E035_ Winning Hearts, Minds an...McBride-Wright and Barry LaBov

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SPEAKERS

Mark McBride-Wright, Barry LaBov

M Mark McBride-Wright 00:00

Hello. Welcome to the next episode of the safe leader podcast. I'm your host, Mark McBride-Wright, and I'm delighted today to be joined by Barry Labov. Is a two time Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year, celebrated author, brand strategist and founder of Labov and beyond, a marketing and communications firm renowned for helping organizations unlock their competitive edge with over four decades of experience, Barry's work revolves around one principle differentiation through his proprietary brand re engineering process, Barry and his team help businesses discover and amplify what sets them apart, first internally with their people, then externally in the market. His best selling book, The Power of differentiation, win hearts, minds and market share, captures his philosophy and continues to inspire leaders worldwide, from unloading parcels at 3am when in college to becoming a strategic advisor to Fortune 500 firms and startups alike, Barry's journey is one of grit creativity and commitment to empowering people through brand clarity, he brings infectious energy to every conversation and a belief that culture and brand are two sides of the same coin. Barry, welcome

B Barry LaBov 01:18

Well, thank you, Mark, this is a pleasure. I'm really looking forward to this, and I say we're going to have a lot of fun,

M Mark McBride-Wright 01:25

infectious energy. Yep, I love that. I just read that now, actually, it's the first time I've read your bio properly. And, yeah, there's, there's lots of stuff in there to to dig into. So let's go back then find out a bit about 3am unloading parcels. What's that all about?

B Barry LaBov 01:49

Well, I worked at United Parcel Service ups as I went to college. I paid my way through college as a young man. At the same time I was doing that, I was in a rock and roll band, trying to write songs that would become hits, hopefully at some point, or try to get my band on MTV or American Bandstand. So and we did get on American Bandstand, and we did have a video that was on MTV,

M Mark McBride-Wright 02:17

bet you that felt good.

B Barry LaBov 02:20

It felt great, but my music sold well under 1 million copies. So I was working through college, and one of the jobs was ups. I was a person who would unload these big semi tractor trailer trucks. So I did that every morning, from three in the morning till eight in the morning, then I take a little nap, go to college, get done, go practice with the band, and then rinse and repeat. And that was my life. That was my life for about five, six years.

M Mark McBride-Wright 02:54

Wow. How much sleep were you getting then

B Barry LaBov 02:57

it wasn't very good sleep. I had a full head of hair at that point. So I think I lost my hair over all of that type of really reckless physical behavior that I was doing. But it was good. It was a great experience. I became UPS his first part time union steward, which was a very, very crazy experience for a young kid, you know, in his early 20s. So I learned a lot about dealing with unions and dealing with management and people and trying to make sure everybody's being treated fairly. So it was quite an experience.

M Mark McBride-Wright 03:34

So how so you went to college, you grafted your way through with with this, this regime, that you had this routine, how did you it from reading your bio and your background, you've, you've you've run your own show for a long time, you've been an entrepreneur from from since 1981 I see when you, when you set the set your Business up. So what was the gap between leaving college and starting that up? What kept you busy in that time and what led you to want to do your own thing?

B Barry LaBov 04:08

I never wanted to be an entrepreneur. I did not want to run my own business. I did not want my name on the door of the company. I wanted to write songs and be in a rock band, and I married the perfect girl for me. She's still with me today, and she supported me, and I worked as hard as I could, and used as much resilience to keep picking myself back up as my band was getting rejected, to see what we could do. Now, what happened was there was a day where I was working at a recording studio, and I had found out that they were not paying the musicians, and that that was not okay with me. So when I did sit down with them and say, Hey, are you paying the musicians, they go, no. And I said, so you're ripping off the musicians that I'm bringing in. They go, Yep, we're ripping them off. And I said, Okay, I cannot work for you anymore. Well, that launched my entrepreneurial career, because little did I know at that precise moment at my tiny little apartment that my wife and I shared, our landlord came in told my wife, look, you two are great tenants. You've been my favorites, but I'm getting a divorce. Your apartment will go to my ex wife in two weeks, so you have to get out. So Little did I know? When I came home and asked why my wife was crying, and she said, Well, we're going to be kicked out of the apartment in two weeks. I said, Oh. And she said, how did your day go? I said, Well, I don't have a job anymore. Oh my gosh. So we had no home, we had no job, and that's how I started the business. I thought, you know, I'll just do some music, some jingles, things like that, and I'll see if I can get by. And I had some of the lowest goals on Earth. And I achieved those, but then they started to, you know, improve over time. But

