



Season Four Episode five– released December 2023

In this episode of Doing the Opposite: Business Disruptors, Jeff Dewing speaks to [Mark A. Mears](#), Chief Growth Officer for LEAF Growth Ventures - a consulting firm inspiring individuals, teams, and organisations to find purpose in fulfilling their true growth potential while making a positive, lasting difference in the world.

Jeff Dewing

Hi and welcome to Doing the Opposite: Business Disruptors - the podcast where you get to meet people who aren't afraid to stand up and call out bad practice or injustice, people who own their mistakes, thrive off of challenges and who ultimately choose only to see the summit and not the mountain. I'm Jeff Dewing - I'm an entrepreneur, I'm the author of best selling book 'Doing the Opposite' and a keynote and masterclass speaker.

Today you're going to meet Mark Mears, from Kansas, where he states that your true genius lies in the ability to fully align your purpose, a combination of your natural gifts and eternal passions. Mark prefers to redefine the COVID era as 'The Great Repurposing', an opportunity to focus on what and who really matters most, to create deeper meaning in our life and in our work. He shows us that who we serve is even more important than our why. In fact, it can lead us to our why and, subsequently, our how and our what.

Today, Mark serves as Chief Growth Officer for LEAF growth ventures, a consulting firm inspiring individuals, teams and organisations to find purpose in fulfilling their true growth potential while making a positive, lasting difference in the world.

Welcome, Mark. Thank you so much for taking the time out to join me on the podcast on Doing the Opposite, and I can't wait for our chat this afternoon.

Mark A. Mears

Well, thank you, Jeff, for inviting me. It's going to be a fun ride!

Jeff Dewing

I'm certain, I'm sure it will be.

So, Mark, let's begin. Can you sort of spend a couple of minutes just setting the scene? How did you find yourself doing what you do and what was the light bulb moment that sent you on this journey?

Mark A. Mears

Yeah, you know I've been involved in marketing and executive management here in the US for many, many years and working for big brands or big brands such as Pizza Hut when it was owned by Pepsico, JC Penney, McDonald's, Frito Lay. I was the chief marketing officer for the Cheesecake Factory and a few others. And so I had an epiphany one day when I was president of a half a billion dollar casual dining restaurant chain based in the Los Angeles area and I was recruited from the Cheesecake Factory to go in there and turn the brand around. It was down double-digit negative in sales, it was kind of getting long in the tooth - they wanted to refresh not only the brand persona and imagery and positioning but also the restaurant experience.

So I wanted a challenge of taking on a huge challenge and really having kind of the highest office of president - we were owned by a publicly traded company and reported to the CEO and build a team and put the plans together to turn this brand around, which we did. We went from double-digit negative sales to positive. We put a new brand positioning in the ground and we also planted a new concept that they would put capital behind, which is what they promised when they recruited me.

And so when we did all that, instead of getting the capital we felt like we deserved, they decided to move in a different direction, and that meant - put us up for sale! And so I was to lead the sale process, and I did. We found a suitor, someone we thought was a perfect strategic play versus a private equity firm, and everything looked good. During the courtship process, they made all these promises of what they were going to do and how we were going to continue on and build this brand the way it was deserved to be built, and so the deal closed on a Friday and we're drinking champagne over the weekend, but Monday morning at eight o'clock I'm supposed to have a meeting with the new CEO to plot our future together. At 8:05 I'm out the door and only while was eight o'clock, because I had like four minutes to get my jaw off the floor and asked the question 'what changed'? And they said well, we've decided to move in different direction. Second time I've heard that what over the weekend!

