

Who* Not What with Clayton Stenson

Clayton Stenson: [00:00:00] We need to do what's best for the company, but it's best for the people. Sometimes that's exposing a blind spot. Needs to be exposed, but intent matters more than technique. Never correct anyone because your intention is that they're causing you pain and you want them to stop. Never correct someone with a perspective of selfishness.

Tim Spiker: No matter how strategic we want to be as leaders, we can never escape the reality that the quality of our relationships with those we lead has a huge influence on how creative, efficient, and effective our organizations are. 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 Clayton Stenson, a consultant, fractional operations leader, and [00:01:00] visionary about visionaries. What is that you ask? A visionary about visionaries? Well, the answer to that question is one of the major reasons I wanted you to get to hear from Clayton. You see, I initially started getting to know Clayton about a year ago.

During that time, I've come to learn that he has tremendous insight about the relationship between visionary leaders and the second in command operators who work for them. The road between today's realities and tomorrow's possibilities is fraught with challenges. Clayton has found that many of these challenges are not structural or strategic but are first and foremost relational between visionaries and the operational leaders who report to them.

Clayton's been down the road between today and tomorrow so many times himself and has advised others about this road as well. That he's developed a way of thinking about the relationship between visionaries and their operational second and commands that we would all benefit from hearing about it.

[00:02:00] So I asked him to be on the podcast to share his insights.

But before we dig into the nitty gritty of visionaries and their operational leaders, we get to hear about a couple of leaders who came to Clayton's defense early in life and left him with a leadership lesson that he follows even to this day.

Clayton Stenson: I go all the way back to high school. And I can think of a couple of situations.

My grandmother passed away and I had a math test and right after that, and I failed it. And the math teacher was not going to give me a chance to rewrite it. And the social studies teacher stepped in and said, if Clayton says he needs to rewrite it, I trust him. And I believe him, and you should let him rewrite it.

And I remember thinking, wow, like, that's a leader, an influencer in my life who stepped in to support me in a time of need. [00:03:00] And I remember that. That was a big one. And then another one was a situation where I was a janitor at the school. My cousin's mom was the head janitor, and I was on staff there working in and the co-captain of the basketball team.

I was, I was a co-captain of the basketball team. And he, when I was working, he snuck into the office and was doing some stuff on the computer and the principal found out and, and I got fired from the job because they thought that I had. You know helped him in there, but I hadn't. I didn't even know that he was in there and again she stood up for me and she went to bat for me and she's like Clayton wouldn't do that You know, he's a good kid.

There's no way he would do it and she fought for me and got me rehired So, those are you know two situations that you know were big influence on me. They were both in grade 12, you know It was just where someone that had influence and that was leading me in some [00:04:00] capacity stood up for me and fought for, for my best interests.

Tim Spiker: How does the kind of effective reality of those experiences, how does that show up for you today in the places where you lead an influence?

Clayton Stenson: Yeah, I would say that I look for opportunities to believe the best in people. Rather than to judge. Like I try not to jump to conclusions and react right. I'd rather, you know, ask questions and explore and discover the truth and then respond appropriately.

Tim Spiker: How, how often would you say, as you take that discovery approach, how often would you say that the, the end conclusion of the fullness of the story turns out to be something more or a little bit different, or maybe even a lot different than what your initial impression is? How often is there a deviation as you explore?

Clayton Stenson: I would say almost every time there's always more to the [00:05:00] story. There are always at least two perspectives on every situation, right? And while three, really, there's my perspective as the, as the leader/

manager, then there's the one person who's involved in the other person involved. There's at least three perspectives and, but there's only one truth.

Tim Spiker: How do you, how do you keep your foot in the door to, to keep that kind of curiosity open, if you will?

Clayton Stenson: I guess it's just like humility, right? Like, like the reality is I, I don't know everything, right? Like I'm not perfect. I'm fallible, right? Like we all are, whether we admit it or not. And I guess like we chatted recently about self-forgetfulness, right. And not thinking about yourself and your own, you know, your own desires or, or your own insecurity or whatever it is like. Like, I'll give you an example. I'm starting with a new fractional client on Monday, and I was meeting with the leadership team on Wednesday, and I said to [00:06:00] them, I think the answers are already here, right?