M Mark McBride-Wright 06:08

When the tough get going, as they say, you have to get going, don't they, and in that, when you're faced with such a stark immediacy, you know, two weeks, you don't have time to go and find a job somewhere, you know, or if you did, sometimes putting your trust into yourself and thinking that you'll make it, you you can architect your own future if you've got the skills that can, that can do it. So what was that, was that that was the origin story. Then, of your of your business, you went all in and set those low goals, but goals that were achievable. It sounds like you're some point setting goals that were unachievable with what you had to work with at the time. So you had that sense of achievement that kept you going, and you get that compound growth, I guess, in your in your resilience, and what's possible?

B Barry LaBov 07:04

Yeah, I would say mark what, what I did is I set extremely low financial goals, and I and I set high performance goals as far as my creativity. So what I wanted to do is create music. At the time I was doing music or jingles, something like that, that companies like Disney and large companies would find attractive enough that they would pay me, so that I wasn't just a local guy doing something, trying to scrape by and survive, that I was doing something good enough that people 1000 miles away would say, hey, let's, let's hire this company or this guy. And that's what I did. And I ended up building this team of friends who were working with me to the point was like having a rock band again. I had these, this group of people with me, and we built it, and we spent time together and scraped together everything we could to survive, and within a few years, I was named the Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst and Young. And it shocked me, but at that point mark, I thought, well, maybe I'm doing something pretty good. Maybe I am okay. And from there, it's grown and built, you know, year after year, decade after decade,

M Mark McBride-Wright 08:28

fantastic. So Well, through that growth, then of your business have you found with phases of scaling and growth, you get growth phases, and then you plateau for a bit, and then you get ready for the next growth. And sometimes you even have to contract a bit in order, because you maybe grew a bit too fast in order to then get ready for the next stage of growth. So what's that arc been like then over the last 40 years of your

B Barry LaBov 08:55

business, what you said is right on target. I was not prepared to grow a lot. And there were times where we did, and when we did that, one of my biggest mistakes was I was hiring the wrong people. You know, I just needed somebody, so we need that guy's pretty good. Let's bring him in. Oh, she, it's okay, let's bring her. And so I didn't realize that, but I was creating more problems down the road, because either it was a performance issue or it was a morale issue, and it wasn't that person's fault, it was just I was bringing people in, and it was not a good fit. The other thing I did back then was I was not paying as much attention to the product itself as I should, because I was trying to grow. So I was entrusting that to other people who maybe didn't have as much interest or intensity. And there's a balance. You want to give people a chance to do great work, but at the same time, you got to make sure you're adhering the standards. So I've erred on that, and I think that's a daily challenge for me somewhere, because. Between, hey, you know what to do, take care of it and, well, wait a minute, I know exactly what I want. So somewhere in between, there is where I live on a daily basis. My goal has been throughout these 40 years, is that I want to give people who work at my company the opportunity of a lifetime, meaning I want to give them a chance to do something and be rewarded at a level that they did not expect would ever be in their lives. And in some cases, that has been true. In other cases, I go I don't really want to do it, because one of my problems, which is good and bad, but one of my problems is I see the potential in people, yeah, which means, if that person's ready to do it, they love it. But if that person goes I want to do that, that sounds like a lot of work. That's I'm not making that person happy.

M Mark McBride-Wright 10:56

Alignment, misalignment, in ambition or or desire, and then what you can see is the raw potential. How do you handle that? Then, when you when you have that predicament,

B Barry LaBov 11:09

you know, I learned, I learned a long time ago, because I made that mistake many times, and I'd be frustrated. Why can't they do more? They could do so much. They have so much talent. And then one time, I was talking to a person, this was 20 years ago, and I said, you know, you really have a lot of talent. I'd love you to have a chance to have an ownership stake in our company. And she said, I absolutely have no interest. And I was immediately hurt, and I thought, Oh, why? And she said, Look, I grew up in an entrepreneurial household with my father talking about business every night and arguing with my mom over it, and I don't want to go through that in my life. I just want to bring up my daughter, and I want to do a good job and right. And I and I thought, you know, she's right. That's perfect for her. And I said, I think that's great. And 20 years later, she's still working with me, and she's one of my favorite people in the world. But I had to learn that mark, because could she have been a leader and an owner of this company? Absolutely, yeah, but she didn't want to do that. It wasn't the right time.