So I got my first real hard lesson in corporate America and business and myself and my team were escorted out and they decided to take on the brand. Well, we were living in Southern California, as I mentioned at the time, and it was late February and that's about the time that the first signs of spring start to emerge. And after a fitful night of sleep, like 'that just happened'. I take the dog out back in the morning and I decide that I'm going to go walk around a little bit and I see this fig tree in our backyard that was barren from the six or seven weeks of winter that we do get in Southern California. But there, Jeff, with God as my witness, on the end of one branch which is tiny little sprig of a green leaf just starting to bud. And in that moment I got the epiphany that a leaf is a symbol of growth and rebirth. And I'm kind of mowing this over. I take the dog back inside, I go into my office and I kind of start banging out a treatment on my computer about this idea of leaf is a symbol of growth and rebirth. But also I saw it as an acronym.

I had been leading with the rule of threes. Maybe you've heard of it - if you do three things really well and you focus on three things. You're going to get more accomplished, be more productive people be more focused, and my three things that turned the brand around were leadership, engagement and accountability. And we did those three things and I used it as my mantra. Every weekly email, every we actually had broadcast voice mails at the time, you remember those? And then also for recognition and reward. And it was. You know, 'Jeff's doing a wonderful job of leading and look what his results are, how he's holding his team accountable and they're so engaged', and that was our recipe for success. But as we were doing all this, we were chasing numbers just to chase numbers, because we were all trying to earn this capital. We really wanted to grow this brand, make it the turnaround story he plfor the ages that we would all be proud of, and we were sacrificing. And I was commuting ungodly commutes in Southern California, living in a hotel most of the week, traveling all over the place to our 24 states where we had 145 restaurants and you know we were burning the candle at both ends.

That was when I saw that leaf! I got this epiphany, that was actually - what was missing was fulfillment, and we need strong leadership. We need people deeply engaged with their heart, head, hands and habits. We need people accountable for results, but we also need to create an environment that's fulfilling. And so I then saw that that leaf, symbol of growth and rebirth, was an acronym which stands for Leadership, Engagement, Accountability and Fulfillment. And then in my mind I saw it as not linear, but as a Venn diagram with four circles. They're all intertwined but all revolving around purposeful growth, and so I'm working on this whole thought pattern and then built it into kind of a presentation. Never thought I would write a book, and this is going back about nine or 10 years ago.

So, this epiphany has been chasing me and I've been using the model, as I've been leading organisations. I've seen that it works, but then I thought, 'well, maybe it is a book'. So I turned it actually into a book that was published last year and I'm proud to say that it hit number one bestseller on 8 out of the 10 categories it was put in, and I'm using it as a foundation now for speaking and consulting, and I'm putting together a cool e-learning platform where people can meld their purpose in life with their purpose at work. And if you think about it, yep, we're awake what a third of the time or asleep about a third of the time. We work about a third of the time. So why not make our awake and working time more purposeful and more fulfilling?

Jeff Dewing

And that's great and thank you for that and setting the scene and it makes a lot of sense to me because it is about epiphany and flight. So I've been in business and entrepreneurial my life, but I am from stone to stone. I was very successful in points, less successful in others, and we don't always understand why we're doing what we're doing and it's not until you achieve something that is really, really important. I didn't realize until 10 years ago how important - the ability to articulate what it is you're doing and why, Because if you can't transmit that information, then you're not transferring knowledge by default. So I was lucky enough to join a peer group which is actually American based it's all over the world now which is called Vistage.

Mark A. Mears

I actually went through Vistage training years ago! So I was looking to be a Vistage leader, so I'm well versed in the value that it can provide,

Jeff Dewing

Of course, and the ability that when you're at the top it's very lonely. You can say you've been talking with your peers in Vistage things that you can't even talk to your wife about. So it really brought a camaraderie together and more importantly the ability to share knowledge, but the bit that was really important to me that I learned and I learned this by stumbling, I was told not that I knew this, but I was told, and I saw it with my own eyes - is that I was able to inspire people to do things they previously couldn't do. And then I need to understand - although I saw the results, I didn't know why. And it all came down to something we learned through Vistage journey and keynote speakers all over the world that it's about engagement. And if you can get people engaged in your organization and believe what you believe, then you have an unstoppable train. If your culture isn't right, you're pushing water uphill. Your culture is measured by engagement, and if people love what they do, then they'll never work a day in their life. And I guess this is what you're saying there about we sleep at third, we work third and we play a third. We have a philosophy that I've instilled in our business saying 'there is no such thing as work-life balance. There is only life', and if you're doing what you love, you'll never label it as work, because you're doing what we love, right?