Like, I'm not coming in with the answers. I think the answers are already here. It's my job to find them and then hold you accountable to execute them. I can be an instrument for sharp, finding those ideas and executing it, but it's not, they're not my ideas. It's much better if you guys arrive at the ideas, but it's my job to ask you. And draw them out and then execute them.

Tim Spiker: You know, it's amazing as we can discipline ourselves or become. So that's just how we show up more humble and take that very attitude that you just described. The side benefit, which I think is actually quite important and valuable comes in the ownership of solution.

As you show up with curiosity and humility and acknowledge the knowledge of the people in the room, and how do we help unearth some things that are already [00:07:00] here, when it's time to go forward in those conclusions, the fact that they have authored what needs to happen, there's just so much more buy in, and if you don't have that It's going to be a long road.

It's going to be a lot harder. So, I love the way that humble curiosity actually leads in to what I might suggest in the long run is probably a more efficient outcome because what comes along with their ideas is their commitment to following through.

Clayton Stenson: Yeah, absolutely. That that's one of the reasons why I do it. And then the other thing is too, as a fractional, I'm only going to be there for six to 12 months. So, I don't want. To make them dependent upon me, right? Like I'm intentionally leading in such a way that they're not dependent on me so that when I leave, it's an easier transition for the next guy.

Tim Spiker: That makes total sense. It what's really interesting about that is that there's probably an element of that, that we should all [00:08:00] be leading with at all times, whether we're fractional or not. It's a little more poignant in your situation, but. am I thinking as a leader let's just say when the lottery and so decided not to work anymore, whatever reason, how would this place function without me and am I thinking about how to get it to that spot on a regular basis?

Clayton Stenson: Yeah, that's also another formative experience in my life. So, my first office role was at my church. The situation was that nine months prior, our executive pastor had died from a brain tumor. And I came on board and was taking on responsibility for things and I'm like, okay, well, how do I do this?

Where's the instructions? Where's the manual? Where do I learn this? And there's like there isn't one, you know, and the reality was that in that situation it was all in his head Right, and it wasn't written down. And so I learned this [00:09:00] because I had to start from scratch I'm gonna make sure that for something happens to me that the next person is not gonna have to start from zero And, and then, and what ended up happening was my wife and I had our first baby and then I'm like, I can't work right now, but I was able to meet with an intern that was under me at that time and like walk through in two hours and explain to him, here's where you go for everything that you're going to need to film. I don't know how long I'll be out. But here it is, and he actually did quite well in that role when I was gone. I was gone for 10 weeks.

Tim Spiker: So, what a terrible experience to have to have to, you know, lean into the human side of that story with the organizational side of the story being that you had fostered capacity in the organization.

To carry [00:10:00] on. It's, you know, my, maybe my engineering brain's kicking in today, but I'm thinking of about, I'm thinking about potential energy and are we putting the ball at the top of the ramp? So all you have to do is give it a little nudge and then it rolls down the hill. When it sits at the top of that ramp, it's got a ton of potential energy, but that ball doesn't get up there unless people like you and people like me intentionally put it up there.

It doesn't automatically go up there. How do you get people to have an urgency? Around creating capacity growth in the organization when there's not an emergency on the horizon, when there's not a big personnel turnover thing that's about to happen, how do, how do you do that? How do you prioritize that in the midst of the day to

Clayton Stenson: day?

Well, I think, I think for me, every organization I've been a part of has been. Way too reactive and not [00:11:00] proactive enough. And so, you know, for me, the entrepreneurial operating system was the, was the solution in the, the first organization that I just discovered that when I was working there. And so just implementing a system where you have a rhythm of stopping, putting your phone aside and like thinking and being intentional to, you know, build the business you want, right.

And not just be running from fire to fire, especially in a smaller organization. I think that's. Just kind of becomes the routine, it's just the way we do things. And I don't know, probably, probably in a bigger business is the same, but I haven't, I haven't written, worked in a lot of large businesses personally.