M Mark McBride-Wright 12:17

Yeah, that's true. Sometimes we project on others what we see, the lens through which we see the world, and we find that hard to then reconcile why there's that lack of alignment. But absolutely, once you know someone's truth and someone's motives, and then you know the boundaries within which you are for the moment. I mean, those boundaries can change over time, so it's important, then, as a leader, to just keep checking in and making sure you're still you're like that. There hasn't been a shift in that. You know, so many of your stories center around people at the heart of a brand. Was there ever a moment that taught you the power of engaging your employees first. Maybe that story you just shared was an example of that, because you found out about your employee, like her ambitions and or lack thereof in terms of company ownership, not saying she wasn't ambitious, I'm sure she is. But how do you find engaging your employees. It's almost like you've got multiple customers, don't you? As a leader, you've got the internal, but then also the external. And how have you managed that over the years?

B Barry LaBov 13:34

Well, you ask about a story. Here's a story I really find interesting a CEO for a major automotive brand called me up one day and he goes, Hey, I need your genius. Here tomorrow, we're launching a brand new version of a car of ours, and it's replacing this no good, crappy looking product that we've been selling that nobody's buying. I need you here because our morale is in the dump, and we have to make sure this launch is successful. So I traveled to see the CEO the next day, and I said, Hey, before we start talking, here's a question, do you know what brand and product is the number one selling product in your segment over the last 10 years? This This car has outsold every other car in that segment. Do you know which one it is? And he goes, I don't have the foggiest idea. I said it's that no good, ugly, looking crappy car of yours that you described yesterday. And he said, I didn't have any idea. I said, Yes, you have been denigrating and talking poorly about that product, and it's the number one seller. It's a success story. And he said, you know, that explains why. Our morale is in the dump because we walk around being ashamed of something that is a success story. And he said, and he said, I should, I'm going to change this. I should be talking to people and say, Look, we're going to do the new version of this, but let's honor the great things we've been doing. So that's what they did. And the thing this guy did that was brilliant. And some of us know this, and others may not, so I hope I explain it well. In the automotive industry, when you launch a brand new product, it's normally going to be shown first at an automotive show. An auto show could be in Detroit, Los Angeles, Geneva, somewhere, and all of a sudden they take the top the drapes off the car, and you see it, right, okay? What he did was, for this launch, he allowed his employees to see it before the world did, and he brought it in, and they had a secret meeting with hundreds of their employees, and he said, put your phones down. You're not taking any photos. You get to see this car before anyone in the world that's a leader that said, You know what, my people are most important, and get them

M Mark McBride-Wright 16:11

involved. Yeah, wow. They must have really appreciated that. It

B Barry LaBov 16:16

was life changing for a few of them. Many of them were crying because they thought, I can't believe I get to see this for the first time before the rest of the world.

M Mark McBride-Wright 16:25

Yeah, I know what you mean about the automotive sector. We, I did some work with McLaren f1 and it was always big, big secrets with the wrap, you know, the wrapping. Oh, yeah, you see pictures of the new car, but then that there's all this weird looking wrapping paper that would, you know, hide bits of the car and like, until the big unveil. So I'm, I want to the word engineering appears in some of your work. So brand re, in re engineering, that's right up my street. You know, I'm an engineer by background. So, how? How Talk? Talk? Tell us a bit about this framework or methodology that you've that you've created.

