



LEADERS in Action

Interviews with ethical, diverse public, private and social sector leaders.



LEADERS in Action is one of the Frances Hesselbein Leadership Forum's leadership resources. In collaboration with executive coach and author Jason Womack, who interviews a leader representing the public, private or social sector and inspires great ethical leadership, we offer this collection of interviews as a free leadership resource.

Our hope is that these interviews will reveal values-based leadership insight from diverse leaders in diverse sectors and inspire action and new habits.

Leadership Resource

As you read these interviews, consider how you would answer each question.

Consider one or two key takeaways from each interview.

Pose these questions to friends, family, teachers, and leaders who you admire for their values-based leadership.



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews NILOFER MERCHANT



Nilofer Merchant is a corporate director, business writer and speaker. Her ideas and approach to innovation, creativity and leadership are regularly featured in the Wall Street Journal, BusinessWeek, Forbes and Harvard Business Review. Her work at Fortune 500 companies and Silicon Valley start-ups over the last 20 years fuel her innovative ideas on frameworks, strategies and cultural values.

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Nilofer Merchant: Listening. Honestly, growth happens when we expose ourselves to new ideas. This means not just mingling with new people (often bucketed into networking) but also listening... “What do they know or do that I don’t know about?” I will take notes on new ideas, even if I don’t quite agree with that particular point, and then I’ll consider what aperture view that person has that makes their idea or direction valid. Most of us talk about how much we LOVE innovation but actually, most of us hate to listen to new ideas. Yet, listening is the key attribute of great leaders: embracing newness by considering diverse, sometimes opposing points of view.

JW: *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

NM: I got fired by Carol Bartz (who was then CEO of Autodesk and later CEO of Yahoo). She told me that while I had gotten the right idea across a finish line, I hadn’t done it in a way that built trust throughout the team. After this, I asked myself “Is there was a way to create amazing results WHILE doing it in a way that leads to shared ownership?” Only through exploring that question did I begin to understand the nuances between decisiveness and deliberation and how vital both are for teams to see how a decision was made. It was a question I chased for 10 years, and ultimately led to my first book on collaborative direction setting, *The Next How*.

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

NM: What’s really interesting is that we teach a lot about strength — knowing enough, being decisive, appearing confident.

Q&A with Nilofer Merchant

In an article Nilofer Merchant wrote for the Harvard Business Review she says, “The one thing leaders don’t do is to check out. Especially now, when we need leadership more than ever.”

This interview shows how Nilofer exudes collaboration, innovation and continual improvement as a leader.



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews NILOFER MERCHANT

Continued

We teach leaders about being in charge but we don't teach them how to lead together — how to say "I don't know," which allows us to step back, and others to contribute.

We teach leadership as if it's "the one" person in charge rather than teaching leadership that lets move further together.

I'm reminded of the African philosophy that you write about in your book, it was chapter 5 of *Your Best Just Got Better* — "If you want to go fast, go alone...but if you want to go far, go together."

We're going have to learn how to lead together.

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

NM: Start asking yourself what you need to start doing to be adaptive, fast and flexible. Today, research shows that even true "advantages" dissipate after 12 years in slow moving industries and 5 years in fast ones. We're not in the business of preserving what is, we're now in the business of routinely reinventing.

JW: *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

NM: To embrace new ideas, you have to have space in your heart and mind for something new to come in. I noticed one year when I was at TED (and about to deliver a talk), I wasn't listening very well. I was worried and anxious about my speech. I could tell the difference afterward. If we don't create space to hear new ideas, we don't have the opportunity to embrace new ideas. I regularly participate in 3-day retreats that help me clear my mind and have found I am a much better listener as a result.

Basically I let people populate my mental picture of their idea with facts, resulting in a much clearer vision of their point.

JW: *How would you define yourself in just one sentence?*

NM: Oh, hard question. Someone a while ago called me the "Jane Bond of innovation," and it stuck.

I've always been good at solving problems that at first seem impossible or intractable. But the truth is simply that I'm willing to keep turning over the situation until I see something no one else has seen—and I let a lot of people inform that process by asking questions or creating a space where others can ask questions.

So, in just one sentence, I would say: I'm pretty good at leading togetherness.

•



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews BERNADETTE MCGLADE



One of the most well-respected and experienced leaders in Division I athletics, Bernadette V. McGlade is the [Atlantic 10](#) Commissioner. Her progressive guidance has created unprecedented new opportunities for the more than 5,200 student-athletes. As an undergraduate at the University of North Carolina she was inducted into the prestigious Order of the Valkyries, the highest honor for a female undergrad, recognizing excellence in scholarship, dynamic leadership, and innovative service.

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Bernadette McGlade: Commit to learning. Stick to your vision. Leaders know enough to know they don't know it all. This is a mindset I adopted early on. In college, I had a clear vision of where I wanted to go: athletic administration. I knew individuals working in this field, and made a point to observe them and learn from their experiences and the examples they set.

To this day, I chip away at clarifying the very specific vision of where I want to be, and then seek out ways to learn more about how to get there. Seek out and work with individuals with whom you respect. Find leaders who have qualities you admire. Smart, empathetic, extremely engaged in whatever they are doing. Leaders who lead from a place of confident humility.

JW: *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

BM: I think we're constantly defining ourselves. One experience that shaped who I am and what I believe took place in 1981. After just completing my playing career at the University of North Carolina, and course work for my Masters degree, I was offered, at 23 years old, a Division I head women's basketball coaching job at an Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) school, Georgia Tech.

A good friend of mine said: "You are a fool to take this job, because you are too young...and you are a fool to turn down this job, because it's a tremendous opportunity." The choice was mine and I accepted the job, to be responsible, and lead my first team of great student-athletes!

Continued

Q&A with Bernadette McGlade

In our interview, Bernadette shares her secrets to successfully "learn on the job," and emphasizes the importance of vision-focused leaders who lead "from a place of confident humility."

Bernadette continues to promote excellence and integrity both on the playing field and in the classroom.



Continued

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

BM: Leadership is not something we bestow on ourselves. It's important to understand the expectations of the work we're expected to do. Effective leaders have to look outside themselves, and over time they are presented with opportunities to take control and broaden their knowledge base. One of the most important aspects of succeeding, I have found, is failing. I am worried about the athletic environment younger generations might be experiencing; an environment with an abundance of positive attention, unequivocal pats on the back... in some cases, young athletes have a false sense of confidence.

As leaders, we have to be prepared to fail; I'm not saying plan to fail, but it is important that we give ourselves the opportunity to reengage and reinvest in our vision if we fail, because it is very possible, when changing, growing, experimenting, innovating, that we will fail. Be resilient! I love that word. Every day, every week, every month, every year, and every cycle, we have to be able to come back and reengage fully, to stay objective and return to a vision of success.

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

BM: I have two: "Am I true to myself or conflicted?" and "Who am I spending time with; who is influencing me?"

Over time, leaders are able to develop a strong intuition when it comes to making decisions...how to move forward with an action plan. I have learned to trust my intuition. If I think about something for too long, I run the risk of going to battle with myself.

That's dangerous. Leaders have to know what to do, but they also have to do what they know...believe it is right, and trust themselves.

When it comes to growing as a contributing leader – it's important to be selective in who we spend our time with. Personally and professionally, I try to surround myself with strong, talented, ethical people. You're only as strong as your weakest link.

JW: *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

BM: There are multiple ways of answering this question. You have to be good at what you do, have healthy living habits and balance; personally, professionally, spiritually and civically. And you need to be sure to listen and consistently make good decisions.

On a practical level, I'm getting more and more reflective as I grow as a leader. I believe leaders must be open; I believe leaders must hone in on their strongest traits and skills and positively affect others around them. The more time leaders build process into their day – thinking, talking about, defining the initiatives we are working toward, the more effectively we all perform.

JW: *How would you define yourself in just one sentence?*

BM: Focused, motivated, positive while trying to give back and be better every day.

•



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews EVA TANSKYBLUM



Eva Tansky Blum is the Chairman of the [Board of Trustees at the University of Pittsburgh](#), the first woman chair in Pitt's 228-year history. Previously, she was executive vice president and director of community affairs at PNC Bank; and former president of the PNC Foundation. She worked to position PNC as a leader in the community and directed the company's philanthropic programs, including PNC Grow Up Great, a \$350 million, multi-year, bilingual initiative to support quality early childhood education.

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Eva Tansky Blum: A leader has to listen. They have to listen all the time. (It bears repeating.) The people throughout the organization, the ones doing the work on the ground, they are the ones who know what's going on. By talking with, and hearing from the people being led, we put ourselves in a position to be very effective leaders.

Also, we have to know our stuff. The next great idea will come from talking it out, by imagining how things can be better, and by taking action on the projects that can make a difference. Everyone is involved. Not just everyone at work, but the communities we work in as well.