So the question then is - how do you remove work-life balance? Work-life balance is only created when people place constraints on it, so if you've got to be at the office at 8 and leave at 5, you're constrained by default. And therefore you're going to have to measure your work-life balance.

But if you don't have those constraints. You decide what you're going to do, how you're going to do it and when you're going to do it, and you're only measured on outcomes and you're held accountable on those outcomes. People can just become giants.

Mark A. Mears

Yeah, and I'm so glad that you said 'if you do what you love', because that fits perfectly into my thesis. And while that's not specifically in the book. I've developed it afterwards and I've got a LinkedIn newsletter that I put out in February, which is kind of the season of love, Valentine's Day and I was thinking about this idea of engagement and how you engage people in a world of quiet quitting, the great resignation which I call the great repurposing, because I think COVID gave us all a bit of the time out to really think deeply about not only what but who matters most in our lives. And when I read the outcome of this tremendous survey of 34 million people that the Sloan School of Management at MIT conducted after several months of COVID saying 'you left the workforce - why'? And the number one answer was toxic work environment, by 10 times more than the second highest answer and compensation didn't come up until number 16 on the list. So the environment that was created by managers, not leaders. We're going to get into the whole idea of how words matter in a minute, but they were like 'I don't want to go back to that. Life's too short' right? I want to be, I want to, I want to purpose in my work, like I feel like I need a purpose or want

a purpose, or have already figured out my purpose in life. But I don't want to just punch in, punch out, get a paycheck and go work for the weekend anymore. That that's no longer fulfilling. So this idea of love came to me as an acronym, an acronym of Listen, Observe, Value and Empower. So in my LEAF growth model, the outcome, the desired outcome of engagement is empowerment.

So I'll unpack that just for a second. When you think about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, we were always taught some of the most basic needs are being loved, feel love, give love, be seen and heard. Some of the basic needs, right. And then you think about listening to someone and now imagine you're a leader and not a boss and you're leading people. To get them to want to follow you is more than a title on a business card, right, it's about attracting them and engaging them in what they need to do. But they may not want to do it and they may not know why they're doing it. But your job is to make sure they understand the why behind it. And so listening to them on a deeper level not only what they're saying, but maybe what they're not saying. I mean, we're all human beings.

What's going on at home? Maybe you have a sick kid, Maybe you're going through some financial troubles, Maybe there's an elderly parent that you're caring for. Whatever it is, it's weighing on your mind and it may be inhibiting your performance. Having someone to talk to about that, especially in the workplace, where you know, years ago we were told leave all that at home, Just keep your nose to grindstone. Well, it's a different world now and we need to lead differently.

So, listening on a deeper level, observing and coaching and encouraging in real time, and don't wait for a quarterly review or the dreaded annual performance appraisal. No one likes, no one does well, but do it in real time and then value the whole person. You know we're all whole people and I believe that we have a spiritual realm, a relational realm, like I mentioned family, friends, community, neighbours. We have a professional realm who we serve at work, our clients, our customers and even in our communities. And then our personal realm. Right, we got to take care of our mind, body, spirit and soul, or no good to the other four, Like that Venn diagram. It's not linear, right? So we need to love our team members, right, and so when you love what you do, it usually means you feel loved.

Jeff Dewing

Of course - you feel belonging right. That's the whole point. I think it brought to life Daniel Pink's philosophy, which is every human being on the planet, to a greater or lesser extent wants the same thing. They want autonomy, mastery and purpose, something bigger than themselves. And if you can give them those ingredients, they will become their best selves. And I think when we talk about psychological safety, leave your problems at the door. One of the things we learned in our business was... we've all had to learn because we've all done these things and we've all been wired to do them. That's what we thought was the right thing to do as we've gone through our generational careers right, and then suddenly COVID shonel rely on it and it made those leaders that were courageous and brave really reflects on doing the opposite.