And then for me, like modeling it right for other people, you know, doing the one to ones and, you know, building a relationship and just really speaking, speaking into situations when you see [00:12:00] people, you know, not you know, not managing that stuff well.

Tim Spiker: One of the things I really like about what you just said is you said, I haven't worked in a lot of larger organizations, and, you know, I think the majority of our audience here are leaders who are working in larger organizations.

So there's this temptation to say, well, of what value then is to the larger organization. And I have a very simple answer to that, which is, that we continuously learn from other contexts about leadership, whether it's from education or athletics or larger firms, learning from smaller firms or vice versa.

And it's really interesting because when you think about behemoth organizations. What's the one thing that they're constantly talking about that they're after that they can't get, which is the ability to shift quickly, the ability to be nimble, the ability, interestingly enough, to be a smaller organization.

It's almost like a grass is greener kind of situation. In some [00:13:00] ways where we want the things that we don't have. And so in the midst of our conversation, I don't find it to be a detriment at all for our listeners that you spent your career in smaller organizations because half of them are trying to think about how to operate smaller anyway.

Well. You know, one of the, one of the great motivations I have about wanting folks to hear from you is a unique perspective that you have on the relationships between the top two people in an organization. And given that you've worked in smaller organization, it really fits from a thematic standpoint because we're essentially talking about the visionary who's often the founder.

In the worlds in which you have been and the second in command. So here's a person with, with grand ideas, which helped, you know, get this thing started in the first place. But at some point, there's the realization [00:14:00] that I, I can't do this. I need help. We need. execution oriented minded people, not just people like me.

This is a visionary speaking. And so, as you have lived and worked around that dynamic, you have seen and identified a continuum there between the visionary and the second in command that I think is really worth all of us pausing and learning from.

Clayton Stenson: Yeah. So I'll tell it a little bit of the story of how I came up with this.

Initially, I mentioned working at the church. That was my first visionary, and I wasn't second in command, but we didn't really have one. So, it was the closest thing that we had to it. So that was seven years working with him. Then I left there, and I went and worked at a construction company. Quickly recognized that, okay, I'm working with another visionary now.

But I learned a lot in the first engagement that I could apply, you know, particularly, I'm [00:15:00] not going to judge him for being different from me. And I realized I need to find my voice to advocate for the opposite, you know, perspective more so with the second visionary. And then I, I did end up in the second in command role in that organization.

And, and it was extremely effective, like incredibly effective. We 22 times net profit in 12 months when I was promoted that role and we implemented EOS in that company and then I left there and then later on in my journey, I had the opportunity to fractional work and my first fractional client. It was it was a challenging situation because firstly, we weren't a very good values match, which I think it's extremely important.

Much. Because of that, you know, once I got a little further into the organization and recognized some of the things that were happening, I ended up resigning the position because I just, it wasn't, it wasn't going to work.

[00:16:00] So after that, I thought, okay, well, I need to process this. Why did this not work? And how do I make sure I never end up in another engagement like this again?

And so, this is where this continuum came from. And I started to recognize that, okay, I think there's four types. of visionaries. And I recognize that two of them I want to work with one of them, maybe, and one of them, no chance, basically. So, the, the first type of visionary, and this is the one I don't ever want to work with.

I call it a flaming visionary. And I refer to them as this because, you know, essentially a visionary is meant in my mind to be a spark plug, right? Like they make things run without a spark plug. your car cannot move. Right? And I believe visionaries are very much like that. You, they, they're the spark.

They make it, they make it happen. They make it, make it go. [00:17:00] You know, I'm from Canada, and up here, you have a lot of forest fires. And a spark is not always A good thing, if it's not, you know, in the right place, right? So a flaming visionary, sparks are flying everywhere, right? And it's causing chaos. And so I experienced this with my first visionary.

You know, he just had, he just had so many ideas and you know, nobody was filtering them. Nobody was. Challenging them. You know, he was changing directions constantly and everyone's like, what? I thought we were doing this. I thought we were doing that. Right? And it's just, it's very hard to navigate that world if you work for a visionary like that.

And it just leaves a path of wreckage. Everywhere in carnage and confusion.

