

## **BW\*F Mike Salguero Transcript**

**Mike Salguero:** [00:00:00] Much like kids, your job as a parent is to keep them safe and to inject confidence in them and inject values into them, and the rest of it is they're just going to be the person that they're going to be. And I have grown this company while growing a family at the same time. That's my best window to look at, which is, wow, this is the same, the way that my kids are. Growing up in the world and the way that my business is growing up in the world are very similar.

**Tim Spiker:** It is up to us as leaders to determine what's negotiable and non-negotiable for the teams and organizations we lead. The question is, are we doing so thoughtfully? I'm your host, Tim Spiker, and this is the Be Worth Following podcast. On this show, we talk with exceptional leaders, thinkers, and researchers.

About what actually drives effective leadership across the globe. And over time, you just heard from Mike Salguero founder and CEO of Butcher Box, a [00:01:00] direct to consumer supplier of 100 percent grass fed beef and other sources of protein in 2020. Mike was named an Entrepreneur of the Year National Award winner as bestowed by Ernst Young.

He is an innovative and accomplished entrepreneur who not only has an eye on the what and how of business, but also on the why. He cares about profit, impact, and purpose. In this episode, you'll hear Mike share about the unique way he's approached the funding of Butcher Box, especially given the business he's in.

You'll also hear the parallels Mike sees between raising kids and growing a business, including letting the business go in directions you might not have expected or planned for. Finally, you'll get to hear Mike's perspectives on executive team dynamics and the role they play in his own growth and development.

But first, we get to hear about how a grandfather and a challenging start to life came together. [00:02:00]

**Mike Salguero:** There have been a lot of influences in my life and a lot of people who have helped me along the way. And you know, I think of myself as more of a horizontal learner than a vertical learner. And what I mean by that is I take little snippets from different leaders, different people I'm exposed to, different books I read, and then turn that into my own personal style. I would

say that some of the bigger influences in my life growing up were my grandfather, my mother's father, who was a successful businessman.

And from him, I really saw that no matter how successful he was, the most important thing was family. It was getting together with family and being there with family and really opening a container for family to be able to hang out together and really enjoy each other. And also, just thinking creatively about, you know, business in general.

As a young kid, I wanted to be an entrepreneur. I grew up [00:03:00] the youngest of four with a single mother in western Massachusetts. And pretty early on we didn't get allowance. My mom was kind of like, yeah, you kind of need to fend for yourselves. We didn't have a lot of money. I would go and do these, these trips or these dinners with my grandparents and with my extended family, which were really nice and really lavish.

And then I'd go back home to, you know, small town and really want to break out of that. So, I had a paper route when I was 10 years old. I worked as a dishwasher as soon as I could get papers, which I think was 15. And I was constantly trying to make it. At first that meant making money. And as I got really in college and after college, I really felt this calling to do something bigger.

I have this this great story of in 2001 being at the World Economic Forum protest. Oh, and I was a protestor. So, I was protesting against [00:04:00] the World Economic Forum and the, the suits that run the world and all of those things. I'm standing there with my picket and I'm, you know, complaining about the suits who run the world.

And I had this this voice in my head that said something to the likes of you'll never change the world from this side of the fence. And that really set up my life's path for me and that life's path is I want to be on the side of business, but to do well by doing good, to try to change the world rather than just try to extract and make money. Extracting and making money is not really what motivates me. What motivates me is making a difference in the world.

**Tim Spiker:** This is so interesting, Mike, because you know, if you go to the 10 year old and 15 year old version of Mike versus what you're talking about, it's not to say that those early versions of you were only financially focused, but as you share the story and kind of what you saw with your grandparents [00:05:00] versus what you were living every day, there certainly is seemed a financial motive or quality of life motive. Then you're saying, hey, look, this really

changed for me. And now I'm doing it and thinking about it for totally different reasons. How do you explain that transformation? Because that's pretty fascinating.

**Mike Salguero:** One of the things I've really reflected on recently is the whole like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, right? And so, I was fortunately never in a position where I was worried about shelter or food but as you march up the triangle of the hierarchy of needs out of your basic necessities and then into your community and then the the peak is self-actualization.

What you realize is the strategies and tactics you use to get to the bottom parts of the pyramid aren't going to work as you, rise up. And so, one of the things I've been really, you know, yes, there was a time in my life where it was like, I need to make as much money as possible and then that switch to, I need to make as much money as possible and give away as much as [00:06:00] possible.

And then that switch to, I don't really want to just make as much money as possible. I don't really care about that. What I care about is making a difference, making an impact. And wouldn't it be much cooler to spend my time every day, not just like, oh, I need to make money, but like, can I make money doing something that truly changes the world while I'm doing it?