Mark A. Mears

What I found in the last organization I worked with was the same thing. We accomplished more during that time. We actually closed our office and sublet it and we decided to go virtual full time because we had executives flying in, we were spending money on travel and meals and this and that and an unproductive time in the air or in the Uber or wherever we were coming in from and it would. We didn't have as much productivity and, you're right, just the opposite. We were getting to know people in a deeper emotional level. And here's the thing we all no matter what walk of life we come from, what age, what gender, what I mean, anything right, we were all suffering through this COVID thing that no one really understood at the time. We were getting updates by scientists and the medical profession and the government and it would change the next week and then it would change the next week, so everyone was flying blind. So we had this common bond and a community was formed and I say community on purpose, because I like to think different. I like it that it's hard. I like to be able to peel back the layers, one up and ask the next question, the next question, the next question, and so I challenge conventional thinking and I believe that words matter. And so when you think about a manager or a boss I believe the word 'boss' is actually a Danish word that kind of reflects back to the slave trade and a master over a slave, right. So when you hear the word boss, no one wants to be bossed around, regardless of the etymology of the word, and no one really wants to be managed. We want to be led, we want to have someone that we can follow, that we believe in, that we trust has our best interests at heart, and so you really find out who the leaders are when you're put in this situation - where you have to take off the mask and have to be more real, more authentic, more vulnerable. And guess what? That's what your team members want. Not your workers, not your employees, but your team members, right? So when I say words matter, imagine being called a team member versus an employee. An employee, maybe someone who just merely works for a paycheck. A team member plays a valuable role towards the success of the team, right? And those of us who grew up, maybe, in team sports when we were kids, we remember how cool it was when our name was selected and maybe we were given a jersey with a number on it and a role to play on the team. We felt like we were in a community, and that's a big difference between the word culture. 'Culture' is not a bad word, everybody uses it but a culture may be a place you feel like you merely are, you're merely part of, but a community is a place you feel like you belong in. What would you rather do? Be in a community or be in a culture? And so I think those words matter in how not only COVID gave us that timeout to think deeply through these things, but now we're seeing as people are going back and, whether it's in person, hybrid or still remote leaders have to lead differently.

And it's not because I say so, it's that study said so. No one wants to work in a toxic environment. What was called the great resignation, I called the great repurposing, because I think it all gave us that timeout to think about our purpose and what we really want. And so now, as we're going back, maybe it's not the same job, maybe it's not the same company, maybe it's somewhere different, but you want to feel like you're part of a community versus just part of the culture, and there's a difference.

Jeff Dewing

Yeah, and I think it's back to when you talk about 'the culture'. I mean, the culture is about an environment you create so they will be able to thrive, and then, within that, as you say, it is about teams. 'Have you got my back? Do I trust you and would you take a bullet for me'

and all this sort of stuff? It is all great stuff, yeah, when people get promoted, and they get promoted to 'manager' or 'senior manager' or director or whatever it is, and those people, you've got to make sure those people are ready for those positions, because the position is not about managing, it's about coaching. So in our world, managers are not allowed to mark the homework. You're only there to help them get the best results, right?

So, it's never about marking the homework, but yet traditional business has always been about 'I'm your manager, you do as I say, I mark your homework, I tell you if you're good or not'. Rather than - like it is with a parent, right? With my children, my job is to help them become the best they can be, not to tell them 'oh, you failed that exam or you failed that soccer practice, or you failed that ability to make your mother happy', or all that sort of nonsense. That's why the bit I found fascinating during my journey is why do we behave differently at work than we do at home? We don't go home and say to the wife 'you score seven out of 10 for that meal tonight', right? You don't say to your children 'look, I'm not being funny - you've got some really bad results, so we have to let you go'. Why is it we behave differently?