B Barry LaBov 17:08

Most of the clients that I get to work with that our company calls customers. Clients are engineers. They're brilliant, they're creative innovators. They're doing things that are amazing. The problem is, and I grew up with an engineer. My dad was an engineer, always the smartest guy in the room. And the issue with engineers is they think the rest of us should understand how brilliant this is, so they don't want to waste time talking about it. They don't want to brag about it. It's, of course, that's how good this is. Come on, everybody should know it. And it's like, hold on a minute. So one of my great opportunities is working with these engineers and explaining to them that when you work with my company, we're not going to try to out create you. We will not you've already done the great work. We're going to discover and identify the genius that you have, then we're going to name it. We're going to be able to say, hey, here's the name of this thing that you created. Because we're not just going to call it a bolt or a valve. We're going to have a name for it, and we're going to then create the story behind it. Celebrate it first with your employees, so they have pride in it, because in a lot of cases, your employees don't even know how great this is. Yeah, then we tell the world, so we call brand re engineering, because we're not coming in to rebrand you. We're going to go re engineer the brand that you already have. We're going to go find that genius, and we're going to put it forefront to the world.

M Mark McBride-Wright 18:42

I love that and something that comes through my mind as you were speaking there, engineering as a sector, has a brand identity problem. More engineers, you know, we need more people in engineering periods. Never mind needing a diverse, more diverse engineering background in set of engineers in our sector. We just need more more engineers. And if we can get greater diversity of engineering backgrounds, then and people, then even better, we should, we should aspire for, for both. And so I'm interested in with the organizations that you work with, and if, like, you know, do you think about the people side of it, as well as, like, the product and the component? How much intention or focus do the leaders that you work with, the CEOs who call you up, like, how much are they thinking about the brand of engineering as a as an industry, in relation to the public, like the public's perception of of who can be an engineer and what an engineer does?

B Barry LaBov 19:51

I think the engineers I get to work with are not concerned about the the world of engineering and how it's viewed. They. Are these geniuses that are trying to come up with the next amazing breakthrough within their company, and they generally will grow that engineering department, and they'll invest in that product, or the machinery or the software needed to build that kind of product. That's what they're all about now, they're not going to be great at naming it or doing anything regarding putting a spin on it, so people get it because they're not that interested in it. They want to go come up with the great idea. So that's that's what they want to do. I see engineers all walks of life, like this that I get to work with, and sometimes even people that are not engineers, by degree, they act and think like engineers, and that's what they're doing. And I love them, but what I try to do is I try to be the engineer whisperer. I try to say, okay, but you know, this would really inspire your people, because they have no idea why you went to all this extra work and all this extra cost to do this, they will be impressed that you did it, and they'll go really and go, yes, they will. So I think it's giving that engineer an opportunity to have his or her ideas, concepts and innovations appreciated, and, of course, internally first, as we've said a few times, so that externally, people go, Oh my gosh, that is amazing. And nobody else does that.

M Mark McBride-Wright 21:32

Yeah, yeah. I think that. I think that that is, that is one of the biggest missing components, unfortunately, currently in the kind of skills attraction and skill development, skills retention, the imparting of knowledge and wisdom through years of experience from Engineer To Engineer, there's a there's a sort of chasm about the perceptions of Who can be an engineer, and that's why we're seeing a sort of flat uptake or a reduction in some instances. And when we've got some of the big challenges ahead of us, you know, AI and opportunities, even we need we just need more. We just need more engineers. So we run a really successful mentoring program, like a reciprocal mentoring program between engineers and industry and engineering students. And it's incredible when you just pair engineers up, who may be decades apart in age, but because they're off a similar degree background, they've got that shared interest, that shared passion for mechanical engineering, and they just, they just learn off each other, you know. And you get, you get the engineer who's worked in the business for 30 odd years and who's gone deep in expertise, but maybe is missing the breadth of what's happening more broadly in the industry, getting to find out what the future engineers perspective is, and how engineering is being taught now at college or university, and what's changed, and it's, it's a really nice, you know, you really cut through a lot of biases that people can harbor about one another, different generations. So, you know, we've cleared up paired up, you know, young black female engineers with older, white male engineers, and they just connect on being engineers, you know? And it's, it's that that's where a lot, this is where a lot of my work plays out. Really, it's that fear of walking on eggshells that different groups have about one another that then means we never connect on anything more deeper than just the engineering. And I think it's that kind of interpersonal depth that we we need to cut through a bit more in our so maybe bringing that into your brand re engineering might help expedite this for the sector.