Tim Spiker: So that causes me to pause for just a second and say, all right, for those of us that might land ourselves more in the visionary category than the second in command, the question would be, am I a flaming [00:18:00] visionary? Am I sending sparks?

Not in a controlled, directed, still spark, still got a little wildness to it. If it's a spark, it's not, it's not like this nice, tame thing, but, but is it contained in a direction that we can do something with? And I might be feeling just a tinge of conviction as you talk about this, Clayton, because with our team in November we had a meeting.

And I was handed the edict, which says we are not creating new things in 2024. Tim, are you hearing me? Please don't say yes to things that will require us to

create more new things than we're already planning. We, we need the capacity to put towards what we already have. Now I'm thinking before I say yes.

Let me talk to the team. Let me, let me count the cost. I wouldn't have counted the cost before, but they're saying, hey, Tim, we need that spark to have some type [00:19:00] of container around it, lest we, lest we all burn out.

Clayton Stenson: There's a place for that. I would say that's in like a same page meeting or a leadership team meeting right where you can, you can throw around ideas.

I think the danger is when you're throwing around ideas with people that don't recognize that they're just ideas and that they don't actually have to action on it, they'll be like, Oh, Oh, okay, I need to do that. Right. And then it creates confusion and chaos. Whereas, you know, if you do that in a, in a same page meeting with your second in command, you know, they're going to filter that.

You know, you're going, they're going to have a discussion. Hopefully they'll resist, push back against you. Like you just described, right. And then you'll make the best decision for the team, right. And not just make a decision because you're feeling like you should do that. What I would say is. Probably it's not malicious.

It's just that visionaries just are a [00:20:00] certain way and you can't, you know, you, you can't, you can't stop it. Right. You just need to learn how to target it and focus it in a way that's more productive.

Tim Spiker: Yeah. You know, the old, the old sports analogy you can't stop him. You can only hope to contain him.

Seems like it might apply here. So flaming tends towards significant chaos. Talk to us about, you kind of walk us through the rest of the continuum.

Clayton Stenson: Yeah. So, what I realized is what the next step is that generally in my experience with everyone that I've met over the years is that something happens that humbles them.

So, I call the next phase humbled. With a D not humble, but humbled, right? So it's like something has happened to make me as the visionary recognize that maybe I'm not everything that this organization needs. And maybe I [00:21:00] have weaknesses that need to be compensated for, or, you know, someone needs to be hired.

That's different for me. I think often visionaries. naturally like to hire people just like them because they get them. If you do that, you know, you just create more, more chaos. You know, you really need to have someone different than you. So, so humbled is, is, it's unfortunate. I think we've all been humbled, you know, in our journey at some point or another, and it's been a great moment of, of change and growth.

But it hurts the danger with a humbled visionary. Is that you don't know where they're gonna go next, if they're gonna revert back into their old habits and shift back into flaming again, or if they're gonna truly embrace what they learned in that humbled time and actually move to the third stage, which I call humble.

Tim Spiker: So, you go from being humbled in a moment to actually being more of a humble person [00:22:00] just on the regular. Is that a fair way to think about it?

Yeah, humbled is situational, right? It's, it's easy to be humble when something's happened. That's kind of forced you to be, but when the storm passes. Are you going to continue to be humble or are you going to shift back into your old habits?

Right. So that's why I said there's one that I won't work with, there's one that I'm cautious to work with, right? And then there's the two that I like working with is the humble and then the fourth one. So. Is there a litmus test to find out whether the humbled leader is gonna take the next step, step to humility, or go back up to chaos and, and live there? Is there a way to know or predict what's gonna happen next?

Clayton Stenson: I don't know. I don't know that I've figured that out yet. When I'm trying to figure that out, that out. I just ask a lot of questions. Right. It's like, you know, what did you, what did you learn? You know, what have you learned that [00:23:00] you do differently now, those kinds of like, just delve in and try to get a sense of where their head's at.

But that's a tough one. That's why I said, I'm hesitant to work with, with Humboldt because you just really don't like, I've said this before in leadership. You can't evaluate someone when, for example, they have three hats. They're wearing three hats in the business. You can't evaluate someone's effectiveness when they're grossly overloaded with work, right?