And if you can like that intersection of making money and doing good and being aligned to your mission is really where I like to play. I'm fortunate enough that I have a lot of people who have given me guidance along the way. And helps give me encouragement to keep following that path versus the other path. I mean, my mom was not pleased when I wanted to like go out on my own and be an entrepreneur. She was very scared. Because it's a scary path. It's not it's not a path for everybody. A lot of people fail at it. And you know, I think she, she probably still would have preferred that I joined a large CPG company and worked my [00:07:00] way up and had a stable job. And that, that just never really appealed to me. What appealed to me was doing my own thing. And I think as the youngest of four, one of the things I've realized is that really shaped me in terms of like, you know, I have three kids, if I had a fourth, I don't think I'd have it in me to tell that fourth to do anything. I didn't grow up with a lot of like structure and rules. I was kind of left to my own devices. And I think that helped me take a mindset of like, well, I'm going to take a completely different path. I don't care what other people think I should do. I'm just going to do what I want to do. And that that, that certainly shaped me as well.

**Tim Spiker:** Do you think that that mentality lands with your three kids now?

**Mike Salguero:** Yeah, it's fascinating. I actually, I have identical twins. I have two seven-year-old and a nine year old, all girls. But the twins are, so they're genetically the same, right? Same DNA, but completely different. Like if you ever want proof that somebody is born with a soul, just look at identical twins. [00:08:00] Cause they're just, they could not be more different. One of them is Lucy is pretty money hungry. She's also happens to be like a money. I call her money magnet because she seems to be the person who like will be in the grocery store. And she's like, oh, look, I found a \$5 bill on the ground. And it just happens all the time. And her other sisters are like, that's so unfair. It's like, yeah, some people just have that gift. And honestly, like that reminds me of me. That reminds me of like, I always, I feel like I had an easy time. Money seemed to be attracted to me from a very early age and that continues to be the case. And then the question is like, what do you do with that? Right. I look at money as like energy. And so, I think it's really important to have that energy flow through you. It's not like up to me to just stockpile it myself. It's really about You know, extreme, extreme generosity and moving that around and helping other people and there's a lot that, that comes from that.

My wife [00:09:00] is an entrepreneur as well. She has a physical therapy practice. And so we do talk a lot about, you know, being your own boss and what that means and the pluses of that make your own schedule, decide what you want to do. The minuses of that don't really have anyone to talk to you about things, it can be lonely.

I'm settling into yeah. the knowledge or the theory, but I would say the knowledge that I don't really get to control what my kids are going to do or who they're going to be. I'm just there to help them reveal what is already written in their soul. And I think that's just a really fun job.

**Tim Spiker:** That entrepreneurial world in PT, that's what my dad did. I grew up, my dad was an athletic trainer for a college football team, and he started a physical therapy clinic. And so that kind of entrepreneurship in the medical space and my dad There weren't a lot of physical therapy services in the town, and he saw the need and he's like, okay, I'll step into that space. But he didn't have like a grand master plan. He had no business training at all. And when he retires, I think [00:10:00] they've got 70 employees, which from the big, huge business standpoint is not a lot, but from a guy who grew up on a farm and had no intentions of being an entrepreneur, that's pretty. It's pretty amazing.

**Mike Salguero:** Butcher Box, it similarly was started with a need. My wife and I were cleaning up our diets. We're doing like elimination diets and learning about food and food's impact on your overall health and how to manage that.

And these elimination diets all said eat grass fed beef. Couldn't find it. I lived in downtown Boston.

I went to the downtown Boston grocery store and there was like a brick of ground beef, but that was it. And I was like, what about all the other stuff? Like, I want a steak. I want chuck roast. How do I get that grass fed beef? And that turned into a bit of an obsession. You know, I ended up buying meat from a farmer and then I bought more and more meat from a farmer and sold it to my friends.

And then one of my friends was like this would be so much better if it was delivered to my house. I was like, huh? Yeah. How would I do that? And then I just started looking into that. And [00:11:00] I did not have big aspirations for this company. I thought if we had a thousand customers that I was sending a box to every month, that would be a pretty interesting business. And it would be a nice like Tim Ferriss four-hour work week, like side hustle type of thing. And then I'd go do something else. And what I always remind people at the company, and I remind entrepreneurs I talk to is much like kids, businesses want to be what they want to be.

And you have pretty minimal control over that. What happens is, you start something, you have these intentions, you're like, this is what it's gonna be, and then it wants to be something different. And in the case with Butcher Box, we happen to have a, you know, we caught a tiger by its tail. You think about some of these, like, Simone Biles, who's a famous gymnast, right?