JW: *As Frances has taught for so many years: Look outside the walls of your organization. What was your defining moment as a leader?*

ETB: At the beginning of my career, I was asked to start a brand new department. I had all these people reporting to me—it was time to get things done, and I had to learn while leading. At one point when someone came to me and said, "We'll never be able to meet the deadline," I knew I had to respond from the point of being a leader, not just doing leadership.

So, I said "We have to meet it." Of course, if you set the right (not unreasonable) expectations, people will figure out how to get there. And they did. We worked together to get the project done, on time, and I learned a valuable lesson about leadership.

Q&A with Eva Tansky Blum

Eva Blum really walks her talk as a leader; she shares her passion and ideas, asks questions, and listens actively to both the topics and tone of the conversation.

As you read our conversation, ask yourself, "What can I listen for in my next important meeting?"

Continued



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews EVA TANSKYBLUM

Continued

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

ETB: Understand how best to use social media. We are going to have to be more and more comfortable with technological connectivity. The way the younger generation thinks, communicates and creates communities is changing; and, it will change again in the near future.

We are operating in a very global, open and transparent world. What is being done “there” in fact impacts us “here.” And, with the technology and speed of connectivity we have access to, we are going to have to study this in more detail.

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

ETB: “Did I do my homework?”
“Am I serious about what I’m doing?”
“Do I feel good about the work I do?”
“Am I having fun?”

I really care about our communities, our people, our collaborators. I try to be true to the work; I wouldn’t ask anyone to do something I wouldn’t do. And I believe in having a balance between a life and a career.

One of my early mentors said to me, “this is your job, your family is your life.” That lesson has stayed with me, and I continue to seek a balance between my career, my family and my life.

Another question I ask a lot: “What’s next?”

And, the truth is, I get teased here. We’ll have a GREAT announcement, and on the plane ride home, as we’re celebrating an amazing achievement, I’ll turn to the team and ask, “Ok, so what’s next?”

JW: *How do you listen - and what do you listen for - so you hear more than what is just being said by those you lead?*

ETB: I like to really listen to people. I believe a collective input makes a better decision. If you listen to people they feel invested in the project.

In a discussion, there is always someone who knows more than they are saying. It’s important for a leader to look around and notice who may not be contributing as much as we think they can. Finding ways to do that has been integral to our success.

One of my tactics is to look around the table and choose someone who I believe has something to add. I ask them, “Is that where you think this is going?”

This question serves to engage them even more in the direction and outcome of the meeting.

JW: *What is one of your favorite books on leadership?*

ETB: I read “Team of Rivals” recently. From the start, Lincoln understood the implications for the future. He fought for what would make us successful in the long term.

•



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews Chief Master Sergeant Todd M. Simmons (Ret.)



Chief Master Sergeant Todd M. Simmons served as the Command Chief Master Sergeant for Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL.

Air University provides the full spectrum of Air Force education, graduating 50,000 resident and 120,000 non-resident officers, enlisted, and civilian personnel each year from commissioning programs to the highest levels of professional military education.

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Chief Simmons: Leaders get better by being lifelong learners; specifically, learning how people operate. Daily, I put myself in a position to be “at my best;” in fact, it’s on my calendar. From 0700-0715 every morning, I mentally prepare for the day as well as reflect on my mission and purpose.

For several years, I’ve become conscious about processing opportunities, pursuing some, declining others. The more I learn about my mission, the people I work with, and my own personal purpose, the better I’m getting at this.

At work, I greet my colleagues, listen and observe. My intent is to bring a “focused enthusiasm” to the office; I demonstrate my dedication to the mission while being as aware of my surroundings as possible.

As a lifelong learner, I recognize that the more present I am with people, the greater the chance I’m able to assist with a project or just talk through an opportunity or challenge they face. I hope they’ll see me leading with curiosity and bring that same enthusiasm to the mission, and work collaboratively.

JW: *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

Chief Simmons: In the spring of 1995, I was here at Maxwell AFB as a 19-year-old, having a very hard time; looking back, I can self-assess that I was deeply depressed. One night, in a phone booth outside my dorm, I told my mother I was suicidal. As hard as it is to admit today, that was my reality.

The next thing I knew, a First Sergeant who witnessed this emotional phone call somehow talked me down from my distress, and I carried on through my training. That moment in time became the starting point for my new life. That First Sergeant took me under his wing. He helped me think about

Q&A with Chief Simmons (Ret.)

Chief Master Sergeant Todd M. Simmons is a leader committed to asking the right questions, and being patient while exploring the answers.

In this interview, Chief Simmons shares the importance of creating routines and time for reflection, which allow for him to better lead with curiosity and “focused enthusiasm.”

Continued



the future – an Air Force world full of opportunity. Because of him, I renewed my commitment. We sat down with a map of the world, and I chose to leave the USA and work abroad. In fact, I spent 17 years living outside the USA; a huge difference from the life I knew in rural South Carolina.

I hope others have the kind of mentor or sponsor they need to support them through tough times and see that there exists a bigger, brighter picture they can step into.

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to do that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

Chief Simmons: An important characteristic of great leadership is “following up.” My own childhood was void of much appreciation or acknowledgement of who I was or what I did, and I’m convinced this is one of the most important roles a leader can take on as they build an effective unit or department. I write cards. I begin each morning by acknowledging someone for something they’ve done; whether it’s a project they completed, a mission they accomplished or an award they achieved.

Though often deemed a “soft skill,” showing appreciation is a trait of compassionate leadership; it’s a demonstration of a higher level of emotional intelligence. I know that the military has a history of “tough love” leadership; of course, there IS a time and a place for being tough, but research – and common sense – shows the benefit of empathy.

The best way I know how to demonstrate this level of caring is to become a better listener. First, listen to yourself as a leader. *What do you care about? What is your mission? What is your “Why?”* Then, listen carefully to those around you. *What is important to them? How can you acknowledge their efforts and their successes?* And, perhaps most important, *How can you find out what’s important to them and help them move in that direction?*

That is what happened that night at the phone booth. Someone took the time to hear me, to help me, and to encourage me to be a better version of myself.

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions that effective leaders need to ask themselves?*

Chief Simmons: There are two questions that I need to ask more: *What should I say no to? What can I say no to?* As I shared earlier, I review my tasks and responsibilities regularly. I remind myself of what my purpose is; knowing what to say no to is a most important leadership skill.

There’s more to it than that. I need to communicate – both up AND down the chain of command – what I’m saying no to, and perhaps more importantly, “why” I’m saying no.

This allows my staff and superiors to know where my focus resides, and my thought processes. It also provides me more time and energy for the things I’ll say yes to.

One more question I hope leaders ask themselves every day is, “*What’s my purpose?*” If you constantly chase your purpose you can better serve as a role model to others; they can see that it’s ok – and even expected – to continually improve and connect more deeply to the mission, not just at work, but in life and to their family as well.

JW: *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

Chief Simmons: It all starts in the morning. Actually, each night my wife and I recommit to our routines for the following day. By 0445, we wake up and exercise; I go to the gym, and she practices yoga. This physical routine gets us started, and grounded, every day. After my workout, I reflect on my purpose. Not just my purpose at work and in life, but my purpose for that day. If I’m speaking to a group of leaders, meeting with a boss, or working on a project, I want to remind myself of not just WHAT I’m doing, but why.

Leading with, and on purpose, is what I want to be known for. I review and process my day as it relates

Continued



to me fulfilling that mission, and I expect it of my teammates. I want people's input in the decisions we make, so I share as much as is appropriate and possible with them about why I do what I do. This is a way to build that camaraderie this job demands.

My childhood was devoid of family routines, so I've worked diligently to create a place for connection, and ours is the family dinner table. Even now, our daughter who is in college looks forward to these meals together. It is a time to hear what is (or maybe isn't) being said, and serve my family as a mentor, role model, and partner in life. I love these dinners.

JW: *How do you listen – and what do you listen for – so you hear more than what is just being said by those you lead?*

Chief Simmons: I want people to know I care. I listen to what they are saying as well as what's not being said. I watch their body language, I listen to the words they use, their inflection, and the questions they ask – or allude to. As much as possible, I try to communicate with people face-to-face. This often means traveling 30 minutes to another location for a 45-minute meeting, but in the end it's worth it... every time.

Finally, I focus on asking the right questions, and being patient as we explore the answers. Often, an opportunity may not have an obvious or immediate solution, but through conversation, we come up with a resolution.

To reiterate: I need to hear what is – and isn't – being said.

JW: *How would you define your leadership philosophy in just one sentence?*

Chief Simmons: I want to create an environment where people can thrive and feel valued.

•



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews COLONEL J. WILLIAM “BILL” DEMARCO (Ret.)



Col. Joseph William DeMarco (Ret.) had a 28 year career in the United States Air Force. He understands effective leadership, developing leaders, and continually learning from others.