Like that's just not fair. You know, so I'd say it's kind of similar. It's hard to evaluate somebody when they're in a low point, a hum, you know, a humbled point.

Tim Spiker: All right. So, let's take that example of the person that doesn't kind of climb back up to flaming visionary, but takes that step from humbled to humble. And kind of living in a more constant state of that. Talk to us a little bit about what happens next in your observation and experience.

Clayton Stenson: You know, I just want to be clear. I don't think you're ever, like, fully one of these [00:24:00] things. Right. Like, I think you can, you can balance, right? Like, you know, it's easy in a moment to be, come flaming and then be like, Oh, right. I just realized I became flaming there and I'm sorry. Right. Like I give an example of parents, like I have kids, right. And you know, sometimes I'm really great. I've got it together. I'm calm, you know, there it's chaotic and, but then other times I lose it. Right. Like I just, you know, I get, I get angry, and I yell at them and then afterwards I'm like, oh, I shouldn't have yelled at them.

Right. But I think where humble comes in is, is that you recognize that. Right. And you're like, ah, that was wrong. I think maybe the best example of humble is that you'll admit that. Right. That you'll apologize. My father and my first visionary almost never apologized. for anything, right? And you know, they made mistakes, right?

Like we all make mistakes, right? [00:25:00] But I think a humbled or humble, sorry, visionary will own that, right? We'll apologize. And we'll, you know, we'll not be afraid to, to mention the things that they've done wrong and be vulnerable and authentic. And then humble. Also, you know, you, you, you recognize and start to hire people and develop people that are different from you.

My, my second visionary was really good at this. Like, I'll just tell that story a little bit. When he hired me as estimator he said, Clayton, I hate spreadsheets and I don't want to learn them. Right. And he's like, can you, can you be my estimator? Right. And I'm like, well, you know, I've never worked in commercial construction before.

Are you sure this is a good idea? And he's like, well, I know you're good with numbers. And I know you can do this and, and I'll help you, right? And I excelled. And then when I, when he promoted me the integrator, the second in

command, he said, Clayton, whenever I touch operations, it blows up in my face. And I know you'll be good at [00:26:00] it.

So, I'm going to give it to you. And his self-awareness. And humility to admit that he's not good at something. And he wouldn't, it wasn't just to me that he would say that he'd said that to everyone. Right. And he was, he was okay with that. You know, it's like, I know what I'm good at and I know what I'm not good at.

And I'm not going to pretend that I'm good at something though. So that unique ability, that zone of genius, like just discovering and focusing on that and then allowing people that are better at the things you're not good at to, to thrive in those areas. So I think a lot of this is self-awareness.

Tim Spiker: What's this next phase? Because as we talk about humble like, hey, this sounds pretty good. I mean, I hear somebody who is willing to acknowledge when they screw things up and seems open to taking their hands out of places where it's not adding value. So, what's, what's the next level here that [00:27:00] we haven't even, you know, gotten into yet.

Clayton Stenson: Yeah, I call it enlightened. I haven't experienced too many of these just to be honest, but I have experienced a couple, a couple of them and it's really refreshing. And I would say back to self-forgetfulness. You know, they're just genuinely, they've let go. And so enlightened is a whole nother level, like you just, there's just so much trust, you know, and surrounded with such good people and, and, and they usually joke about their weaknesses. And it's beautiful because the team just rallies around them.

Tim Spiker: So, I'm imagining now some folks that are listening, whether in larger organizations or smaller that have this kind of, they know the leader that they work for and that leaders. You know, if that's a kind of visionary type of leader, somebody who's looking forward and they're kind of going through these four phases, four stages, flaming, [00:28:00] humble, humble, enlightened and thinking, okay, where does my visionary land and where do I land?

And so I guess I would say to you, help us land like, so what do we do with this? In terms of moving forward, whether, whether as a visionary or as a second in command, what is it to take this kind of stage development of visionary leadership and put it into real life practice, leverage it in order to make things better.

Clayton Stenson: You know, when I coach people on this stuff, I start with awareness. I think it's good to do different kinds of assessments to determine what your natural tendencies are. So, if you're familiar with the Colby assessment, it's really good, you know, recognizes your natural tendency for risk and, you know, need, need for information, all these kinds of things.