I would imagine that her parents, who were her adoptive parents, but her parents, one day, Simone Biles is doing, like, backflips, and they're like maybe we should get her into gymnastics because that's like [00:12:00] abnormal for a three year old to be doing. And so there, there is this path that's written in the soul of your children that you're just kind of there to observe and like help them observe and help them move forward.

I feel the same way about the company. Butcher Box is not what I expected Butcher Box to be. And that's not because like I put together an amazing, amazing strategic plan. And here we are, and I'm really smart. And you know, it's just like the people that got thrown into the company, the people that dropped in the challenges that we were trying to solve.

And it's like, oh, we can have this person. And the doors that opened and the path that we are on was written on Butcher Box far before. It's just my job to

kind of tune into that and try to help Butcher Box along while realizing that like, I don't really get to guide it that much.

**Tim Spiker:** What fascinates me about what you just said, Mike, is that is so counter cultural. I mean, trust me, nobody ever [00:13:00] said what you just said in any of my MBA classes ever. Nobody said, well, you know, maybe you get the company started and you just listen to the company and see what, like, no, it's go be a brilliant strategist. And you're going to come up with all these great ideas and the idea of kind of flowing with an organization like you would with a child is a really fascinating and different mentality.

**Mike Salguero:** I think a lot of people spend a ton of time on like their business plan, right? So, it's like, Oh, I got, I need to finish my business plan before I get started. And I'm always like, well, why don't you just get started and see what happens, right? Like make the first move and see like what. reveals itself.

And just don't hold everything too tightly, because when you hold things tightly, you might not be open to the, the wisdom of the company and the wisdom of what's happening. And if you can open to that wisdom, you can see big things can happen that you were not anticipating.

**Tim Spiker:** I've got two vivid thoughts in my mind. One [00:14:00] is the hospital birthing plan that my wife and I had for our first kid. Right now, if I were to find that document and pull it, it would be like reading a sketch comedy. There was nothing remotely like that, that actually happened. And we were, we were so naive to the whole process that we thought, oh, here's our four pages and everything that's kind of like, no. Which leads me to the second thing, which is, you know, the famous quote from Mike Dyson, which is everybody's, everybody's got to plan until they get punched in the face, right? You know, I think when it comes to business, what, you know, maybe it's not a punch in the face. Maybe it's more positive. Maybe it's an opportunity, but why don't you get started and see what happens. It has a lot more, there's a lot more flow to that than here's how it's going to go.

**Mike Salguero:** There are things that you want to make sure that like really matter to you. Right? So, if you think about your birth plan, there was probably like you wanted to be in the room or you wanted it to be calm and loving, right? And those [00:15:00] pieces like you have to hold on to because those will fall apart too. So, really understanding like what your values are and like what are your guardrails is really important. And then the rest of it is just like, yeah, it's just like, enjoy the ride because the ride is going to be the ride.

And too often I find people are either grinding their teeth, trying to make the business be something that it doesn't want to be. It's like, oh yeah, well, this thing over here is working, but like, that's not what we've set out to do. That's not what we set out to do. We want to do this. And I'm like, it seems like the, it wants to do that. Why don't you just let it do that?

Much like kids, like your job as a parent is to keep them safe and to, you know, inject confidence in them and inject values into them. And the rest of it is like, they're just going to be the person that they're going to be. And so, and I have grown this company while growing a family at the same time. That's my best, like kind of mirror [00:16:00] to look at or window to look at, which is, wow, like this is the same, the way that my kids are growing up in the world. And the way that my business is growing up in the world are very similar.

**Tim Spiker:** This is super fascinating to think about, and I think it's really important to talk about as folks are listening, you know, a very different mental approach to growing and developing a business.

And I think what you just said is so critically important. Be open, your perspective has to be open. Maybe I'm not going to force things, but at the same time, what are those handful of non-negotiables about our purpose, about our values? Those might not, those may not get expressed exactly how I thought they would at the beginning, but we're going to hold tightly onto those and then we're just going to hold on tight for the ride.

And so those are the two things. And I appreciate it again. It's a really different way of thinking about how to lead and run a business, which leads us to another different kind of thing that you've [00:17:00] done. Which is around how you have, or perhaps the better way to say it would be, have not capitalized the business.

So, let's talk about the financial structure of Butcher Box and, and how you approach that in a more non, certainly not a Silicon Valley kind of perspective in from a capital standpoint.