Mark A. Mears

If you think about that love model? Let's go back to your example at home and I agree, I think we've all got a deeper feeling of shared humanity and the continuing thread, regardless of your religious orientation, regardless of your race, gender, creed, color, sexual orientation, the binding tissue among all of us on this earth is love. And so when you go back to that model of love listen, observe, value and empower.

So your wife making dinner, or your wife doing this or that, or any of your kids, you want to listen to them, right? Who doesn't want to be listened to? Who doesn't want to be observed and coached and encouraged in real time, versus waiting? Like you know, 'I hope in this review I get a good score and I get maybe promoted or a raise or something'.

Who wants that tension? Instead of - it's your job as a leader to make that team member successful, it's not their job to make you successful. And if you don't turn that around, I love your podcast of Doing the Opposite. If you don't turn that mindset around, they're going to dutifully salute and execute for a while until something better comes along and then value the whole person. And by that I mean look for opportunities that they can grow and learn, right? But they all want to grow and learn. We talk about engagement. You know Gallup does their annual global State of the Workforce study every year. This last year showed engagement at its lowest level. And so why are people disengaged? Why is there quiet, quitting? We can all cite examples of higher level of engagement. That's because there are better leaders. But where there aren't better leaders, people are filling in the void with their own wants and needs. Because my leader doesn't care about me, why should I care about them? Or this company doesn't care about me, why should I care about them? So, listening, observing and valuing, and then empowering.

Now, really important, Jeff, is think about a time when you felt empowered. I go back to what I learned to ride a bike. We start with a trike, maybe, then we have a bike with training wheels, and then we take the training wheels off and someone maybe your parents help guide us and then at some point we're peddling on our own. And when we're peddling on

our own and we feel like we can balance and we got this, that sense of empowerment, that sense of freedom is palpable and I'll never forget it. Now imagine if you could help a team member learn to ride their bike and empower them, be, and if they fall down, you pick them up, you put them right back on and get them right back down the road at the sidewalk, right. And so that idea of humanity shared humanity by the continuing and constant ebb and flow and connection of love.

Why would that be different at home? Don't you love your wife, your family? Why shouldn't you love your team members? Now, it's a different kind of love, but it's still based on the exact same principles. And why don't we do them? Because we've been taught a different way and so we have to do the opposite. We have to turn that old command and control management style and I say 'management', not 'leadership', because we read books on management and we are worshipping managers who are, you know, do great things, like Leigh Iacocca in the 80s who turned Chrysler around, or Steve Jobs, or maybe Jack Welch at GE. They weren't great people! They were great managers, but they weren't really great people and I'm not so sure that in today's world they would have been successful.

Jeff Dewing

When you go from the old command and control environment we've been talking about and having leaders... I do this podcast and I'll do some keynotes, I get lots of CEOs, managers, owners say to me, 'yeah, but when you're giving people this freedom and this work from home and they can choose to do these things, what do you do about all those people that take the piss'?

I say it's really interesting that the only thing you focus on is not the value you get when the people are doing a great job. You're only worried about the handful that take the piss. That's probably what your problem is. You're worried about the wrong thing. You're asking the wrong question, but I will give you the answer you're looking for, since I've done this for two years, since COVID - and I employ 200 people - not one person in the last two years has let me down.

Because if you truly give them the freedom and they've got clarity on what it is, we're all doing. The purpose and the OKRs, when they know what they're supposed to be doing, what the outcomes are, that they have negotiated they've not been told, but negotiated what those outcomes are. They will own it and then kick the accountability, natural accountability and they will never let you down.

And if one or two over some points let you down there will be a reason for that. It might be family issues, it might be children issues, it might be parent issues, it may be financial issues. There'll be a reason, but there is not a single person on this planet that is born a bad person.