There's. You know, Working Genius. There's you know, different kinds of assessments that at 360 [00:29:00] evaluations, it starts with awareness, right? If you're not really willing to be real about who you are and where you're at and listen to the people around you, also give feedback about who you are and where you're at, then, you know, you're not going to be able to move along the spectrum, right?

So, if, if you're a visionary and you're listening and you're like, yeah. You know, maybe I am flaming. Ask your closest people on your team. Ask your direct reports. Get them to watch this.

Tim Spiker: Speaking of in the hot seat, like I'm not going to be able to avoid this conversation internally now. I mean, I can have you on the podcast. It's like my whole team is going to be working on this podcast. So, so I have nowhere to hide is what I am saying.

Clayton Stenson: It's a good thing. Right. Like, but like I said before, it hurts in the moment. Right. But if you truly care about your organization and the impact you're trying to have, you know, this is important, right?

Because if you can step [00:30:00] through to humble, which I would say is inwardly sound, you know, we got to get to that place where we're inwardly sound and you can't be inwardly sound without being humble. In my opinion, you know, you have to just be real about it. And when we get to that place of humility, then I feel like that's the, you know, that's the, the step towards growth and becoming the best that you can become.

And it doesn't just affect your business. It affects your entire life, right? Like it's, it's just this journey of growth. And maybe I'll switch gears here a little bit, because when I was preparing this and I'm reflecting on my journey and all the 15 years of working with visionaries, I recognized this applies to the second in command too And I looked back on my years at the church and I recognized I was a flaming second in command Like I wasn't second in command, but I was a flaming leader on the other side and how a flaming second in command is is that [00:31:00] they're so concerned about process and systems and doing things right that they don't bring the people with them.

Right? It's like, this is what you need to do. You know, I thought this through, you need to do it this way. Right? And they wouldn't. And now I look back and it's like, I know why, because they probably thought I was a jerk. Right? They're like, I don't want to follow that guy. I don't want to follow his system.

Right. Like he's just, he's just a jerk. Right. Like whatever. Right. So now I don't lead like that because it doesn't work. It's flaming second in command. Now I'm, I have to come in humble. Like we talked about the beginning, you know, what do you guys think the ideas are in the room? How do I draw them out?

How do I bring people along with me and we build it together? So, it's theirs. Right. And so the same thing happens with a second in command. You, you come to a point where you're humbled. It's like. I feel like I have the right plan here, but nobody's following me. So, [00:32:00] you know, maybe I'm not as good as I thought I was, and something needs to change.

Tim Spiker: What's really interesting in that example there is it may not be, you know, I think there's a tendency for an operator to look at the process. And if it's people aren't following the process, you know, you're, you're suggesting that the solution is not a better process. The solution is a more well-developed person.

Maybe the process doesn't change at all. Maybe the process is exactly what it needs to be, but we don't have anybody, you know, willingly or enthusiastically flowing into it because there's a, there's a, there's something in the way. There's a blockage. And if that blockage is me as a person, me as a leader, then the best process, the best strategy doesn't yield very much.

Because ultimately people, we need people's enthusiasm. We need people's energy. We need people's buy in. We need people's ideas. We need them to come into the [00:33:00] system and not only just kind of follow, but also contribute and commit and own. And so it's really interesting because this, this.

Operational leader, influencer that we're talking about a COO, if you will, in some regards might be very tempted to think that their system is the problem if people aren't following when in fact, they may have nothing to do with the system itself. At all and everything to do with the person.

Clayton Stenson: One thing I say with my clients quite often is, you know, we want to make sure that we get people's bodies by default.

Like, you know, they're there because they want to get a paycheck. You know, we want their mind. As well, because their mind is important. But what we truly want is their heart, right? We want them to, to buy in at such a level that they love being here and it, it's fulfilling work and that kind of thing. And you don't, you don't get that as a flaming, you might be able to [00:34:00] scare people into submission in the short term, but you will not, you can't get long-term engagement and results by being flaming.