**Mike Salguero:** Yeah. So, we have never raised outside capital. So, we're sitting on a \$550 million business. And we've never raised a dime of outside capital. That in the certainly in the box subscription world is I think we're the only ones. It just in tech enabled businesses right now, we're in a very rare breed of companies that decided to take that approach. And the reason why we did that was I had run a company before this for eight years.

We raised about \$30 million of venture capital, and there was a moment there where, similarly to what I [00:18:00] said before, me and my co-founder felt like the company needed to do X. And the investors had invested in Y and we were unable to move the company towards X because our investors were like, Well, that's not what we invested in.

And we're like, okay, well, I guess we are not going to do that. And so, in this business where providing meat that is raised better was the mission. I was worried that over capitalizing the business or taking in any outside capital with investors who want a return on that capital was going to force us to make decisions about the quality of the meat or about how animals are raised or how we're spending our money.

It was going to force us into decisions that we couldn't walk back from. And that would hurt the company, you know, looking back on it, like there was definitely a lot of like trauma for my first eight years and from having investors [00:19:00] and like how poorly that went and how bad I felt that I lost their money. At the end of the day, we lost everyone's money. I held that as like deep shame for a long time until I met with my investors on the back half on the back end of it. And they're like, Oh yeah, no, no problem. Like 50 percent of these things go to zero anyway. Like it's not, not a big deal. And I'm like, oh, like the amount of nights that I spent worried about losing everyone's money. And it turns out nobody cares.

**Tim Spiker:** Now imagine that you were completely nonchalant about it and didn't care at all. Like what, what type of organization or what type of leadership would that be?

**Mike Salguero:** Yeah, I mean, I care deeply. That's the thing. Like, even, even now without investors, like, I care a lot about our company, about growing the company, about driving profit, driving a great value for our customers, the changes we're making.

So, I think if you didn't care about that stuff. I, I'm not sure being an entrepreneur running a company would be the right path for you. One of the things that people don't talk about a lot is the [00:20:00] amount of pressure and psychological pressure that is put on entrepreneurs. One of the, one of the beauties of running your own business is that it is a great playground for to understand like what drives you and what your shadows are and what gets in your way.



And like, how do you show up at work? And because you're making so many decisions and because you're interacting with so many people, I think you just, you just see yourself in hyperdrive. And if things are not from. going well, or if you feel out of control or out of integrity with the person that you want to be because you raised money and it can just, it can be really really tough.

There is a tremendous amount of mental health issues with people who run companies. It's something that people don't talk about because you're supposed to be strong and running the company and super smart. And, and the reality is it's lonely. You have to make a lot of decisions and you don't know if they're the right decisions.

And I think one [00:21:00] way that entrepreneurs can like claim control over their experience, and it's not, it's not true for all companies, but for many companies, you can do that by not raising outside capital. Then you don't have these other voices and these other “Oh, you need to do this.” And what about this? And you're not performing well enough and all this stuff that like you're probably already saying to yourself. So, you know, it's just like. It's an easier path. I don't think like me saying, tune into the spirit of the company and where it wants to go. Like that doesn't fly when you raise venture capital.

They're just, they're not going to be cool with that. Right. But when you, when it's just me and the employees who own the company, like we can say stuff like that and mean it and then like do that.

**Tim Spiker:** I just imagining you in one of those investor meetings and you're talking about where the company as a child, you know, speaking about a child where you feel like the company wants to go.

And I just imagine something like, can you go back two slides of that spreadsheet, please? I need to take a look at that again. [00:22:00] I don't even want to be in that conversation. That's way out here. Let's, talk about numbers.

**Mike Salguero:** It would be a mistake to think that I don't care about the spreadsheets and the numbers, right, because I do and we are maniacal about improving and, you know, checking our gross margins or EBITDA margins and like what's happening in the business and our metrics and all that.

Like we are maniacal on that. But at the end of the day, when you, when you haven't raised money and you control the destiny, that stuff, it's kind of choose your own adventure. The company's only as stressed out as I make it.

**Tim Spiker:** As you're choosing your own adventure with regard to, okay, learn this lesson. I don't want to do the capital raise thing again. I don't want to do it that way. You know, maybe now being on the other side of it, I can just hold on to the lessons and the way that it influences butcher box today, having let go of the shame part so they can have kind of move forward in a healthy way.

But then there's another choose your own [00:23:00] adventure here, I think, and you referred to it earlier, but I want to get into it a little bit here now, which is this idea of, you know, doing well by doing good. We're gonna pay attention to the spreadsheets. We're gonna pay attention to the margins. Where are we at in terms of the financial realities of how this engine runs.