B Barry LaBov 23:55

Well, I love your passion on that mark. You know, example, I work with a copper rod producer, and they have brilliant engineering. And one of the things we discovered when we did their brand re engineering was these engineers would go into the clock to their customers, plants and factories, and they would reconfigure their customer's machinery to perform at a higher level. And my team said, hey, that's really great. What do you charge for that? And they go, we don't charge we just do it. And we go, you got to understand, you're bringing this genius to your customers. It's worth something. And so often, I think the engineer also short changes herself or himself, because they're going, Well, come on, everybody ought to do that. Well, it doesn't really matter. Oh, it only took me an hour. Well, it took you 40 hours of experience maybe, to get the thing done, but it took you 40 years of engineering prowess to get that done. So. All of what you did is valuable. So I think sometimes in the in the engineering space, it is a situation where something brilliant is dismissed by the engineer, and therefore think about it's so complex for the average person to understand, they're not going to grasp it, so it's lost. So I think the engineer owes it to themselves to say, hey, wait a minute. Maybe this is special, and maybe we should communicate it.

M Mark McBride-Wright 25:31

Yeah, there's almost an education there of engineers getting into business, putting their business hat on. Hey, you know, business development. Hat on the so you've I'm interested in your use of AR VR and interactive learning. That's something that I've looked into with with some clients to create a more experiential learning experience. And, you know, bring it out from just the PowerPoint and the slides and the mundaneness that can sometimes be a learning experience. So what, what is it that you've done? And how are you embracing emerging technologies?

B Barry LaBov 26:13

Well, I love the question, because let's think about this. Let's say you're an engineer and you are leading a company that is really technologically advanced, and you're doing some amazing engineering and technology. It's great. And how do you promote it? Well, you have a piece of paper, a sales sheet, a brochure, and you have a photo of the thing, and that's it. And the thing itself looks very unimpressive, because all the cool stuff is going on inside, and you'd have to tear the thing apart. Well, what we do is we use technology to be able to express the technological genius of a product. So we will go inside the product and we will show, for instance, how a transmission is actually working. We will go inside a fire truck and show how the apparatus is working, how all of the different valves are working. We'll go inside a port truck and show where all the ingenious areas to service the product are that were created, but you cannot see it with the human eye. So what we do is we think technology should be able to make it even better than the real thing, meaning you should be able to look inside and go, Oh my gosh, look what's going on in there. That's That's genius. And that's what we do. We use technology, augmented reality. We use sometimes we'll use headsets. We'll do whatever it takes to show the genius of that product. And

M Mark McBride-Wright 27:52

that must really peak engagement then and get people, yeah, more more engaged.

B Barry LaBov 28:00

Well, yes, as an example, we work with a company, and they'll produce a transmission that could be 800 pounds to 6000 pounds, right? Okay, well, they're not going to send that around to show it to people, but we can create a two pound, 3d model, send it to people, and then they can go put their phone in front of it and see everything working, and they're going to go, Oh my gosh, these people are geniuses. Well, that's what we want to do. I want to show the genius. I don't want somebody to say, hey, there's really cool stuff going on. I don't want to hear that. I want to see it. And you can do that with technology.

M Mark McBride-Wright 28:40

Yeah. No, I love that. I love that. So I'm interested in moving into the finding out a bit about your book, differentiation, the power of differentiation. So tell us about that.

B Barry LaBov 28:53

I was writing the book right before covid struck. It was primarily about how a leader can increase the value of their company by differentiating their product and their engineering, and it as a result, increasing market share. But in the middle of covid, there was a statistic in the United States, and it was that 55, zero, 50 million Americans walked off their job in one year. It was the great resignation. And it occurred to me that identifying the differentiation that you are producing in your brand and your product and your services is not just to increase sales and profit and sure that will do it, but it's to make sure that the people who are working with you or for you. If you want to say that feel a sense of significance. They feel there's a meaning of what they're doing. And that's why I created it. I'm now doing keynote speeches to manufacturing associations to the Better Business Bureaus all over the nation who. Sharing that story, and my goal mark is, I want to inspire 1 million people or more with that message that you win the hearts and minds of your people, then you win the market share. And that's the subtitle of the book. It's the power of differentiation. Win hearts, minds and market share,

M Mark McBride-Wright 30:21

but so the hearts and minds are tunedly into the hearts of your people, the people in wider society as well. But the nugget is the people working for you, working with you, and then when you've got that, you've got the trust, you've got the commitment, you lock that in. It means then the business can perform better, have impact, and then hence get the market share,

B Barry LaBov 30:46

right. If your people do not believe and they're not buying in, why would your customers believe or buy in? It doesn't make any sense. So we do that, and we make sure everybody knows the value of what this company is doing. And, you know, sometimes they're doing things from a social standpoint that's really great, or an environmental standpoint, but sometimes it's like a customer of ours that builds ambulances, they're little literally helping to save or protect lives, yeah, and you know, you know, am I plugging in a wire harness or tightening a bolt, or am I helping to save or protect a few 100,000 lives? And that's a big difference.

