things and I've got out and I've got some air it's better for the business.

Anyway, I perform better and you're more alive. And that flows off on everyone else. If you're the sort of boss that sits in the corner office and doesn't do a lot, I think that. Sends a statement out to the rest of the organization. It's become a lot easier. I mean, now I don't do nearly as much as I did.

I now have boards that run every company. I stepped down from MD of the biggest company two years ago now. And let one of the younger guys who we was talking about South Africans, well, how did I let that happen? Brian stoner, terrific job, lovely guy making loads of mistakes and upsetting everyone. But he, I

Pod: should pause you and say that you and I are looking at each other to the screen and I can see you're laughing as you say that.

Whereas the listeners will think it's been deliberately derogatory South Africans. It's not true.

Richard: Oh, it's definitely a love, love relationship with the southerners. Once you, if you're in the Northern hemisphere where I love all the Sabines, now Brian's a tricky guy and we've got quite a few South African son.

I love him to bits, pretty punchy at times I've got to sort of pull them back a little and go, did you really mean that? But, uh, with Brian taking over the largest individual business, in some ways, I feel a bit of an imposter now. Cause I've, I've got relatively, I've got lots of time, lots and lots of time.

And I did that for a number of reasons, partly because I was getting older mainly because I didn't want to be that old guy who never left didn't want to be the guy in the way or girl who just suddenly their views are outdated and they're hanging on and they still want to be the boss. And because I don't need to be the boss, it was easy for me to go, you know what?

You guys take it over, run with it, go and have some fun. And yeah, that worked out pretty well. But you know, I was very, very worried about waiting in that sort of really operational role too long, because I think it just stops the business

Pod: ultimately. And where's the future for you and the business? Um,

Richard: horrible question mainly because that's, that's my Achilles heel.

I want to keep doing it forever. I want to live forever. I want to keep running the business forever. I don't want to get in the way I'm gradually hoovering up the odd little business on the, on the outskirts. So I was with a business yesterday that I'd love to be involved with. I can't quite convince him to let me in there yet what's happening with the pandemic.

And one that I think in the UK they'll certainly be opportunities or are there are beginning to be opportunities for smaller businesses, with good teams that are just in a bad place. We can offer a pretty good home for those types of businesses. And I mentioned the logistics business. We picked them up 18 months ago.

I love it. And that keeps me alive because it's a new sector. It's something I'm, I'm not particularly interested in, but I'm interested because I don't know anything about it. And we're moving stuff all over the world and that's fantastic and exciting. And I hope to Hoover up a few of them over the next, you know, five, 10 years and things that I'm personally really interested in, but the same model, get ownership, some ownership there, I, I own group, but group owns most of the subsidiaries and someones some local ownership and then really nurture some of those teams to go and just do some interesting stuff and grow and, and, and have fun.

So, but don't ask me about exit because I don't want to know it's a long time ago. The money didn't matter. I'm very lucky. So now the idea of having to exit is horrible and ruining my kids and all that sort of stuff is a bit of a worry. So I don't know the answer to that real because it wasn't supposed to go this well, it should have crushed it.

Now there's still time.

Pod: Well, if you have all the right young guys running the business, that the likelihood of crashing is, is not very high, which I suspect is part of your grand plan, but coming to the end of this great conversation, Richard, I really appreciate you giving me this time for this conversation.



It's been delightful and insightful. Every episode I finished with the same two questions. So I'm going to finish with the same two for you. What is your favorite song or your favorite band?

Richard: Okay, favorite band or song. Now I want to answer that one. I love music. I always listen to music, anything from very early sort of rock and roll and R and B and all the way through to current stuff.

And if I chose one, it would mean that I'm not choosing somebody else. I'll tell you what, I'll go with a local just to make it easy. We, we're not funded very close to Ed Sheeran. And I lived in Framingham, which is castle on the Hill. And so that's a little warm spot and it's a head and the family there.

They're really nice people. So let's go with

Pod: it. Fair enough. And the word wisdom has come through in our college a few times tonight. If you could turn back the time and talk to your 30 year old version of you, what would you tell them?

Richard: Two problems with that? I wouldn't be able to tell me anything, because if some old guy tried to tell me stuff, I wouldn't listen at all, I'd be interested in is what's happened.

What sort of, what sort of technology have they got? And I wouldn't show up for long enough to listen. So that's the first problem. And secondly, I wouldn't tell myself a thing because. I'm in a very good place with who I am. And I'm, I'm a direct consequence of the mistakes I've made and the twists in the road.

But the journey for me is so important that I wouldn't want the young man to not make him take his own journey. And all the goods in the beds that have happened have put me in a pretty good place in terms of my family and who I am. And so why would I tell myself anything? I'd just talk about the future.

Tell me about the latest, whatever

Pod: I've been asking that question of, of leaders for all. I'm guessing 20 years now, and answers tend to drop into various themes depending on who you speak to. But the people who, who are very comfortable with who they are irrespective of where they are in life, but who they are as human beings always have the same answer, which is what you just said, which is I wouldn't tell them anything.

I just go live your life and, and, and enjoy your life. And your life will be your life as opposed to here's my view of your life. So it sounds like you're in a happy place. All things

Richard: with what I was given as a starting point, I never thought it would quite be this good so far, but you know, plenty of time to mess it up yet.

Pod: Well, on that note, Richard, if you do mess it up, let's book you in for a second podcast. So we can hear about the other side of the story, but the front of the first version has been a delight tonight. I'm so glad that my wife and your friend Carol had put us together, have this conversation. You guys are not there for a long time.

I think after today's conversation in case he didn't realize I have so much fun in that MTV with Richard, it is always good to interview a founder because as a class of leader, they are relatively unique in the sense of having taken complete risk and backing themselves and setting up a new organization.