And yet we're also about some other things around here that are important to us and non-negotiable. So, walk us through a little bit, the idea of marrying these two ideas. What does it, what does it look like? Almost a nonprofit mentality, which, which might send a shiver down the spine of the folks who are listening to this podcast and I'm like, hold on, now just give Mike a chance to explain this. So let's talk to us a little bit about how that plays out at Butcher Box.

**Mike Salguero:** I'll give a little background because I'm not sure people actually know this, but if you start a corporation or an LLC or really any vehicle that is owned by multiple people, [00:24:00] Buried in your incorporation documents is a paragraph around how you are supposed to make decisions and the way that you are required as a leader of a corporation to make decisions is based on the best interest of the shareholders, period.

Now, these days people make arguments for how certain things are, you know, like for example, caring about the planet is better for shareholders in the long-term. People get sued for that as well because it is, it is not necessarily the truth. And so, the capitalist system, right? The kid, the system that runs the world, um, has in its foundational documents that you as the person who runs one of the corporations in the capitalist system have to do what's best for the shareholders full stop. So, what happens is you are put in an environment where, well, what's best for the shareholders is generally making more money. And [00:25:00] unless you can like crowbar in some, some values that you say, well, these values help the company move forward.

For the most part, what you are supposed to do. And by the way, you have a fiduciary duty, which means it's a legal obligation. Like you can go to jail if you don't do this. What you have to do is you have to act in the best interest of the shareholders. And so, no wonder we're picking up our heads in 2023 and we're looking around at the way in which companies and corporations have decimated

the planet. Pick your industry, mine, mine happens to be food and happens to be meat, but have decimated the planet in pursuit of profits, because that's what they were supposed to do. That's their legal obligation, right? And it's only been recently that people are finding ways to push against that. So, for example, we are B Corp certified you can be a public benefit corporation, you can be B Corp certified, there's a few different ways to do this.

[00:26:00] We took the B Corp certification route. We put into our corporate charter that we are not just making decisions for the shareholder. We're making decisions for the shareholder, for the community, for our employees, for the planet. Like, that's written in. Part of that was because I wanted to make sure that if I died, which I'm hoping I'm not going to die anytime soon.

If I died and somebody else took over the company, that they would be encumbered by that. I want them to have to run the company that way.

**Tim Spiker:** So, it's not only that they can take into account other stakeholders, they must based on the certification.

**Mike Salguero:** That's right. And so, what we did here is we went and got third party audited, which is getting a B Corp certification.

We just re upped so three years later and you get a score and then you try to improve that score. We improved our score by about 15 percent over a three-year period, which I'm super proud of, especially as a meat company. We're one of the only meat companies that's B Corp certified. [00:27:00] And it's a way of testing that we're walking the walk or walking the talk, I guess that we're actually doing what we said we were going to do, which is to try to build a meat company in the largest meat economy in the world where we care about doing things right.

And I believe fundamentally that meat in this country is broken. The meat industry in this country for the past 50 years has been focused on two things, food safety and how cheap can we make it. And that's it. And so, in the details, and in these like plants, and in these farms, you end up with an incredible amount of suffering.

I mean, nothing would turn you off to eating bacon faster than walking through a conventional pork plant. It is a wild thing to observe. feedlot and watching you know, animals in super confined spaces being given a whole bunch of drugs to grow quicker.

[00:28:00] Modifications being made to their body to have them act certain ways and we are not taking animals. And by the way, there are millions of these every week. We're not taking animals and treating them as nature intended. And what I set out to do at this company is to build a company that said, you know what?

Could we honor like the natural rhythms of the animal? Could we you allow them to graze on grass and be outdoors and eat feed that's like in accordance with what their body is designed for. And we believe, I believe this even more today than I did then, we believe that there's a customer out there who's fed up with the system.

I like to say we agree with vegetarians. It's like, I don't eat meat because meat is awful. I agree. Meat is awful. I happen to believe that for a healthy diet, for me and for many others, meat is a necessity. But it needs to improve. It has to be done differently than the way it's being done now.

And the good news is, it's growing. So [00:29:00] like, we represent a huge change in the industry. I'm asked to speak at events and, you know, go talk to meat companies. And what, what's happened with our very rapid growth is companies, large companies are taking a look at it and saying, you know what, maybe they're onto something, maybe we should treat animals better. Let's like launch this new line or do this new thing. So, there is a small population of people who care about this. It is growing. If you look at Baby Boomers versus Gen Z, it's way more people who are younger care about how they're eating, what the environmental impact is.

You see a lot more people not trusting meat and wanting something better. We have to prove that there is a willing buyer. And for us, we're like, not only do we have to saturate the market and dominate the kind of animals raised this way, market. We also have an obligation to grow that market.