M Mark McBride-Wright 31:29

So I guess that's where the power of storytelling comes in, because you could define the role in the mechanics of what it is fixing the ambulance, and that is what you do, but then it's speaking to, actually, the higher order purpose of the organization, the what the ambulance does, in terms of helping, help in society. So do you you mentioned about bringing in storytelling, which fits squarely into my safe leader framework of share, act, feel, empower, and, yes, getting people to share elements of ourselves that they cannot see from looking at someone. Because as engineers, like we've been saying we don't do that, right? You know that that's the that's not important. That's a distraction from the technical stuff that I need to prioritize. But actually, because we're not doing that, we've got, you know, engineering has got one of the highest suicide rates in the entire nation, so we've got a mental health crisis. So my, my kind of bigger purpose is to try and get more men, in particular, talking about things that might be non engineering or non engineering relevant, but actually will help create a greater sense of belonging and empathy from within. You know,

B Barry LaBov 32:43

that's brilliant. I'll add to this. I think storytelling is great. What I share with every audience is it must be compelling story telling. So storytelling about we have 400 people in the factory, and we produce 2000 products a year, and we make blank millions of dollars, is not a compelling story. If we say we have 350 people, and over half of our people are volunteer firefighters because they believe in the fire truck we're building, and in essence, we've been able to protect and save over 2 million lives over these years, then all of a sudden you're going, now, wait a minute, and it fits perfectly with your approach mark. All of a sudden, there's something I'm doing that's actually significant. Yeah, you know, I'm not just lining somebody's pockets with money. I'm actually doing something good. You know, I shared this with some folks in the ambulance and fire truck industry. And one person said, you know, I never thought of myself as a as a life saving person or something like that, but maybe I am and are absolutely that's what you are. You're not just a guy that's tightening a bolt. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

M Mark McBride-Wright 33:56

Absolutely, absolutely, I It's funny when you, um, see people then realize this about themselves. So we, you know, in our in our training, that that's what we do. We we bring in the art of storytelling as well as the importance of it. And it's funny when you see people first just talk through an experience that they've had in the very like you said fact, like just listing a bunch of facts, right? But then when you skill them in the why or the how, or what did that mean? What what did, how did that feel for you? What did that taste like for you? What did that smell like for you? You know, bring in some interesting adjectives. So then you're bringing in the art of storytelling, actually, how you tell a compelling story. All of a sudden, I remember this one training course we did in particular, and it was a woman who had just had a job promotion to like quality control. Manager or something at the start of the pandemic, and she was telling us, you know, the data and the stats. Then when we we dug a bit deeper, it turned out she'd just become a single parent. You know, it was the start of the pandemic. You know, there were, like, a few other stresses happening in our life, basically, and then all of a sudden you're like, Wow, you you were offered this opportunity, and you took that on when all this other stuff was happening. So the the resilience and the fortitude and the, you know, and you were seeing a woman in front of you that kind of didn't seem very confident in herself. And very, very sure, you know, maybe the imposter syndrome stuff that we often say can come in and all of a sudden to see that shift, even a physicality shift in confidence. And yes, I did do that. I that has led me to, I was eligible for that promotion. I absolutely deserved it. She now brings that forward to how she then shows up in town halls or in front of teams. You know, that confidence that she emanates and that she can then share, it helps others then relate to her, so that that's what I'm all about with my safe leader framework, it's emboldening leaders to lower their guards, do that self reflection, then bring that to the to their leadership and how they show up, and then it kind of gets more like gets others to do the same.

B Barry LaBov 36:34

I think it's great. It's all about vulnerability. And we're all human beings. We don't know what somebody else is going through, and if we think we do, we're wrong. We're just completely wrong. We have to show grace and allow other people to share where they don't feel that good or what they're concerned about. And I could not agree more.