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Colonel DeMarco: Leonardo daVinci once said “simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.” There are two things I know I need to do as a leader; both are simple to understand, yet complex or quite sophisticated in implementation.

Understand that we need to improve. In the Air Force it’s possible to believe leadership is dependent upon a position. Someone who has positional authority does not automatically make them a strong leader. I make a point to let people know that I’m continuing to grow, to study, to learn, to talk to people like you. Another leadership guy, Andy Christiansen of High Capacity Leaders in Atlanta GA, once asked me to help him look at some military leadership issues, and in answering some of his questions, I think I’ve actually learned more from him!

We need to learn more about our own leadership style. There’s a lot of debate out there on what to work on, our strengths or our weaknesses. I interact with a lot of younger people, and I encourage them to really understand themselves, to understand both their strengths AND their weaknesses. When people understand themselves - their motivations and goals - more, it gives them thrust AND vector; it gives them the energy they need AND something to focus on.

JW: *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

Colonel DeMarco: I have a very strong memory of how 9/11 attacks changed everything for me, my family and my larger community. That morning I was out for a run, I came home and when I got out of the shower my sister-in-law called to tell me to “turn on the news.” When the second plane hit the World Trade Center I turned to my wife and said, “We’re at war.” She asked, “With who?” I replied, “I have no idea.”

Continued

Q&A with COLONEL DeMarco

Leadership is more than just a word to Colonel Joseph William DeMarco. It is a way of life.

Colonel DeMarco has pushed to understand effective leadership, develop leaders, and (continually) learn from others.



Continued

Over the next 100 days I was deployed halfway across the world, and flew one of the first sorties in combat [he flew a KC-10 tanker, re-fueling fighter jets in the air] over the desert.

During that time I reflected back on something I learned as a cadet at The Citadel. When I was a freshman, one of the seniors told me, “The most important people in your LIFE are your classmates.” I had no idea how right he was. So, now I tell people: the most important people are your peers. The second most important, your direct reports, you need to take care of those guys. The third...Your boss.”

I learned who I could count on to get the job done.

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

Colonel DeMarco: Start thinking about how you serve as a role model. Leaders who want to connect with the next generation have to make understanding social media a priority, they need to jump in and become social media competent. I’ve been researching how we’re communicating and collaborating and find there are three groups: The Tourists (they know it exists, drop in, and then leave). The Natives (they were born and exist online), and the Citizens (they understand how social media and connect well there). The problem is—natives tend to avoid tourists who don’t care enough to learn their language or understand their culture.

Our young people are using Social Media to connect and learn about how the world works; as role models — as leaders — we have an opportunity to connect with them in many new ways and social media is their venue of choice...we need to join them there.

JW: *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

Colonel DeMarco: I am at my best when I’m able to do my morning routines:

- My wife and I get up at oh-dark-thirty and go to the gym together.
- Over breakfast (the most important meal of the day), I read the news, gaining an understanding of the world.
- I get in to the office about 30 minutes before anyone else (I told the staff not to come in before me!) and that’s my time for reading the Bible or devotional time.

By the time I start my day, I’ve engaged in mental, physical, and spiritual fitness.

JW: *How would you define your self in just one sentence?*

Colonel DeMarco: I am a leader in continual Beta.

•



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews Brigadier General Troy E. Dunn



Brigadier General Troy E. Dunn is the Director of Military Force Management Policy, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, for the U.S. Air Force in Arlington, Virginia. The directorate is responsible for establishing military force management policies for more than 500,000 Total Force military personnel. He was selected as a Congressional Fellow in the Office of Senator Trent Lott and as a distinguished member of the National Security Team in the Office of the U.S. Senate Minority Whip. His command tours include squadron, group and air base wing at the U.S Air Force Academy.

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Brigadier General Troy E. Dunn: Making time every day to process the day's events gives leaders the gift of deliberate self-reflection. Practicing and engaging in mindfulness can cleanse our mind and soul. After reading *The Art of Happiness* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and its sequel, *The Art of Happiness at Work*, I realized the power within to achieve happiness through training our minds and our hearts, by being intentional about what we do and how we do it.

I stumbled upon these books when our sons were diagnosed with autism. At the time, we were beginning to understand how to balance a successful career in the military along with their medical, educational, social, and communication needs. I was distracted, and I lost sight of my purpose, my happiness. *The Art of Happiness at Work* gave me hope as I learned to prepare my heart and open my mind to experience true happiness personally and professionally. I believe that the challenges and struggles we go through in life help us develop our leadership skills so that we are prepared to serve those we lead.

JW: *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

Brig Gen Troy E. Dunn: When I was about five years old, my father shared a motto with me to commit to memory: "All that you do, do it with your might. Things by half are never done right." This motto has been passed down generational lines, and my children also have it committed to memory. Of course, I share it with our Airmen. Growing up, I thought the phrase "all that you do, do it with your might," meant striving for perfection, a notion I was consumed with, until my dad reminded me that the quote was not about perfection. It's about excellence, specifically, excellence of character.

My dad is a retired Master Sergeant in the US Air Force. Throughout my own Air Force career, I would call him every weekend to share stories and experiences. At the end of every conversation, he said, "Great, now do more." He said this every time we talked...for years! At the end of one of our conversations, I was tired, I needed some affirmation, and I replied in a

Q&A with Brigadier General Troy E. Dunn

Brig Gen Troy E. Dunn is a leader who values humility, self-care and connection.

In this interview, he shares his "battle rhythm," a morning routine that leaves him energized for the day's challenges and opportunities; his favorite books on leadership; and a family motto that has been passed down for generations.

Continued



heightened and elevated voice, “Dad, what more can I do!?”

He quickly replied, “First of all, son, you’re not going to talk to me that way.” Then he said, “If you have to ask me that question, then, you’ve lost your way as far as why you’ve been chosen to serve as a leader.” That hit me like a ton of bricks. I felt his disappointment and immediately changed my perspective. I asked the question again, “What more can I do?” Same question. Same exact words. Same order. Different attitude! He wasn’t telling me to do more because I wasn’t doing enough, it’s because I was in a position to do more. Now I ask, “What more can I do?” knowing there is more to do from a place of humility, modesty, and compassionate leadership.

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

Brig Gen Troy E. Dunn: I wrestle with this question as we look to the future and wonder how things are going to be. We’re entering the 4th Industrial Revolution. The First Industrial Revolution used steam power to mechanize production. The Second used electric power to create mass production. The Third used information technology to automate mass production. Now, the Fourth Industrial Revolution has ushered in advanced technology against the backdrop of globalization, changing security environment, and intense competition in all domains: economic, industrial, military, information, and even diplomacy. The world is more interconnected than ever before.

This is a clarion call for all leaders to study humble leadership. When we understand that our purpose is to take care of others, we realize humility is not that you think less of yourself, it’s that you think of yourself...less. When we strive to be an excellent – not perfect – leader, we have to be humble.

I believe in the leadership concepts that Edgar Schein and his son Peter wrote about in a book titled, *Humble Leadership: The Power of Relationships, Openness, and Trust*. Because the world is so complex

and is always changing, one person does not have all the answers. It takes humility to say, “I don’t have all the answers.” But, collectively, by bringing everyone in and working collaboratively, we can come up with the solutions we need.

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

Brig Gen Troy E. Dunn: Leaders need to ask, “Am I worthy?” There’s a follow-up question, “Am I worthy to lead America’s sons and daughters?” If we start with that question, it requires we do intentional self-reflection. We can ask ourselves, “Have I become a lifelong learner; a dedicated and committed student of people?” We need to understand the internal and external environments and be deeply curious to know their why. Not, “Why am I here?” But, instead, “Why am I still here? Why do I continue to serve?” Through that understanding, we can focus more of our attention and commit to doing more for those we lead.

JW: *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

Brig Gen Troy E. Dunn: When we talk about our Air Force core values: *Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do*, we sometimes look at that second core value and think, “I’ll take care of everyone else before I take care of myself.” However, I’m a believer in the concept of “Self-Care.” I refer to my routine as my battle rhythm: I wake up early and start the day with mental cleansing, meditation and Neuro Linguistic Programming in which I practice positive self-talk and meditative visualization. Then, I go to the gym for my physical care. After that, my goal at the office is for intellectual, cognitive care — reading. Then, I have dedicated open time on my calendar for mentoring. This is my connection-care time where I work to make deliberate connections so that people can feel that I care for them. That’s all before 8am.

Practicing these four self-care rituals — meditation, exercise, reading, and connection — makes it possible for me to be a more effective leader.