And [00:30:00] so every chance I can get to talk about like, food system's broken here are all the reasons why, here's why grass fed is better, here's why humanely raised pork is better, et cetera, et cetera. Like I, any chance I can get, I do that because I, it's one of those, like if you only knew I don't think anyone would be comfortable with the way that they're currently eating.

And so, what we do as a company, and one of our core values is relentless improvement. So, we're constantly trying to improve the industry as well as our own internal practices. There's actually a lot happening at plants that like nobody talks about. Nobody knows about. I always say that if I wanted to create

a t-shirt company and I wanted, a t shirt made in a safe factory where people were paid well and were given breaks. You'd go to Bangladesh, you get a fair-trade certification, you bring them into a plant, you make sure it's done, they do audits, and you get your fair-trade certification tag to put on your t-shirt. That [00:31:00] doesn't exist for meat in this country.

The only people who are walking through a meat plant and making sure people are safe is OSHA, which is, which is great. But there's so much more needed to make sure that people are safe in plants, that they're treated well, that they're allowed to vote, that they're given time off. COVID was if you remember early COVID, there were a lot of people in meat plants who were dying.

And that was really one of the first times that the American audience was like, wait, what's going on in these plants? And we're trying to like, continue that. More importantly to us, because we're a pretty big buyer, is like, we're not going to buy from you. If you're not doing X, Y, and Z. And that causes companies to change. They're like, okay, oh, somebody cares about that. Okay, we can, we can make that change. And so, we are affecting change in a huge industry with huge partners. And little by little we're seeing the dominoes fall.

**Tim Spiker:** Have you found as that leverage has been applied for something that you and the organization is [00:32:00] committed to, have you found that partners have begun to shift in their reasons for buying into that?

At first, it's like, well, you're I want your business. So, okay, let's make our adjustments. Do you see any movement in kind of their in their core beliefs and perspectives over time?

**Mike Salguero:** Yes. I think that companies are waking up to the fact that there is a growing wave of people who are not happy with the status quo and want meat to be different. And so, we represent a large wave that's coming and people see that. So, for example, California just passed Prop 12 which is pigs sold in California or pork sold in California cannot come from pigs that were raised in certain conditions, including crates and stuff like that. So that's huge.

I mean, that's the largest state in terms of population, they're making that change. That means others will fall. [00:33:00] And what that's doing is it's causing the meat companies to scramble, to change.

**Tim Spiker:** So, in that regard, you know, they're, they're forced to change due to laws that are changing and that's going to shift things.

And as you have exerted your influence, it's causing people to have to think differently. Is there a thing that tips them over? Not that, Oh yeah, okay. This is good business, and we have to be legal, but does anybody ever begin to have a passion about it at the, at the core purpose standpoint, as you do as Butcher Box does.

**Mike Salguero:** There are certainly some companies that have more of a passion, like for example, Purdue has for 10 years, and I don't think that their brand, like, most people don't know this about Purdue, but they've had for the past 10 years taken animal welfare incredibly seriously. Like they care deeply about animal welfare, but again, it's a privately held company, Family owned, it's been around for a hundred years, 125 years.[00:34:00] And so they almost have the luxury of being able to do that versus other companies that answer to Wall Street or answer to their investors where like, it's like, yeah, but you have to prove. Again, going back to like what's in your corporate charter, you have to prove that that's going to be better for shareholders. And the only way to do that is to prove there's a market.

**Tim Spiker:** It's fascinating to think about all these things that, you know, to your point earlier, most of us don't know anything about. Like I just, you know, went to the grocery store and I, you know, grabbed a burger and some pork chops or some hamburger meat and the way I went, don't really have a window into how it all gets produced. But interesting as you come back to the ownership structure of the company and what that invites or allows and how that influences things. So, that's all that whole ecosystem is interesting. And that's the, that's the broader story. Let's take it in house a little bit. There's the, there's the broader story of legalities and what's going on out there in the world and [00:35:00] environment.

And yet there's the culture and reality of what does it look like? What does it feel like to show up at Butcher Box every day? What does it look like within the organization? I know you've got some thoughts around interpersonal interaction. The shadows that show up, how personalities and specific leadership styles show up and do, you know, I'll say, you know, good and bad, probably every single day, talk to us a little bit about your perspective on those shadows and the types of things that matter to you as the leader of the organization.

**Mike Salguero:** I'm a big believer in the Enneagram, which is I mean, essentially a personality test, but it's the ways in which people remove themselves from presence and how they become unconscious. And I'm a big believer in teams sharing what their Enneagram is so that other people know where they're coming from or what they're thinking. And I'm a seven.