M Mark McBride-Wright 36:56

I'm interested in your take on digging deeper on that, like, in terms of men masculinity, like, how how do you feel in the years that you've been working, how do you feel? Do you feel there's a shift nowadays in the modern man being a bit more empathetic, lowering the guard, being more vulnerable. Or do you think we're still upheld to these kind of being stoic and having it together and not allowed to cry, and we have to have a certain type of leadership style in the workplace.

B Barry LaBov 37:29

I think it's improved with men. I think that, you know, maybe 2030, years ago, when I was little younger in the business, it was a little more macho, and there was a lot of tough love, and you know, men are going to be tough on these things and things like that. I think it's the workplace is a very sensitive place now, and there are a lot of positives to that. I think there are a few negatives, but I think there are a lot of positives to the workplace. I think there's less of a difference between the way the man behaves and the woman behaves today than in the past. I think also, there is an expectation that you as a leader, you need to listen, and if you're not a really good listener, you're you're probably not a good leader. You might be a good performer, but you're not a good leader.

M Mark McBride-Wright 38:22

That's that. That's an important differentiation, actually, because people can sniff if you're bullshitting them basically, and if what, if you're being authentic or or inauthentic. And I think that helps you buy it to to your framework and what you're talking about, it helps by loyalty, doesn't it? If you're showing up, showing that you can be trustworthy, you have to give a bit to get a bit. So if you lower your guard a bit and share an element of yourself that people can't see from looking at you or knowing stuff about you, or if you're quite a private leader, being a bit more vulnerable gives gives permission for others to do similarly.

B Barry LaBov 39:05

I think ideally, you're very open with everybody you're working with. You're the same person with the direct report as you are with the person you report to. Ideally, I think being vulnerable and open about where your failings are is critical. It is sometimes not done by leaders because they think it makes them look weak. I think it makes you look human, which is a strength. So I err on the side of admitting I'm wrong. I err on the side of saying, Wow, I need help on this. I err on the side of saying, I don't know what to do here. Can somebody you know, sit down with me here and work with me through this? So I think that's important. One thing I'll add, we talked about listening. My company does jam sessions with clients. Okay? So that means we do a lot of ideating and collaborating, and the first thing we share before we begin this. Session is that the most important aspect of a jam session is not the ideas. It's listening, and what we have to do is listen. In this jam session, we have to listen to what the person next to you is saying. Then you can share your ideas, because that next person to you is now obligated to listen to you. What you cannot do is hear somebody talk, and you're already on your mind, inside your mind, coming up with something else, and you're not even paying attention to them. So I think that works throughout all relationships. Absolutely. Listen intently as deeply as you can and then respond, but don't, don't shut somebody off as they're blabbering, you know, so to speak, and just think, I don't care what they say, I'm going to make sure they hear me.

M Mark McBride-Wright 40:51

Yeah, listening with the intention to respond means you're not fully focused and fully present in what's being shared. I love that you I'm sensing the jam session is you bringing across some of your old music, love and terminology, and your your peppered it throughout your business? I love that.

B Barry LaBov 41:12

Yep, that's what we do. So we'll generate 1000s of ideas through hundreds of jam sessions every year at my company, it's a non stop ideation process.

M Mark McBride-Wright 41:24

Love that. I love that. So what's the legacy thinking about the future? And you know, the energy you've put into the world with what you've created as an author, you've made a permanent imprint with a book, you know what? What are you hoping will come with your impact on leadership over the years? What are you hoping to to impart on the world?

B Barry LaBov 41:51

What I would love is, regarding the people I get to work with in my company, is that I'm providing something to them that they would not get anywhere else, a better life, a better opportunity with our clients. My thought is, I am a person who understands them. I listen to them. I'm not fearful of them, so they may feel more receptive to what I suggest, and that that basically means that they understand that number one, they have something brilliant that their company's been doing for one year, 10 years, 100 years, whatever it's been. They need to honor that. They also need to go and celebrate, not just inform, but celebrate that with the most important people first, and that's their employees or anybody involved with them. And if they learn that, I think a lot of good things happen. Your morale improves, your retention improves, your quality inside the facility improves, but the life of the leader improves because he or she is thinking, You know what, we're actually doing something good. So I hope I can, if I can, help leaders understand that, I think that's, that's a great legacy. Yeah,

M Mark McBride-Wright 43:11

you've helped me, Barry, over this, over this webinar, definitely, you've definitely given me some food for thought. So I appreciate that. Okay, quick fire questions, are you ready? I'm ready. What's your favorite band of all time, and why?