Mark A. Mears

Yeah, no, you're dead on because here's what you're doing. You may not know the acronym love, but you're loving them. You're demonstrating love in a way that is then reciprocated. When someone loves us, we tend to reciprocate and love them back, and you're creating an environment where they're probably thinking I probably could get another job somewhere

else. But why? I'm in an environment where I feel loved, I feel like I belong, and that word belonging is so important, Jeff, because you know we are in a world now where we're finally getting a light bulb on and we're, you know, employing DEI tactics and strategies, and all that's great.

But think about it diversity just gets us in the door, right? Equity gives us an equal voice. That's good. Inclusion gets us a seat at the table better yet. But if we don't feel like we belong, we're likely not going to be vulnerable enough to feel like we can add the most value, because we don't want to rock the boat. It took us a long time to get in that room or in that seat or have that equal voice, and now we don't want to blow it! And so who wins in that situation? So if we don't create a community - a community where people feel they belong. We were just getting part of it right. And oftentimes, when someone's in that situation and they don't feel like they belong, they're going to just finally walk away and you're going to go 'what happened?! We worked so hard on diversity. We have videos that we show on how to be more inclusive. We gave them a seat at the table with an equal voice. What more do they want?' Well, they just want to be loved! They want to feel like they belong and that if they say something that may not be spot on, they don't want it to boomerang back and say, 'oh now see, there you go', and I think that's what leaders need to learn. Probably the number one thing - not to be more productive and cranking out more widgets, that that will happen as a result of being able to form a community, Whether it's your small team, whether it's a larger team, and if you're the CEO, how do you do it for a large organization and how do you get people's mindset to see differently?

Well, it is all based on a shared sense of purpose, right? If you have a purpose as a company and you've got people that are just looking for a job and they're not totally engaged and invested, then they're just like working for a paycheck and that's fine to a point, but at some point then they're going to be human and they're going to lack engagement and they're going to drag your productivity down, or they're going to recant your organization and not support the values that you and your team have worked so hard to instill. Right and so building a community and leading differently through the lens of love is really the biggest opportunity. I know it's a big challenge, but it's also the biggest opportunity we have in changing the dynamics of the community.

Jeff Dewing

To perhaps sum that up - it's the same thing as I say to people: If you're going through a process where you say to somebody 'look, everything you do is wrong', and someone would say 'surely not everything I can do is wrong'. 'Yeah, everything you do is wrong'. And they say, 'well, I'm never going to fix that, am I'? So I said, 'yeah, you can, because you've got to change one thing, like everything right, and that is your attitude towards what we're doing' Right. So you change one thing, you fix everything else. Now, when you talk about culture, community, environment, engagement, there'll be leaders out there saying, 'but my God, there's so many things to do'. You say 'no, there's one thing to do and that is just to love your people'. Right? The rest happens as a by-product.

Mark A. Mears

Yes, yeah, I mean, I love that because I think about it. When you get someone's heart, everything else follows. Think about your personal relationships. You know, when you fall in

love with somebody, you tend to not see their faults. You tend to see the best in them, right. And when you can grab someone by the heart, they're going to follow, because they have a vested interest in the outcome. And if they're feeling empowered that they can be their best self and you're helping them be their best self, why would they want to quietly quit that? Why would they want to leave that? They wouldn't!

Jeff Dewing

Of course, who quite puts in this as a result of disengagement? But I think the other thing I want to mention to you as well was when you go through that journey, that becomes a natural function of just being human. Everything and the biggest issue for me was vulnerability. Right, because I was a typical... I'm a baby boomer and especially those who have come from the forces 'no no you can't show weakness, vulnerability is weakness' and it's only been the last 10, 15 years through my journey that I've realized and I promote in my keynotes that vulnerability is your biggest strength as long as its authentic.