**Tim Spiker:** I hail from the home base of one. It's interesting. Sorry to depart for those [00:36:00] of you that are not into Enneagram. Just bear with us for a second. With your orientation towards fighting for something good. I'm a little surprised that your home base isn't one. Cause there's a, there's a little bit of your, of your, of your perspective that would lean in that direction.

**Mike Salguero:** Yeah. Well, sevens go to one and stress. So, I've, I've spent much of my time in one. But my true nature is a seven. And so, you know, so for example, a seven is the glutton. And so, my life's work is instead of leaning forward, like, how could this be better? Like, well, you know it's leaning backwards and being in presence in the moment and not be trying to change the current moment.

I guess like where that would show up personally is I could be watching an amazing sunset like with all the people I love in the world and I'm like, oh, I wish I brought down my whatever, you know, it's like, I'm not there. I'm like, oh, this would make it better. Where it shows up in the company is we're doing some initiative, it's going really well. And I'm [00:37:00] like, oh yeah, but we should do this. Or what about this? Or like, let's add this to it. And like, so I'm constantly like trying to throw people. Yeah. other shiny objects at the company.

**Tim Spiker:** So is it FOMO of Enneagram 7 that can invite you to miss out on the moment that's, that's right in front of you?

**Mike Salguero:** The deadly sin is gluttony with a 7. So, they call it like the enthusiastic visionary, right? But which I am but the negative side is the glutton. And so, whether that's like you eat chocolate cake and then you're like man, I should have more of that instead of being like, "Oh, that was really good. let me, let me taste and savor this." Instead, I'm like, Oh, like, how do I get more of that? You know whether it's that or it's drinking alcohol or it's any, anything, any, everything needs to be like more. You could see where that would cause one to be like, let's grow more. Let's be bigger. Like, let's, let's go, let's go, let's go.

And not be like, [00:38:00] Hey, okay. Like, this is pretty cool. Like, what we've built here is, like, pretty neat. My general nature is not to be, like, wow, we've just did a great job on that. Let's celebrate where we are, because I'm immediately, like, Yeah, but that page is broken. Or, like, what about this? Or, like, we didn't think about that.

And so, what's good is if you are with a team of people who are open and vulnerable and are willing to give you feedback, they can point out. Where that shows up, right. And if I know what my team is constructed of, I know like, you know, I'm not really going to tell my finance person like how to build his model more efficiently.

I can't help him with that. I can help him with like who he is as a person and how he's showing up and how like the way he was raised and these, the you know, The traumas that he holds are the things that hold him back from where he wants to go. And I try to do that with everybody. I try to spend a little bit of my [00:39:00] time on content like, hey, what about this? What do you think I should do about this? And I'm like, oh, have you thought of this? Have you thought of this? Have you thought of this? And a lot of my time helping people to understand how they're showing up in the company and how that probably relates to how they're showing up at home and how that probably relates to the things that have gotten them to the position they're in at our like high flying prestigious company, like they earned a spot at the table because of those things, but also are holding them back from where they want to go. And I just love that space because it's like, it's very healing. Like it's you know, I look at the company as like, we're healing the meat industry and then we're kind of all healing ourselves while we here on this journey. If you're willing to do the work, which I like to surround myself with people who are.

**Tim Spiker:** There's so many things that you just said there that, you know, any one of them would be another half an hour of conversation. But first of all, you immediately take me to what got you here won't get you there.

Like there a certain [00:40:00] level of maybe even sometimes neuroses that would come out of our damage that somehow have made me successful to a point, but Those type of drivers ultimately have, it's it to me, it's like a dead end highway. It might get you to a certain point and it might get you there quickly, but in the end, it's not, it's not going to take you to the highest levels that you're capable of.

It's only, it's only health and healing in a variety of different ways. That will get you there. And the, the vulnerability though, that you're talking about from the, from your position at the top of the organization, this is something that a lot of us struggle with a lot of us struggle to put those, those hang-ups, those challenges, those hurts, those things we haven't done the work to look at ourselves.



And then we certainly haven't invited others to call it out when they, when they see it show up, how do, how do you get there? Because that's a, you know, that type of, confident vulnerability, willingness to be open. That is a superpower that a lot of [00:41:00] folks don't yet have. They may be working towards it and it's; you know, it probably would be helpful for us to hear a little bit about your journey to get to be that type of, of leader who's inviting people into that space.