B Barry LaBov 43:30

Favorite band of all time is Tom Petty, and the Heartbreakers, I love it because petty stood up for what he believed in, in music, and he did not compromise

M Mark McBride-Wright 43:41

what's a campaign or client moment? You'll never forget.

B Barry LaBov 43:45

We launched the first electric motorcycle for Harley Davidson. Many of their dealers were against it, and we were able to rally them behind it,

M Mark McBride-Wright 43:56

rock band rehearsal or client Strategy Session. What gets you more fired up?

B Barry LaBov 44:01

Strategy session with clients, because we have a chance to do something that may never have been done before.

M Mark McBride-Wright 44:09

What's your most underrated leadership trait?

B Barry LaBov 44:14

I think the most underrated leadership trait is resilience, being able to deal with a disappointment and get right back up and say, Okay, here's what we do next. Yeah,

M Mark McBride-Wright 44:28

what's one book every brand strategist should read?

B Barry LaBov 44:31

I think the New Testament. It's the Bible, but it's a great, great exercise in looking at the way people look at leadership, the way you grow a group of people who believe in you, and how you stand up for what you believe in.

M Mark McBride-Wright 44:50

Okay, what's your go to? Way to recharge creative. Creatively,

B Barry LaBov 44:58

I turn on some. Classic Rock and Roll and enjoy the music and then go to the piano and play along with it,

M Mark McBride-Wright 45:07

nice coffee, tea or something stronger

B Barry LaBov 45:12

coffee. And as far as stronger I love wine. I love red wine, and I'm a wine collector. Oh,

M Mark McBride-Wright 45:20

nice. What advice would you give your younger self unloading trucks at UPS,

B Barry LaBov 45:27

to try to enjoy the journey even more than you're enjoying it right now, and realize that you should move forward assuming things will be great. So why not enjoy that moment?

M Mark McBride-Wright 45:41

Oh, good advice. What's a tool or method? You think more companies should use?

B Barry LaBov 45:46

What's a what method? I'm sorry, a

M Mark McBride-Wright 45:48

tool or method.

B Barry LaBov 45:51

A tool or method, I believe all companies should look at what we call a jam session, where you bring people in, and you listen to their ideas and force yourself by the end of that session, could be an hour, could be six hours to come up with not 1000 ideas, but three workable, actionable ideas that could be considered to move forward.

M Mark McBride-Wright 46:18

And finally, win hearts or win minds. If you had to pick just one,

B Barry LaBov 46:23

I would win hearts. I think once you win the hearts, the minds are real easy, but you can win minds, but people may not believe in you and what you

M Mark McBride-Wright 46:34

do very good. Very, very, very good. Thank you, Barry, if our audience want to get in touch with you, find out, you know, get a copy of your book, find out more about your company. How can they do that?

B Barry LaBov 46:48

There are many ways mark that our audience can reach out. So you can go to LinkedIn. I'm right there. So it's Barry Labov, I will respond. I have a website. Barry labove.com, so you can go right there. Some of my music is there. A few of the books are there. That's great. Check me out on Amazon. Please buy the book if you're interested and leave a very honest review. I love that. And you can also check out my company's website, which is Labov, L, A, B, O, v.com,

M Mark McBride-Wright 47:20

that is brilliant, Barry, and I'm just going to call out the fact that I never clarified how to pronounce your surname the call. So I've been making you sound very French. Labov.

B Barry LaBov 47:32

I have cousins who pronounce the name Labov, lab and Labov. So Labov is it's all the same to me, I love

M Mark McBride-Wright 47:41

it, awesome, awesome. Thank you so much. Barry, really appreciate your time. Thanks,

B Barry LaBov 47:47

Mark. I love your passion. And I think I not only feel it, I know the audience does. So thank you for what you believe in and the fact that you want to spread that message to as many people as possible.

M Mark McBride-Wright 48:00

Oh, thank you. That's very kind. I appreciate that. Thank you. If.