JW: *How do you listen - and what do you listen for - so you hear more than what is just being said by those you lead?*

Brig Gen Troy E. Dunn: I always ask people to fill in this blank, "People don't care how much you know until they _____. Well, people usually answer quickly with, "...until they know how much you care." And as soon as they say that, I say, "Wrong! Actually, people don't care how much you know, until they FEEL how much you care." That is the difference between leadership and management. Leadership is getting at the feeling and the heart and soul of people.

Cognitively, our Airmen know their leaders care about them. But, at times, they may not FEEL that we care. When we look into Airmen's eyes and ask them to leave their family to defend freedom and democracy around the globe, they need to FEEL that their leaders care about them. They will do amazing things because they feel that their leaders and fellow wingmen care about them.

People will do extraordinary things on and off the battlefield when they feel their leaders care about them. That is the role of leadership.

In his book, the Dalai Lama challenges us to be deliberate and to connect with people. We all face challenges at work, at home, or maybe we aren't getting along with a co-worker or even a boss. We need to show people that we care, and I do that by asking the question, "How are you doing?" I may have to ask that question two or three more times. "Really, how are you doing?" By the third time I ask - and that time a little slower, "How are YOU doing?" Then, it's amazing how the walls come down, the masks come off, and you might hear them say something like, "You know, I'm not doing so well." Your persistence shows that you truly listened for more than what was being said, and a connection is made.

JW: *How would you define your leadership philosophy in just one sentence?*

Brig Gen Troy E. Dunn: Humble leadership. As part of being a humble leader, every leader should have five words in their vocabulary: "Please, Help, Sorry, Thanks, and Wow." Each of those words means something. Let me explain...

"Please" is a sign of Respect, a way to acknowledge the person we're talking with and that every person has value and should be treated with dignity and respect. "Help" shows a sign of Strength, and it's ok to ask for help. That's important for Airmen to know that and the key to resiliency. "Sorry" is a sign of Humility. It's a way to take connectedness one step further where we take ownership and accountability for our actions and also how our actions made people feel. "Thanks" is a sign of Gratitude. We work with some amazingly, talented Airmen, and to say thank you for what they do every day is essential for our Air Force. And finally, "Wow" is a sign of Amazement. Our civilian and enlisted officers wow us by the amazing things they do every day.

When we take the time to acknowledge that, we connect with others on a deeper level.

•



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews JIMMY LEE



Jimmy Lee is the former Executive Director of [RESTORE NYC](#), a non-profit working to end sex trafficking in New York and restore the well-being and independence of foreign national survivors. In 2010 RESTORE NYC opened a safehome for women victims of sex trafficking; the first of its kind in the northeastern U.S. Lee studied business at the University of Chicago and sociology at Cornell University, and has worked with GBCHealth, World Vision, American Express, J.P. Morgan, and Goldman, Sachs. He lives in Harlem with his wife Christine and loves to run long distances.

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Jimmy Lee: Being effective is indeed an inward journey. Leaders get better by focusing on themselves first. I'd say the best thing you can do to improve as a leader is to work hard to understand yourself.

People follow leaders who lead from an authentic place, leaders who know why they do what they do. Ask yourself questions about purpose and contribution; and, ask yourself those questions again at ages 18, 23, 30, 42 and beyond. Strive to identify your strengths and wonder – every day – how you could be better at them.

JW: *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

JL: In April 1994, I watched on television as Nelson Mandela was elected the President of South Africa. That summer, between my junior and senior years of college, I travelled to South Africa and observed firsthand the birth of a new country. For many years, I followed developments in Sub-Saharan Africa and devoted part of my career to addressing AIDS in that region.

So, when my wife introduced me to the founders of RESTORE NYC, I came to understand that women are trafficked for many of the same reasons they are disproportionately affected with AIDS: they are in a vulnerable position, and easily taken advantage of. I joined the organization as the founding Chairperson, and later took the position of Executive Director; literally jumping at the idea of being able to do something in my own back yard.

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

JL: I believe leaders will have to do more "Thinking." We must ask ourselves big questions that move us toward more transcendent thinking. As the author Simon Sinek said, we've got to "start with why" and move toward the *what*, and then the *how*.

Q&A with Jimmy Lee

Jimmy Lee is the quiet leader who ultimately stands out in the room. (And, it's not just because he's over 6 feet tall!)

He listens, a lot. Then, in a burst of vision and strategic thinking, he pulls the conversation together in a way that says, "I've been thinking about this for a long, long time."



Continued

Practice asking the questions that make you uncomfortable, which enables people to feel more comfortable around you, knowing you're asking the tough questions. This goes a long way in increasing their trust in you.

Personally, I'm experiencing the fulfillment of a vocational desire to be the leader of an organization whose mission I am passionate about. This came after a lot of thoughtful planning.

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

JL: I've been journaling since I was in high school. [It turns out Jimmy's wife, Christine, has ALSO been journaling since then.] There are some basic questions that I've continued to push through the journaling process.

"What are those things that I do that give me life and bring me joy?"

"Why truly am I doing this?"

"What my strengths, and how do I get better at them?"

JW: *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

JL: This is an important question, because the more people look to you as leader, the more they watch what you do.

I start the morning with a cup of coffee, and 30 minutes of reflecting, meditating, or reading, often something inspiring such as the Bible. Reflective thinking, nutrition and exercise is an important part of my day, every day.

I'm known as a doer within the organization. I constantly look at the value I can bring to the team by creating structure, studying process and managing people.

My job each day is to move the organization toward where it needs to be tomorrow, so that people can do their best work. I believe I'm seen as a hard worker. To me, that means that I am disciplined, I'm reliable, I'm committed, I'm high energy, and I'm structured.

JW: *How do you listen - and what do you listen for - so you hear more than what is just being said by those you lead?*

JL: I continue to think in different – maybe non-traditional – ways. For example, I journal. A lot. In fact, I see journaling is my third eye; I'm able to see truth in a way that I can't otherwise.

Also, I rarely tackle a problem "head-on." If I'm not thinking directly about something, I get insight in to the challenges I am facing. I don't expect results, but I know that if I give my mind a moment to relax – or even time overnight – I'll come up with ideas and answers I had not seen before.

JW: *How would you define your self in just one sentence?*

JL: I work hard so that I can help others.

•



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews JOCELYN MANGAN



Jocelyn Mangan, [Snagajob](#)'s COO, is a proven, forward-thinking executive with nearly two decades of experience building iconic global mobile apps, marketing-leading software products and relevant marketplaces. Prior to Snagajob, Jocelyn was head of product for OpenTable and oversaw the vision, strategy and development of the company's consumer and restaurant products. Recently, Mangan was honored as a member of the 2016 class of Henry Crown Fellows and the Aspen Global Leadership Network at the Aspen Institute. She received her B.A. in English and Communications from Vanderbilt.

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Jocelyn Mangan: Leaders improve by valuing growth over fear. If you're ruled by fear, you'll face challenges in life and work.

Leadership is like yoga — which I practice regularly — there isn't ever a point when you look around and say, "I'm done." I'm always learning. Always. We get better by putting ourselves in a position to learn and grow, and gather the resources to help us get to our next level.

JW: *How do you explain the leadership journey?*

JM: If you're not a sponge, it's going to be really hard to be a better leader. Listen to everything around you, not just the spoken words. Study trends, find subtleties: how you are influenced, and what you are influenced by. Your title does not make you a leader.

I've learned the most when put in a position to manage a project that I'd never done before. Winning a big contract wasn't the end of the project, it was the beginning. My journeys have begun when I created a vision of where we were going and began to organize the resources to get things done effectively and efficiently.

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

JM: The time to lean in to learning, to seize an opportunity, is when faced with a challenge. Leaders need to stay focused on their mission, the purpose of the organization. Consider the legacy you would like to leave. Envision an end, even though we may not know all the steps necessary to get there. Be ready for change and serendipity - and keep clear goals in mind. Never lose sight of your mission. Don't only focus on the details, trust the process.

Q&A with Jocelyn Mangan

In our interview, Jocelyn Mangan, Chief Operating Officer of Snagajob shares her insight on valuing growth over fear, trusting the process, and considering legacy.

As you read our conversation, ask yourself, "What behavior might I need to change?"



Continued

In addition, leaders today need to consider the beneficial impacts of diversity. Research proves that diversity creates better results for business.

We're still at conversation level, and leaders need to learn how to approach and address differences and work together more productively. More innovation and bigger business growth depends on growing diversity and being more inclusive.

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

JM: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I'm surprised by how many people haven't asked themselves that question. Without knowing the answer to that question, it's going to be hard to create a path.
and

"What behavior do I need to change?" We all have work to do, and we need the training to bridge the gap between what we hold as our vision and how we are going to take action to make things happen.

JW: *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

JM: I rely on systems and believe in processes. I work from Inbox Zero, and the leadership in our organization supports us. We use messaging apps and meet 1:1 to reduce the number of emails we need to send to one another.