**Mike Salguero:** Yeah. So first, first of all, as we talked about before, I'm a big believer in having values or guardrails that help drive the behavior you're looking for. So, two of our core values are authenticity. and humility. And what we mean by those is people actually being able to show, being willing and able to show their authentic self.

And that is really important to build a culture of people who are you know, willing to be open. For me personally I continue to try to open. And I, you know, going back to that Maslow's hierarchy of needs, like the last thing is self-actualization. And I think that the behaviors that you get [00:42:00] there, the behaviors that you use to get all the way up that triangle to the very top to self-actualization are driving, striving, trying, like doing stuff, you know, and then it's like, Oh, self-actualization, how do I conquer that one?

And it has to do with everything like different. It has to do with opening your hand and being open and authentic and just opening. And I'm by no means an expert. I continue to try to work hard to open, but I want to surround myself with people who are also doing that type of work because it helps me with doing my work.

**Tim Spiker:** So many interesting thoughts that Mike shared with us. I want to take a moment to review a few of them and let me start with just a generalized idea. You got a chance to hear Mike unpack, not only his history, but where and how Butcher Box is going, some of the ethic and belief behind it. And you think about the whole, as he was talking [00:43:00] about the meat industry and his perspective on it, didn't you get the idea that Mike is a very thoughtful leader. And I say it that way because he is a leader who is full of thoughts. He is thinking about a variety of different edges. To the things that most of us might be tempted to just look at face value, but here he is diving deeper. If I were working for Mike at butcher box, I would have so much confidence that this is a leader of depth who is thinking about more than just the very obvious things who is also thinking about important things.

And I, as I got a chance to visit with him, it's really impressive to me and would be confidence building if I were following him. So, it gives us something for all of us to think about, you know, am I that kind of leader as well. Then there was a comment he made at the very end that I don't want us to lose track of, which I thought was incredibly poignant, which is this idea of as a leader, am I [00:44:00] surrounding myself with people who are going to help me grow and develop as a leader, the people who are going to challenge and be vulnerable and authentic, or are these the type of people that I'm surrounding myself with?

Of course, there's that old temptation that we've probably heard about many times where leaders have an unconscious invitation to surround themselves with people who are, perhaps a little bit less talented, a little bit less capable so that their egos are not threatened. And yet as Mike unpacked that right at the end, there's this idea of what if you had the opposite approach?

What if you said, I have to be around people who are going to challenge me? In winsome ways who are going to also get into that space of development of vulnerability and authenticity, where we can all move forward, not only in the business, but also in life. And so that's a, that's an interesting challenge, I think, for all [00:45:00] of us to consider is are those the kind of people that I'm surrounding myself with so that I can grow and develop as a leader? and so, we all can as a team.

A final thought here as we wrap up is this idea that Mike talked about which is the maturation of an organization he drew a lot of parallels between being the leader of a business and being a parent and in that analogy he talked about the idea of holding on to core principles core values and those are non-negotiable we're going to hold on to those but outside of that the flexibility of how the organization would mature.

I think it's a very novel way of looking at an organization and the one that we don't often take on so many times. It's about here is the direction we are absolutely going to go. Here's who we are going to be as an organization. Here's the timing that's going to happen. We've got the strategic plan and look; I don't think Mike or anybody else would say [00:46:00] having plans is a bad idea.

In fact, one of the reasons to have a strategic plan is to know what when you're either off track or being invited to consider a different plan. And I think that was part of Mike's point is, can we, just as a good parent, we'll look at their child and say, look, I'm not stamping out, you know, conforming widgets here as a family.

We're going to hold on to some core principles. But other than that, I've got an artist with one of my kids. I've got an athlete with. I've got a musician, I've got a writer, you know, to be open with how kids grow and develop. And even knowing that at one stage in life, they might have you know, a certain identity around who they want to be and what they want to do and the contribution that they want to make and as they get older, that might, that might shift. And how do you, how do you roll with the reality that we are growing and developing.

I just thought it was such a novel idea that he's [00:47:00] applying that concept to the business and it's not anything goes, you know, just go wherever opportunity arrives. You know that whole kind of opportunistic perspective on business.

No, it's, it's more steadfast than that because there are values. There are purposes that are non-negotiable, but outside of that, having a flexibility to look at the maturation of the business and consider, hey, this thing might unfold and roll differently than I expected. So that leads me to the question that I want to leave you with today.

And that is this. Are you open to what you are leading, maturing differently than you expected? This is Tim Spiker, reminding you to be worth following and to follow us wherever you get your podcasts. If you've heard something valuable today, please share our podcast with your friends and colleagues. And if you're up for it, leave us a five star review. Thanks for listening. [00:48:00]