Tim Spiker: I love that you use the term long term there, because there's an implication in it, in that some of these things that are not so effective in the long term can actually work in the short term, and so kind of threat and fear and all of that, it has, it has, you can see a positive effect from these things.

It's just not a long-term strategy. In, in my mind, it's a, it's a superhighway with a dead end. Like you can get there really fast, but eventually you're not going to be able to go anywhere. And the person that's on the actual highway without the blockage, it might take them a little longer to get there, but in the long run, they go much, much, much further and produce so much more of a result because they didn't take the, the fear shortcut, which, [00:35:00] again, it can be really effective in the short run, but the things we're talking about are long run success for organizations and leaders, not just the short run stuff. As we wrap up here. And you think about advice for visionaries, advice for the second and command operators that support the organization that these visionaries have, in many cases, founded or at least now are leading. What kind of advice would you have for these two, these two groups?

Clayton Stenson: One I'll say for somebody who's, who's new to having a second in command or new to working with a visionary, don't try to change each other. So, I've been married for 13 years. I use this as an analogy all the time.

My wife and I spent way too much of our first 10 years of marriage trying to change each other. And it doesn't work. You can't, you can't change each other, [00:36:00] nor should you want to, because, you know, it's the differences that, that make the magic happen, that make it worthwhile. It's harder. Definitely. It's harder on the short term, in the short term to learn to work together with someone who's very different from you.

It's much more effective in the long run. So that would be my advice. Cause I, there's a tendency, I think if you've, if you're a visionary, you've never had a second in command and now all of a sudden, this person's asking you questions and poking holes in all of your ideas, like it's really annoying.

Like just go away and let me do what I want to do. Like I've always been doing. And then, but then as the integra or the second command, you know, the visionaries, the loose cannon all over the place, you know, it's like, man, he is so driving me crazy. He's causing all these problems, blah, blah, blah. You know, I wish he would just change.

Well, he's not going to write in large part, you know, hopefully he will over time, you know, allow you to help him focus for the, for the existing person, I would say. You know, [00:37:00] be open and honest. I think where I really failed in my first visionary relationship was that I wasn't open and honest. I wasn't, you know, like he would do things that would bother me and I wouldn't react, right?

Like I wouldn't like lash out at him. I would just bottle it, right? Cause he's the owner or the leader, the founder, and I'm just an employee. So, there was a level of fear. Right. To, to say anything, but ultimately, I don't think I did any service to him by not expressing how, what he did, how it impacted me, but how it impacted the organization as well.

Right. So, I think we need to do what's best for the company, but it's best for the people, you know, sometimes that's exposing a blind spot, right. That needs to be exposed, exposed. But I think you and I talked about this before that intent matters more than technique. Never correct anyone. Because [00:38:00] your intention is that they're causing you pain and you want them to stop.

Like never correct someone with a perspective of selfishness, right? Like I want you to stop doing this because it's a pain in my butt, right? Like you need to do it from a heart of I care about you. You know, and you know, this is holding you back or this is holding the company back or your department back or whoever, whatever it is, right?

Like the intention needs to be for them, like a caring, loving attention intention. So if you, if you can't get there, then don't do it until you can, if you have an emotional response where you're pushing your agenda, right? You look yourself in the mirror and, and really be honest, right? Is this what's best for the company or is this my, my just my opinion when you can get to the point where you can be honest with yourself in both those chairs and ultimately honest with yourselves looking at each other instead of the mirrors, you know That's where the that's where the beauty of [00:39:00] the two working together comes It's like we can be real open and honest and I could even ask you if you were my visionary Tim You know, I could ask you that question

Do you really think that's what's best company? Tell me why. Like, convince me 'cause I'm open to it.

Tim Spiker: What a, what a great conversation. Yeah, right.

Clayton Stenson: And vice versa, right? Like, let's just put it all on the table, right? Like, let's just go for it and fight it out until we arrive at what's best, right? That, like, that's when it really is incredible.

And I've been a part of that and it's great but it's not very common. When I was in university, I lived in a, in a, in a dorm like in a residence. And I was, across the hall from me was this guy who was, he was like a punk rocker. He had like huge speakers in his room, and he was the kind of guy he'd stay up to like four in the morning and, you know, sleep till noon.