Also, as I shared, I've been practicing yoga for more than 20 years. While I'm there, I think things through, often I find solutions to problems when I'm in that relaxed state.

Finally, sleep is important. I realize that I'm only as good as I am rested. And, that saying "I'll sleep on it"? Yes, I believe in it!

JW: *How do you listen - and what do you listen for - so you hear more than what is just being said by those you lead?*

JM: Be HUMBLE: Admit what you don't know. Create a space to learn. You're not supposed to know everything. Leaders must value the process of continual development. Continue to grow, step up to challenges and engage.

Any time you're faced with a challenge, there is an opportunity to turn away from fear and move toward growth. Become aware of unconscious biases. Recognize uncomfortable situations, slow down and listen. Observe how to work better together.

JW: *How would you define your leadership philosophy in just one sentence?*

JM: I think of this question a lot like the legacy you would like to leave. In that sense, I'd say I'm someone who lives with purpose and who hopes to impact others in a way that makes them do the same.

•



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews JOANNE RENCHER



With 25 years of business leadership experience, Joanne Rencher serves as the Chief Business and Talent Officer at the [Girl Scouts of the USA](#). Joanne provides strategic leadership of the Girl Scouts' Cultural Resources, with a focus on increasing investments and elevating the brand through GSUSA's unique physical properties, history, and collections. With her passion for developing business leaders across the HR field, Joanne founded Who's Got Next in HR?, Inc. - a membership based organization challenging conventional wisdom around career paths for HR professionals who dare to ask 'what's next?'

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Joanne Rencher: What comes to mind immediately is that we should be making time to think. I'm a believer in what I call "White Space" and getting above it all, into the balcony. It's our job to press the pause button and look around our environment very deliberately and intentionally and ask: "What are the trends? What do I need to be worried about? Where do we have strengths as a unit, and how do we learn more about where we'll need to be?" Leaders are lifelong learners as things are evolving daily. We need to use all our tools to our advantage.

So, absorb new information and give yourself the time to think. Get up to the balcony, don't just be busy...be productive too! You can't figure it out if you don't pause and make the space to do that.

JW: *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

JR: As far back as I can remember, I've asked "Why?" At times it was irritating to my parents or teachers, but I was genuinely curious. To this day, I want people to explain "Why?" we're trying to solve a problem we face. It's that curiosity and ability to get to the heart of things that makes for strong and sustainable leaders.

In April of 2015, I concluded a speech saying, "It's time for HR professionals to think about themselves. If you're not willing to settle for less, come see me after the keynote." I thought a few people would be interested. Well, I looked up and there was a long line of people. I stood and talked with the people in line for an hour or more. That was the birth of what is now a membership organization, "Who's Got Next in HR?" that continues to grow. I feel it is my calling to help people find out what's next for them. Those who may want desperately to challenge the status quo, move outside of the box in the organizational chart, and go to that next level – to the C-suite, across it or even to the top seat.

Q&A with Joanne Rencher

In our interview, Joanne shares insight on a disciplined process to failing; the importance of asking 'Why?'; and the concept of 'White Space.'

Joanne continues to develop business leaders across the HR field by challenging the status quo.



Continued

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

JR: Future leaders are going to need to be a lot more comfortable with failure. Our founder, Juliette Gordon Low was a trailblazer. Why? She wasn't afraid to fail. She was comfortable creating and inspiring, not always knowing what would come... Be willing to fail, be a smart risk-taker. That's where the trails are blazed. That's how you pave the way for something that's new and important and different. What you think is comfortable today just might surprise you tomorrow.

That's where innovation comes from. When you enter a project, you might have a way of thinking that will be tested. You can be organized and thoughtful while iterating along the way, and even failing on your way to success. There's a disciplined process to failing. Be cognizant and sober that things aren't going to go the way you thought, learning throughout the process. Remember to pause; get up on that balcony and look around!

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

JR: "Am I doing this because I want to be liked? Or, am I doing it because it's necessary?"

In the moment, you may want to make a split-second decision to make a statement or challenge something that's happening. Sometimes, you wait. And you're glad you waited! As I reflect on my own development over the years, I'm much less concerned about being liked than I am about doing the right thing. The older I get, the better I get at doing what's hard. I know that I'm more confident in wanting to do the right thing. I ask myself that question several times a day.

JW: *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

JR: Thinking for me is a renewing and rejuvenating activity. I close my eyes, and I focus on the goal. There's something out there, something on the radar that might be a blur. Kind of like when you're driving closer and closer and the destination becomes clearer and clearer. The closer I get, the more I rest and reflect, I gain clarity. I have a two hour commute to and from my office, so that's where I let myself relax and think through the bigger issues we're facing.

JW: *How do you listen - and what do you listen for - so you hear more than what is just being said by those you lead?*

JR: Leaders rely on data. We want to be grounded in solid information, but sometimes all we have is our opinion. If you talk long and constructively enough, you think about it, you learn about it until you get to that point of clarity, you can relay what your intuition is telling you you're seeing. There's something called "Life Experience." As you go from profession to profession, reading, learning, talking, leading, you will have amassed knowledge. When you marry that experience with a perspective, you have to express yourself.

And that often includes looking at body language and not being afraid to call out what you're seeing. If someone seems closed or uncomfortable, for example, ask them about it. It builds a sense of trust as you're giving them permission to be real with you. Authenticity, demonstrated or felt, is part of the secret sauce of leadership.

JW: *How would you define your leadership philosophy in just one sentence?*

JR: Be fresh, different and on the edge of what's comfortable today to create the future.

•



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews Lieutenant General Christopher F. Burne (Ret.)



Lieutenant General Christopher F. Burne (Ret.), [The Judge Advocate General](#), Headquarters U.S. Air Force, served as the Legal Adviser to the Secretary of the Air Force and all officers and agencies of the Department of the Air Force. He directed all judge advocates in the performance of their duties and was responsible for the professional oversight of more than 2,200 judge advocates, 350 civilian attorneys, 1,400 enlisted paralegals and 500 civilians in the Total Force Judge Advocate General's Corps worldwide. General Burne oversaw military justice, operational and international law, and civil law functions at every level of command.

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Lt Gen Chris Burne: First, love learning. I was educated by the Jesuits — I studied Latin, Philosophy, History and Science. By being a Renaissance man or woman, leaders can be open to new ideas, new people and new concepts. Renaissance leaders are interested in the beauty and the gritty stuff that is humanity. Seek out mentors, attend classes and lectures, study history, tap into new technology...never lose your sense of wonder.

Second, listen, analyze and utilize the words and actions of the people around you. Every conversation is important, no matter the setting, circumstances or topic. Allies and adversaries all provide pieces of valuable information.

Finally, find the operating space between being risk-averse and reckless. If we don't, our organizations will be marginalized, ineffective and unable to compete. I preach to our young lawyers all the time that we can't be so risk averse that we paralyze the mission. We must strive to get our clients to "yes," but have the moral courage to say "no" when no is the right answer.

JW: *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

LT GEN CB: I was a young captain. I had just deployed to Operation DESERT STORM. Upon arriving at an airfield in Saudi Arabia, our planeload of Airmen was given a task and, although pretty junior, I was the "senior ranking" and put in charge. In the midst of the task, someone shouted for us to "don our [gas] masks and take cover." We heard missiles overhead. At some point, I decided that lying in the sand wasn't the position I wanted to be in and decided to stand up. When I stood, I looked around and every Airman under my charge followed my lead, and stood up. Why? Because their captain stood up. I wasn't expecting that.

It was a leadership lesson I have always carried with me. Members of an organization watch what leaders are doing. They watch and act accordingly.

Continued

Q&A with Lt Gen Chris Burne (Ret.)

Lt Gen Burne is a leader who thinks comprehensively and long-term, who asks of himself, "Is our work promoting the mission?"

In this interview, Lt Gen Burne discusses what it means to be a Renaissance man or woman in today's climate; the importance of collaboration and listening; and developing "a sense for the sensitive."



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews LT GEN CHRIS BURNE

They will follow leaders they trust, leaders who care about them, leaders who appear competent and confident; and they will reject false leaders.

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to do that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

LT GEN CB: In today's ET (Everybody Transmits) world, the reality is that everyone is sharing via social media. Leaders' actions are under constant review and unprecedented scrutiny. This is not something to fear, but leaders must be keenly aware of what I call the Wi-Fi tsunami and gear their actions and communications to take advantage of this reality.

Another new age reality is that some in leadership roles tend to become entrenched or fixed on a position very early in the development stage. They ought to resist stepping into quick-dry concrete. This is a little back-to-the-future, but leaders need to be open to new facts, new ideas, and new solutions that may differ from their preconceived answers.

Earlier this year, I had a conversation with Senator Bob Dole. He emphasized that when he was the leader of the Senate, he could sit down with his counterparts across the aisle and craft legislation through collaborative effort... a little compromise allowed them to accomplish "we the people's" business. We need to get back to that.