I give the example that says - you're both standing at the office door having a chat and an old lady walks past and she falls over right in front of you. What do you do? Of course, everybody says, 'well, we go pick her up' because she's vulnerable, she needs help. Everybody will help that lady, bar no-one, right? The problem that we have in business, where we don't have engagement, we don't have the psychological safety, we don't have a safe environment. There's people that have fallen over, you just can't see it. And if people put the courage to be vulnerable because the environment allows it, then you can help it. When you help people, they want to help you. It's a natural reaction. All the time I'm helping somebody, that means people want to help me. So you create this virtuous cycle but you've got to do everything opposite to what you've been told through your baby boomer, command and control, business leadership years that you could argue have said we've been getting it wrong for 100 years.

Mark A. Mears

Yes, you know. Let me unpack that as it relates to the dreaded annual performance appraisal that I mentioned earlier.

First of all, think about the word 'appraisal'. It sounds like you're a piece of property or a cattle or something right. But now let's do the opposite. Let's flip it on its head. So, instead of looking at the Simon Sinek model which I love Simon Sinek, 'start with why', right? People want to know why you do what you do before they care how you do it or even what you do. I get that.

He has his magic circle and the concentric circles, with wide being in the center and it emanates outward. Well, I believe he got it wrong. I believe we should start with who we serve, and 'serve' is really an important word. So if think about a four circle, then diagram, and I think there are four realms of service spiritual, relational, professional and personal. And so if you think about that, it's not linear, it's intertwined. Like if I'm a spiritual person and I believe in God, I don't say 'God, I'll see you on Sunday, but I got to go to work on Monday'.

I take my spiritual self to my work and relations and in my personal being right? Imagine having a conversation with your leader where you have a plan, a purposeful growth plan that's co-created. And I'm able to tell you, Jeff as my leader - here's my spiritual belief system. Here are my relational connections. I'm married, I have kids, I have friends, I have family, I'm involved in this thing in the community, and here's who I serve professionally. Well, I serve you, but, but I also serve our team and our organization, and our clients or customers or all of our stakeholders, right, including our communities. And then I serve myself. And if I'm not serving myself, my mind, my body, my spirit, my soul, I'm not good to anybody, right. And so once you know that, you're like 'okay, very cool, okay. Well, what's next'? Now I want to know why, what's my motivation, what's my purpose, and, as a leader, you're going to want to know what lights me up!

You're going to want to know what my my trigger points are that really get the best out of me. My why. And then my how is how am I uniquely gifted or talented? What are my superpowers or major strikes? Because you're going to want to know how you can get the most out of my strengths for the benefit of the team.

In the US, football is a big thing and I happen to be in Kansas City, home of the world champion Ken City Chiefs. Andy Reid is an amazing coach. He doesn't wait for the end of the year to have a conversation with people about coaching them. It's in real time, every single day, right? So now you know how they're uniquely gifted. You wouldn't take Patrick Mahomes, the greatest quarterback on the planet, and say, 'Patrick, you're a great quarterback but you can't tackle for the crap. We're going to put you on the defensive line for a while so you can learn how to tackle'. No, that would be ruining his gifts for the team's benefit. Right? so that's how he's uniquely gifted.

And then we get to the what. Well, what do you do? What role do you play on the team? What are your metrics of performance? What are you going to learn and do to grow into your position so I can promote you to the next position? You can add even more value to the team. Imagine if we turned it on its head. We did the opposite, and we did that on a regular basis. Maybe it's monthly, maybe it's even with your one-on-ones. I've always had one-on-ones with my team every week to check in with them, right, and so it's possible if you look at someone through that holistic lens of love and you understand who they serve, why they do what they do, how they're uniquely gifted and what they do, so that you can coach and mentor them along the process and they can be successful. And then you and the team can be successful. And that's what we need to instil is a different approach, instead of wanting something different and doing, you know, the same thing as definition of insanity, Right? We need to think differently and act differently.

Jeff Dewing

Yeah, and behave differently, and I think one of the things coming back to the manager stuff.