And, and I wasn't like that at all. Like we were just very different from each other, but we got along so [00:40:00] well. Like, we were really good friends, you know, and it was just beautiful, right, that two people that are so different could really find that, you know, that solid relationship. And my second visionary, I went for supper with him last, last week on Thursday, and we laughed and laughed and laughed and about our differences and, and we worked so well together.

I just encourage you like; you know, we really need to bring down those walls because there's some beauty on the other side. It's, it's, it's just really beautiful, you know, when two people that are so different can find unity and really leverage. Each other's unique abilities and some of those genius.

Tim Spiker: I'm willing to bet that as you listen to my conversation with Clayton, that you got a sense for his winsomeness. This is just somebody that you want to lean into somebody that you want to interact with. Certainly [00:41:00] a humility there that is so attractive, and it causes us, I mean, it's kind of a, a simple, a simple lesson example for some of the things that we were talking about during.

The discussion, which is to say leaders who show up with humility are more attractive to us, and they cause us to want to lean in. And I, I feel that from Clayton all over the place. So, I love how he walked us through these stages of the visionary leader. From flaming to humbled, from humbled to humble, and from humble ultimately to enlightened.

But you notice there's no guarantee. It's not like a slide at a playground that once you start to go down, you're gonna go to the bottom. It's possible to go from flaming to humbled and then go right back up to flaming and stay there. And so there is not an inevitability here that we end up in great places.

And then I so appreciate it. At the end, has [00:42:00] he brought her? Back around and said, you know what? These ideas don't just apply to the visionaries. They apply to the second and commands as well. And it's important for that group to also think about, am I flaming in the way that I lead as a second in command towards operations?

Is there that stage progression for me as well into humbled and then humble and then enlightened? As well. So, I just appreciate that construct. I think we need mental models like these to help us move forward more effectively. Of course, boots on the ground in action is where it really happens ultimately.

But for us to think through these things and really understand where am I back to the self-awareness that he was talking about? Where do I fall in this continuum right now? And where would my team, where would the people that I lead if I'm a visionary, or if I'm a second in command, where would my visionary assess that I am? [00:43:00]

And there are some of you right now who might be thinking, I need to have a conversation. I'm a second in command who needs to have a conversation about this with the visionary. I'm the visionary who might need to have this conversation with the second in command. It might even be an interesting way to go about this, to, to put this episode to that person and say, hey, let's both listen to this and then let's have a conversation now, given all that, I want to take a turn here as we wrap up, because I am feeling personally very convicted.

The reality is I'm just going to be a little bit more, a little bit more open on the personal side here is even last night. I had a conversation with my wife about humility or my lack of it, my lack of willingness or ability to communicate. That I've made a mistake or created a problem for somebody else.

And so, it's impossible for me to lean into the conversation that [00:44:00] had so much grounding in the idea of humility and not admit that I'm in the midst of a thought like that. And so we might say in a, in a business podcast like this one, What does the family dynamic have to do with the business and my answer is everything because ultimately I don't want to be just a good leader at business I want to be a good leader everywhere and that includes with my family and so as

I sit here recording this episode with Clayton and we bring up the term humility over and over and over again it puts a pit in my stomach.

Regarding the conversation that I had just last. Our definition of humble that we use with our clients is having a mindset of self-forgetfulness. a willingness to see and admit faults and an eagerness to learn from and acknowledge others. And so when you walk through that, you heard Clayton talk about self-forgetfulness.

We talked about the need to [00:45:00] see and admit faults and you can even there here in that, you know, does the visionary have an appreciation for the second in command who's trying to bring operational excellence to the game. Does the second in command have an appreciation for what the visionary brings? So, in all three aspects of that definition, there's a lot of important things to consider, but in this moment, I'm going to stay where I am, which is sitting in this space, not with regard to business in this moment, but with regard to my marriage and my parenting.

And so normally at this moment, I would say to you. That brings me to the question that I want to leave you with today, but I'm going to switch it up just a little bit this time and say, that leads me to the question I want to leave myself with today. And if that question happens to apply to you, that's great.

That question is this, am I being a humble leader? [00:46:00]

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