Collaboration is a focus of my work. I could never compromise on a core principle, but it is rare that building solutions to advance the mission gets to that level. I know of no relationships whether professional among peers and competitors or personal between spouses or friends that can survive without a little bit of collaboration and compromise.

JW: *How do you listen — and what do you listen for — so you hear more than what is just being said by those you lead?*

LT GEN CB: Listen aggressively (meaning actively, intently, completely) and ask questions. Leaders must have a sense for the sensitive. Be open to listening, learning, analyzing and utilizing the

conversations and communication that are all around you. Listen for the subtle details. Sometimes it's what's not being said. Always operate on both the tactical and strategic levels. Let conversations and accompanying visuals feed your solutions. Leaders need to think comprehensively and long-term. It does no good to win the battle and lose the war.

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions that effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

LT GEN CB: "Does our work or decision enable commanders (or directors, partners, managers, subordinates) and promote the mission? Are the actions we are taking fair, just, and transparent (meaning visibly just and defensible)? For my legal colleagues: Are we ACTIVE advocates...that is, aggressive, comprehensive, timely, independent, versatile, and effective?"

Finally, as a leader, ask yourself, "How is talent being developed?" Explore ways to help members of your organization get better. Mentorship is incredibly helpful in this regard. I encourage people to seek mentors, and for leaders to seek out mentees — when you run across real talent, reach out to that person.

This may be a convenient time to say just a few words about mentoring. I was fortunate to have had several platinum mentors, starting early on with my parents and continuing to present-day colleagues, who passed along invaluable leadership and interpersonal life lessons. A mentor can sometimes be a boss, a peer, or a subordinate, but a mentor is always an invaluable resource for professional development and personal growth.

(My #1 mentor continues to be my WWII vet/Distinguished Flying Cross father. He turned 93 years old earlier this month...Happy Birthday, Dad, and thanks! My other most important mentor is my beautiful wife. She offers encouragement, but honestly critiques my ideas. Leaders need that... thank you, Robin!)

Continued



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews LT GEN CHRIS BURNE

JW: *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

LT GEN CB: I normally leave the Pentagon after 6:30. The hallways are quiet then. On the way out I thank those who are still there making it nice for us... cleaning floors and restrooms. Everyone contributes to the mission in some way. Sometimes we have to remind ourselves of that.

When I get home, I walk my dog and then discuss the day's activities and upcoming events with my wife, my partner of 29 years. Of course, I don't mention classified or attorney confidential information, but in discussing other issues, Robin often helps me focus on details, like family impacts, that I may have overlooked.

I then spend some "quality time" on the computer... answering email, writing performance reports, editing position papers, etc. As it draws near turning into bed, I read... I love history and biographies. As was General Patton's habit, I also read the Bible praying for wisdom, health and courage. I encourage spiritual enrichment – whatever that term means to you. I firmly believe we need to stay fit and refresh ourselves spiritually, not just physically.

Finally, I catch up on the news, and then — and this is critical — update my weekly to-do list of tasks, calls and meetings. I always have a top-ten list. To paraphrase Yogi... *If you don't know where you're going, you might not get there.*

When I wake up in the morning, I check email, adjust task lists, jump on the treadmill, feed the dog and by the time I'm eating breakfast, I am totally energized. My mind is racing... I can't wait to attack the to-do list and discuss twenty other ideas that have since come into play.

JW: *How would you define your leadership philosophy in just one sentence?*

LT GEN CB: My staff kids me that our flagship is The Black Swan with a battle cry of "expect the unexpected." I do call a few audibles throughout

the day. So I laugh with them when they say we're setting sail, but it actually fits my belief that leadership requires aggressive listening, comprehensive analysis, real caring, and bold action.

•



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews MIKE BRADY



Mike Brady, President and CEO of [Greyston Bakery](#), is building on the organization's 33 year heritage as a leading social enterprise. Mike is responsible for Greyston's Workforce Development, Community Gardens, Housing, Health Services and Early Learning Center. Mike's passionate about the integration of business and social good, particularly through the scaling of Open Hiring™ which provides employment opportunities regardless of background or work history while offering support and services needed to succeed in the workplace and thrive in the community. Mike is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School.

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Mike Brady: Surround yourself with excellent people. Collectively, we'll all get better as we focus on and solve increasingly challenging problems. I've got a lot of hustle in me. Paul Polman said, "Don't think about what career you want, think about what kinds of problems you want to solve."

JW: *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

MB: I've always been fascinated by finding the purpose in what I do. I spent a good part of my career not loving what I was doing. When my father passed away I made a commitment, I wasn't going to continue doing what I didn't want to do.

I wanted more control, and for me, that one step led me down a path of running a great organization.

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

MB: At Greyston, we are committed to coaching and building "Compassionate Leaders in a Compassionate Business."

We need compassionate, mindful leaders — this means understanding the needs of both my team members and my stakeholders and improving our operating systems. I don't remember us focusing on this approach in business school.

Q&A with Mike Brady

Mike Brady shares what he considers to be the most important focus for contemporary leaders today — how to be more mindful and compassionate toward employees, suppliers and customers.

This interview encourages leaders to ask themselves, "What is it you really want to do?"



Continued

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

MB: I often ask myself, “How can I be more mindful and compassionate toward my employees, suppliers and customers?”

One answer is to be mindful of the very diverse needs of those groups. The needs of my hiring manager, for example, are very different from those of my CFO. And, asking myself to reflect on that is something I do regularly.

JW: *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

MB: We set annual goals. Being effective means that we’ve established the path to be successful, and we continue to realign by meeting regularly to assess how we’re doing and how we’re working together.

My own daily habits include meditation, exercise and taking time to be with my family — all reenergizing activities for me. I also don’t spend a lot of time doing things I don’t like. We know that we’re not as effective — and it’s not as fun — if we have to do work we don’t like.

JW: *How do you listen - and what do you listen for - so you hear more than what is just being said by those you lead?*

MB: I’m always asking, “How do we get better?” I’m listening for someone’s passion. As long as the mentality exists to keep trying, to consider, “this is not yet good enough, but it’s still not all that I want” you’re going to end up where you want.

If a colleague is not leading with a passion, I’ll ask, “What is it you really want to do?” I want to help people become more entrepreneurial in their thinking, thus more energized at work.

Once I know what they want to do, I can motivate them to work on our collective goals.

JW: *How would you define your self in just one sentence?*

MB: Be not afraid of failing, be most afraid of standing still. Or, as I would say to my young children, “Keep trying.”

JW: *How has being an organization founded on the principles of inclusion and diversity helped you flourish?*

MB: At Greyston, inclusion is at the core of our business and is the basis of our Open Hiring Model. Open Hiring creates opportunities for everyone: women, men, people of color, people of all faiths and sexual orientations, immigrants and refugees, the economically disadvantaged, the formerly incarcerated and all others who may have been excluded — blocked from contributing to the health and strength of our society. Without our commitment to the principles of inclusion and diversity, Greyston would have never achieved the levels of success we recognize today.

JW: *Greyston began the moniker “we don’t hire people to bake brownies, we bake brownies to hire people,” what incited this philosophy?*

MB: Roshi Bernie Glassman was well ahead of his time with his belief that a successful business could do more than create financial gain. He believed capitalism could be used to generate social justice alongside products and profits. Bernie created Greyston as an enterprise that would treat people, regardless of their past, as equal.

To this day, we believe creating thriving members of the community is as important as delivering increasing financial returns. Rather than judge people on their past, Greyston today remains steadfast in the belief and the proven practice that everyone has the potential to succeed and to contribute.

•



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews Commissioner ANN M. RAVEL



Commissioner Ann M. Ravel was nominated to the [Federal Election Commission](#) by President Barack Obama on June 21, 2013. Prior to her appointment, Ms. Ravel served as Chair of the California Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) overseeing the regulation of campaign finance, lobbyist registration and reporting, and ethics and conflicts of interest related to officeholders and public employees. Ms. Ravel received her B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley and her J.D. from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law.

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Commissioner Ann Ravel: Leaders must know that they can always be better, and focus on improving. I read — books on leadership, on communication, on current political issues. I seek out people who work in my organization, and meet with them to get a sense of the issues they're concerned about.

Remember, the work you do is important. When you take time to reflect deeply on those who benefit from the work you do you will want to be better at what you do and how you do it...every day.

JW: *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

AR: There was a specific time when I didn't set out to become a leader, however, my predecessor was fired and I was called to serve under particularly difficult circumstances. There were articles criticizing our office, and our leadership. I immediately recognized that I had to examine — and reexamine — what it takes to be a good leader.