But a founder who has been successful and it also is having not a fun along the way is even more unique. I'm so great to have the time with Richard. I'm not sure about you, but I took lots of learnings from that conversation. But for the purpose of this summary here at the end, I'm going to pick out five that really resonated for me in our conversation.

The first one is the very simple, but profound statement. Be confident enough to take advice from anyone from learning perspective. What struck me about this is leaders who are confident to ask. Other people for advice are demonstrating a few different things. The demonstrating their ability and desire to learn that demonstrating their, their realization that whilst they might have lots of good ideas and indeed their ideas might be.

Very good. In some cases, the best ones, they're not the audio ideas. And they're willing to add interested in finding out other ideas from other people in doing so they're also demonstrating a willingness to source opinions that then lead to buy-in. The most successful change agents in the world are those who engage in good dialogue, not who force opinions through strong influence.

So being confident enough to take advice from anyone goes to increasing levels of humility and a desire to learn or bring other people along in the conversation.

The second idea for me that really jumped out at me and, uh, you know, this cause we spoke a fair bit about it in the interview. And indeed the grab upfront talks to this and that is the experience Richard had in his career where he was very publicly fired and indeed humiliated, uh, in an organization that he took on the CEO role for and left within a year after he was fired, excite exactly a year later.

And what I loved about the whole story was. He knew that they would fire him. He knew that there was a process that they had to go through and they would wait for a year. And indeed the experience was horrific as he said, but quite brilliant. And what really jumped out to me is that simple phrase, we are way we are, and it's a simple phrase, but it goes to whenever we find ourselves in trouble or in adverse times, we can spend a lot of time ruminating on why we got here or indeed the injustice of the event.

And when our personal resilience is hit, our own narrative gets a very big headline. I E we are being done to, and it's a very. Natural human phenomenon to wallow in a degree of pity



or at least the injustice or whatever is happening, even if that is completely true, but it doesn't actually help. And his notion of we are aware, we are allows you to steady the boat and re center yourself to figure it out.

Here's where we are. What can we do right now that will help us move forward. And his case, he spent almost a year building up relationships across the industry. We stand helped him when he went forward and charted the MBO, as we heard in the rest of the story, took that on to great success. So the notion of how do we find ourselves in a difficult situation and what can we do to center ourselves and the phrase he uses, we are where we are, therefore let's move forward.

It's a great way of changing the narrative, changing this story, understanding that our resilience might be currently hit, but. We don't need to wallow on that. We can still chart away.

Starting for me was his realization that culture in his organization is a reflection of him. Now, this is not a new idea told, um, but a lot of leaders forget this. A lot of leaders forget that the more senior they are, they cast a larger shadow. And this not just goes to people wondering what the leader is actually thinking about, but actually the leader is on show.

The leader is on pedestal leaders on stage. And what they are doing is sending signals around the organization as to he is how he gets stuff done around here. Because X leader on Y leader does it that way. He hears the culture and the more you understand who you are and how you be. As a leader actually.

Co-create if not actively creates the culture around you. So taking stock of the culture around you means you're taking stock of yourself, which can be quite confronting. It can be intimidating to understand that there are 10, 20 hundreds, maybe thousands of people around the organization taking signals from what you do and say, and following that, it doesn't mean that they are lemons.

It doesn't mean they're idiots. It just means that's how culture works. So as a leader, how do you take time to take stock of the culture in your team, in your function, in your organization and realize that it is in some ways a reflection of who you are, and then therefore, if the culture is working well, great amplify, who you are even more.

So if the culture is not helping the organization, how do you start changing that by yourself? How do you start changing the way you. Interact with other leaders, other teams, other functions are across the organization. And how has that, that ripple effect from you amplify the culture around the whole organization.

The fourth thing, which I love it is also a classic business founder thinking and business founder mentality. And that is how do I find young hungry leaders who are still malleable in their thinking, but are willing to, to have a go to rip our trees to have fun. How do I promote them early in order to give them a go?

Transcript by Descript:

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Because of course they are ready. The larger the organization, the more bureaucratic the process that seems to emerge with the best of intentions in the sense of there's a talent development, talent spotting, a talent acquisition process in place. And by nature that becomes more organized, more structured, and sometimes more bureaucratic.

I understand that completely, but his mentality of looking for talent and coupled with that, looking for their motivators, because just because someone is talented doesn't mean they necessarily want to be promoted, but finding those people who are ready, who are, want to take risks, who want to make mistakes, who are willing to learn, who are willing to put energy into the place who are willing to have it go, who are willing to be mobile, set them up early, put them into a bigger role.

Yes. Support them. So they don't drown. Don't wait five years before you give them that, go get them ready now, because in his case, and indeed what I've seen many times across my career, these leaders often surprises the earlier they are given responsibility, lots of them will take it on a normal fit in places that we would never have expected.

Yes, of course there are mistakes. Yes, of course. Sometimes they flame out. Yes, of course. Sometimes they are well promoted and that is always true, but the converse is also true. Sometimes they do fantastically well using his phrase, ripping our trees, still making mistakes, but having fun and willing to have a go look for those leaders, give them projects, give them responsibility and see what they.

last learning, which I did make a comment on when he said this, but I love, love, love what he said at the very end, in terms of at the end of the day, if he had an opportunity to speak to his 35 year old version of himself, he wouldn't say anything because today Richard recognizes that he is a direct consequence of his own mistakes.

And as a leader who has made many, many mistakes in my own life, I am still learning. How do I own those mistakes? And how do I fully accept that and learn from that and be okay with that. And what I'm realizing is the more I appreciate, I am a direct consequence of those mistakes. The more I'm enjoying that those mistakes happened.

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