I accepted that the perceptions were the reality, and I had to work to change those perceptions through action. I attended an executive program at a business school, and during the "Ropes Course" (an activity in which participants were to swing on a rope off of a platform) I realized personal fear. I considered myself to be strong and independent, and in that moment, I began to understand that everyone grapples with fear of something. Everyone is different, and individuals must be considered on who they are, and how they experience the workplace.

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

Continued

Q&A with Ann Ravel

In our interview, Commissioner Ann Ravel shares her insight on listening, reflecting and growing as a leader.

Learn about the questions Commissioner Ravel asks herself every day. As you read our conversation, ask yourself, "What daily habits keep me on track?"



AR: We must think more deeply about how technology is going to help - and hinder - our mission. The next generation understands and uses technology at a level that many senior leaders find hard to comprehend.

The best leaders will continue to learn. Read, listen, and talk about current events. In an increasingly complicated world, leaders must work to un-complicate and understand complex challenges.

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

AR: The questions we ask ourselves serve to slow us down. Ask yourself, "Am I seeing individuals based on who they are and where they are coming from?"

The question I ask myself every day is, "What can we do to make a difference in the community?" When I listen to the answer, I do everything possible to line things up in a way to accomplish those underlying purposes.

JW: *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

AR: Reading and thinking about the real, key challenges we face equips me to make things better and move the ball forward in the area I'm working on.

Writing about what I'm reading and thinking clears my mind and clarifies my perspective. I keep a note pad by my bed, one in my purse, and one in my car.

JW: *How do you listen - and what do you listen for - so you hear more than what is just being said by those you lead?*

AR: It takes some time. Leaders have to first establish goodwill, and have an actual interest in people. I sit with people in informal-type settings, over coffee, for example.

Afterward, I follow up with that person by sending an article, making an introduction, or checking in on a project they are working on.

JW: *How would you define your leadership philosophy in just one sentence?*

AR: We must fully understand and communicate the purpose and the significance of the work that we do.

-



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews SASHA DICHTER



Sasha Dichter is the Chief Innovation Officer at [Acumen](#), a global organization changing the way the world tackles poverty by investing in companies, leaders and ideas. Sasha heads work in impact and leadership including Acumen's Lean Data Work, the Acumen Fellows Programs, and [+Acumen](#), the world's school for social change, and is part of the Acumen Management Committee. Sasha blogs about leadership at [SashaDichter.com](#).

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Sasha Dichter: I am interested in asking, "Where does our commitment to change as leaders come from?" My own starting point of personal development is grounded in a genuine intention to improve. What I've seen, in working with leaders, is that you have to have deep humility (to see where you need to grow) and also have belief in what you can become. If you're defined by fear of failure you won't be able to see your own potential. It's both challenging and empowering to see clearly who you are today and, with that clarity, seek self-improvement.

Our intention to improve is grounded in purpose — (Stanford Professor Carol Dweck's work, including her books "Mindset" and "Grit," are fundamental reading for anyone interested in change). Only with this sense of purpose can we move to the question, "How do we do it?" Depth of intention for continual growth is the prerequisite.

JW: *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

SD: That's a tough one! An important turning point for me was recognizing that how I wanted to be led and managed wasn't going to be the best way for me to lead and manage everyone else. When I first started managing people I thought I needed to provide a goal and lots of space: "Here's the mountain, here's how you might want to scale it, now, GO!" I assumed that because I responded to that type of management, everyone else would too. Subsequently, I have worked on my skills in situational leadership, which starts with diagnosing the kind of stretches and managerial support that are right for each individual in each situation. My job is to enable others to succeed, and support them in the right (evolving) ways to get there.

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

SD: The rate of change in the world around us is accelerating, so standing still is no longer an option. We need to see continued growth and evolution as part of our everyday. We cannot be static. I feel like this message is sometimes missed.

Continued

Q&A with Sasha Dichter

Sasha Dichter is a leader who is committed to gradual, deliberate change.

He understands the importance of adjusting his leadership style to fit the development level of the people he is trying to support, creating opportunities for learning and growth along the way.



In both my personal and professional life, I have seen how much people can change. At the same time, most organizational cultures inhibit people's growth. While it's easy to say, "It's OK to fail," look at what typically happens when people do. The author and Wharton professor Adam Grant reminds us that there are two kinds of failure, and if failure is going to lead to a successful learning experience, it has to be free of shame.

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

SD: It all starts with where we focus our energy and intention. In the context of personal development, that means asking, "What is the most important new skill or set of skills for me to work on now?" Once this question surfaces, I can get the input I need, whether that's through reading or seeking feedback from colleagues or consultation with a coach or mentor, on how to work on these skills.

Where people sometimes get stuck is in letting themselves get overwhelmed by changes that seem too big. To overcome this, ask "How do I break that skill down into learnable small pieces?" For example, if my intention is to become a more effective storyteller, that's not something I can do all at once. There are fears I might have to face, techniques I need to develop, and lots of practicing to do. Making sense of all those pieces and allowing ourselves time to work on each of them is essential.

This is where the assistance and guidance of coaches and mentors is particularly relevant.

JW: *What are some of your own habits or routines?*

SD: I try to work on consistently to making small — even minuscule — changes that can ultimately make a big difference. I give myself plenty of time to make these small adjustments in behavior either through self-study or seeking assistance. It can feel like a long road, and progress is hard to see, but it's the only way I've found that really works.

In terms of working with others, I try to help them do the same thing. To partner with them, my first

job is to really understand them. This is why I think the most important trait a leader can have is to be a voracious listener. I need to understand what they can and cannot do well, and really understand why. Often I find it helps to ask, "What's the story they tell about themselves?"

JW: *How do you listen — and what do you listen for — so you hear more than what is just being said?*

SD: I'm sure I'll be working on this for the rest of my life—I know I'm not all the way there yet. The most helpful advice I received on listening is to start with deep curiosity. This is how, in the words of Stephen Covey, we listen with the intent to understand, not the intent to reply. I try to couple that with seeing things they can't quite see — or believe in — about their potential.

Then it's all about how to help them get there, and the balance of supporting and challenging them along the way. If someone is really committed to growth, and up to the task, they'll often need and respond to a degree of toughness. That can be a way of saying "this is what I know you're capable of" even if they don't believe it yet.

At the same time, it's not my job to define everything for them — that's a mistake. It's easy to defer the big decisions to an authority figure. When we do this, we're off the hook, because someone else then owns that decision and its consequences. To me, leadership is fundamentally about mobilizing people to create change. If I, as the "leader," am always playing the role of deciding what comes next, then I'm limiting the potential of those around me. Ultimately, leadership needs to come from all of us, and that can be scary both for the person in charge and the person working for them.

JW: *How would you define your leadership philosophy in just one sentence?*

SD: We all need teachers, and it is our job to find them. They are everywhere. ●



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews JOSH TAYLOR



Josh Taylor is a groundbreaking [social entrepreneur](#) who collaborates with influential business leaders, creates dynamic opportunities and coaches clients on social impact in business. Acknowledged by The Huffington Post as one of '15 Young People Changing the World', Taylor is a co-founding partner of [Hunter Grange Investments](#), which purchases and manages commercial properties and agricultural land to incubate social ventures and benefit the local community in Tywardreath, Cornwall.

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Josh Taylor: First, listen. Listen to individuals from different generations and different industries, listen to those with less *and* more experience than you.

Second, have internal conversations with yourself. Ask, "How did I deal with this particular challenge? How else could I have dealt with it? How did others seem to deal with it?"

JW: *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

JT: When I was 15 years old, playing cricket, waiting for my turn at bat, I began talking with the owner of a local business. He needed a video made, and knew I was in media studies, so he asked if I could help him. I made a video for his organization, and I also created a website. People found out what I was doing. After I'd attached a video camera to a balloon and sent it into near space (nearly 118,000 feet), I began sharing my ideas locally.

I didn't come out of college knowing what an entrepreneur was. I was focused on graduating from university and getting a job. During my journey, I met a mentor who'd been an entrepreneur all her life, and she encouraged me to think about using my way of thinking to help small businesses think through their problems in new ways. Today, we are partners of Hunter Grange Investments, and our goal is to help people grow.

JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

JT: Communication. We need to make our communication simple, effective and ensure that it translates completely. I prefer to make big decisions by sitting down and breaking bread with someone before we start working together. With the increasing use of social media, information can easily be misconstrued. We need to be very careful how our emotions and meaning is conveyed to others.

Q&A with Josh Taylor

Josh Taylor is the socially minded and connected leader who embraces challenges as opportunities.

He experiments, a lot. Taylor's social enterprise activities have given thousands of hours of free coaching support and start-up loans to local people, of all ages, to start and grow all kinds of micro ventures.



Q&A

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

JT: *“How can I be firm and confident without being negative or hard-hearted?”* This question allows leaders to keep the end goal in sight and work together to accomplish that goal.

“What do I need feedback on next?” Stop, often, and consider the results you’re producing. Ask where feedback could or should come from, listen to the answer and seek that feedback out. It’s one of the best ways to change our perspective and do what we do better.

JW: *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

JT: I’m comfortable taking a risk — it’s my nature to be curious. As a kid, I spent time outside and to entertain ourselves, we made things without a lot of resources, without money. I think that the more leaders can look at challenges and see opportunities, the better they will be at creating and experimenting.

I ask for a lot of feedback. My mentor enables me to reassess situations. Oftentimes she’ll ask me to look at something that I thought went well (but could have been better!) and I always get value from that.

Maybe it’s naiveté, but I’m willing to step into an experience without always knowing what’s going to happen. If you’re a leader just starting out, find someone different than you who will help you think — make you think — differently.

JW: *How do you listen — and what do you listen for — so you hear more than what is just being said by those you lead?*

JT: I’ve found that every new idea comes from listening to what people are talking about — often, what they wish was different. If I can hear that, I know what to work on next.

I believe in learning by doing, creating a way of looking at business and community building in new and creative ways. That’s what keeps me going and engaged.

JW: *How would you define your self in just one sentence?*

JT: I think a leader is someone who identifies and nurtures talent in others so that they flourish and achieve common goals. It’s what I aspire to be... and do.

•



LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews VALERIE EGAN



Valerie Egan is responsible for [Girl Scouts of the USA's](#) Talent Acquisition, providing strategic direction to enhance candidate experience. Before joining GSUSA, Valerie held recruitment roles at Linde and AT&T. Valerie has experience working for Merrill Lynch in human resources, specializing in technology and college recruitment and employee relations. She holds a B.S. in Marketing Management from St. Peter's College and an MBA from Pace University. For the past 13 years, Valerie has been a member of the Morris County NJ Chapter of SHRM holding leadership positions including Vice-President of Programming and President.

Q&A

Jason Womack: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

Valerie Egan: Leaders get better by leading. From my experience, leaders can improve two skills: preparation and follow up. Success often comes down to "being prepared." Leaders will benefit from creating time to adequately prepare for a meeting, whether they are attending or leading the session.

The best leaders anticipate what will come up, and will be prepared to bring clarity to the situation. Bring a fresh perspective, a new way of looking at the topic of discussion.

Document your conversations and the decisions that were made. Clarify what people want. The more efficient leaders are in running meetings and hallway conversations, the more easily everyone can focus on the big picture, the larger goals of the organization and your department. Step up, take mental or written notes, and pay attention to the feedback.

JW: *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

VE: I once worked with a recruiter said to me, "I have done all the recruiting, I've gotten all the candidates, and the client is flip-flopping. I'm at a total loss." She was at a total loss and had to rely on me. I felt that I needed to help her rebuild from the foundation.

I know there is always a process, steps and stages to build from. Everyone appreciates a backstory, it helps leaders understand how things work, and then they can gain a clearer appreciation for what's being done.

Q&A with Valerie Egan

From the private sector to serving in the nonprofit world, Valerie Egan shares how she listens, communicates and leads.

This interview encourages leaders to take mental and/or written notes, pay attention to feedback and body language, and clarify intentions.



JW: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

VE: Leaders should be able to share their experiences: what they have learned, how they have changed and how they may have turned something around.

If [a candidate?] said to me, “Here are the 10 things I’ve learned, 5 of them were successes and 5 were failures,” I’d be very interested in listening.

There is also much to be learned from feedback. It is the way leaders grow. By evaluating the things that are harder for me to do or accept, I’m equipped to be more open in the future, to see something new or different.

JW: *What do you think are the most important questions effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

VE: Ask yourself “How am I communicating? How am I leading?” Leaders need to influence in various mediums: face to face, over the phone, via email and through video. The workplace is spreading beyond the office, and leaders need to be aware and connected even if they don’t have a physical presence in an office.

In the past, managers would work side by side with their colleagues and team. Today, many still sharing space, while others work remotely. Leaders will have to learn to connect with remote team members and be accessible.

JW: *Are there questions that leaders ask themselves regularly?*

VE: “Am I still learning something?” Throughout my career, I continue learning new things. I even moved between divisions in organizations I worked for in the past.

Most recently, I’ve moved from the private sector to serving in the non-profit world and even though I’ve been in the talent acquisition world for 25 years, I’m still learning.

JW: *How do you listen — and what do you listen for — so you hear more than what is just being said by those you lead?*

VE: I ask for stories. If I ask someone to give me an example, we get beyond the facts.

I note everything - especially body language - because their words might be different than what their body is expressing. Sometimes, people need assurance that they are being heard. They want to trust that they can share, but past experiences may be clouding their ability to answer the prompt you’re giving.

JW: *How would you define your leadership philosophy in just one sentence?*

VE: Ask the question you want the answer to.

•



LEADERS in Action

Frances Hesselbein interviews JASON WOMACK



Jason Womack is an executive coach, author and expert speaker focusing on the psychology, sociology and technology of productivity. He has worked with leaders for almost two decades in both business and education sectors. His extensive background is in leadership education, curriculum design, program implementation, policy research and development of partnerships.

Q&A

Frances Hesselbein: *Jason, I believe you are one of the great thought leaders of our time. During many meetings with Peter Drucker, I heard him say, “I just look out the window and see what’s visible, but not yet seen.” When you look out the window, what do you see?*

Jason Womack: Frances, as you’ve mentored me, I’ve heard you say, “In today’s world and in our own country, we have the lowest level of trust, and the highest level of cynicism and we seem to have forgotten civil discourse in a civil society.” What do I see? I see many people wondering who is going to make things better while simultaneously I see that a few leaders are stepping into the spotlight and that is making “all the difference in our world.”

FH: *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better? How they seek continual improvement? Tell us what you do, to be a better leader.*

JW: For any project I participate in, I ask, “Why?” I want to understand — on the deepest of levels — the “So that...” at the foundation of the endeavor.

FH: *What Was Your Defining Moment As a Leader?*

JW: As a high school teacher, I worked tirelessly to connect with my students and their parents. I regularly planned parent, teacher, student conferences before and after school. During one conference long ago, I learned a critical lesson. I was meeting with a father and his son who was struggling in class. At one point during our conversation, the father turned to his son and said, “Why are you always getting into trouble?”

The boy hung his head, avoided eye contact and answered, “The only time anyone notices me is when I do something wrong.” That moment in time changed me. I understood just how fundamental the human need for belonging is; even if it expressed itself as attention getting behavior.

Q&A with Jason Womack

Jason says leadership is about more than just getting other people to follow; anyone with a loud voice could do that.

In this interview, Jason reveals his belief that values-based leadership means that you make and keep promises, building a strong foundation of belief and trust for emerging leaders around you.



Continued

I reflect back on that conversation often when I'm working with people today. I know that they will grow and prosper when they feel acknowledged and know that they belong.

FH: *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

JW: As an advisor to managers and founders of companies around the world, I continue to observe the need for teams to be able to collaborate across cultures and between functions.

Over the next twenty years, it's going to be more important that these leaders embrace not just integration but what I call "Cross Functional Imagination." I believe a mark of an effective executive is her or his ability to image-in the variables and the unknowns that are only beginning to become clear.

A mentor of mine reminds me, "You'll see into the future much more clearly when you do your homework and you use your creative imagination to wonder how it can be." In the future, leaders must incorporate much more creative and cross functional scenario planning into their strategy.

FH: *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

JW: At the end of each day, I have what I call my Triple A process. In a notebook on my nightstand, I write a paragraph or two about the past fifteen - eighteen hours.

I write about 3 themes:

- Accomplishment (what did we finish today?)
- Acknowledgement (who made a significant, positive difference today?)
- Appreciation (what am I incredibly grateful for?)

The next morning, I will read and reflect on these notes, which helps set the next day in motion.

Oh, and another habit: I write 3-5 "thank you" cards each week. For the past 17 years, I have focused on finding someone to be grateful to each day. I stop, write a note, and put in the mail. I call this my "gratitude meditation" and find it calms my mind and gets me to place of service.

FH: *How do you listen — and what do you listen for — so you hear more than what is just being said by those you lead?*

JW: First, I feel it's important to consider the whole person: where are they from, what do they like, how do they interact with their world? Knowing answers to these kinds of questions gives me a point of reference for our conversation.

Second, some people talk in "noun languaging," they frame topics of discussions and discuss those areas of focus usually from a perspective of observation (and/or opinion!). Other people focus on "verbs;" they are the ones who talk about the actions, the results, the things that need to be done to achieve.

Thirdly, I listen as much as I can to find out where someone is complaining about something (even subtly). In the complaint, they're on the verge of discovery of something new.

FH: *How would you define your self in just one sentence?*

JW: I live curiously and passionately in the present, knowing we are clearing a path to a better future of collaboration and contribution.

•