You know, every company you go to, almost every company you go to, will have managers and senior managers and so on. And you will say 'how do you manage them'? And the manager's saying, 'well, I set the goals, I demand the deadlines, I do this like', and you think 'God really, even after what we've learned in the last few years', whereas in our world...

So we have a thing called My Check In. And it's every single month, without fail, but it's not formal, its informal. So it's a chat, right? We are clear on our objectives. 'How are you getting on? Do you need any help? Is there anything I can do to help you achieve those goals?' That's my job. I'm. My job is to help you achieve your goals. That's all my job is. My job is to serve you.

And then the next thing I also found, because it's also about human behavior, is you hear people talk about stuff and they say, 'yeah, well people are driven by financial rewards, incentives, bonuses' and I say 'I don't believe any of that'. I don't believe anyone – to a certain extent – I don't believe they are. What I've recognised, and we've tested it in our business, that recognition is one of the most powerful things – again if it's authentic.

So we have this little thing that we do. We have a thing called Stop the Floor, because we're an all-remote business across Europe. A thing called Stop the Floor and 200 people log on once a month where it's a 20 minute update on what's happening around the world in the business? And within that update we do a thing called Spin the Wheel three times. And the wheel is full of names of people that have been nominated by their peers.

So Jack on the help desk says 'this person in finance really solved a problem for me that was driving me mad, but I want to nominate them for this doing this thing'. And now what was going wrong when we first started this was - the nominations were going into a committee who were selecting the top two and those top two got a voucher and a congratulations. And I looked at it. 'I said we're missing a trick here'. So we've now done this wheel where everybody's name appears and we have a little video introducing who has been nominated, what for and who nominated and all that sort of stuff. And when that happens, what we recognised was no one cares if they win the voucher. They just want to see their name on that wheel and the second they saw that name is because no money - just recognition. We have 200 people in our business. We have 140 nominations every month. And its nominations for people that are doing something that is not in their job description, yes, and then you start to build a community.

Mark A. Mears

My guess is, Jeff, you're doing it because somewhere in your shared values there is an element that creates that dynamic, and not because they're written somewhere, but because they're lived! They're not just shared, they're lived values. I love what you just said, because if everyone did that, we'd have a lot of, you know, a lot different community, and that's essentially what you're doing. You're creating this online community because people don't have the benefit of interacting in person, while we wish they could. This is really good, because you're making it human and not just about a checklist. Did you get this done? Did you get this done? Did you get this done? And this needs to be better and this needs to be done differently. You know, business is business and all that has to happen, but there's a way it can happen in a more humanistic way. Right? Just like you talked about, you wouldn't come home and say, 'well, the dishes aren't done, the laundry's not folded and I've been working all day. What are you doing'? You know what. People have done that and it hasn't worked out very well.

Jeff Dewing

Are you not supposed to do that then?!

Mark A. Mears

Yeah! I've been told that over and over, but I love what you shared, Jeff, because you're creating a sense of community and that just bolsters my thesis and it makes me feel very, very good that it's working, it's in action! It's not theory or concept, it's real and you're bringing it to life in your organisation and that is very commendable.

Jeff Dewing

Coming back to your human piece, the other piece that I loved because, again, I come under a lot of challenges as you'd imagine, about what's right, what's wrong. Should it be hybrid? Should it be a remote, should it be three days a week? I'm quite bold about this - three days a week is no different to five days a week One day a week is no different to five days a week. You're applying a constraint. That's the simple fact.

So in our world, we have a couple of offices, one in Barcelona, one in Ireland and two in the UK. We closed the other seven offices because we're remote. But the offices are there for collaboration. The offices are there – you can only do three things: you go there to have fun, you go there to collaborate and you go there to solve problems. You do not go there to transact. That's illegal! You're not allowed to do that.

Now, what then happens is the teams themselves decide when they're going to meet to do any of those things, which might be once a month, might be once in six weeks, might be once every eight weeks. The team make that decision. But when everyone was in the office every day, you walked in, you went 'morning', 'morning', and that's what was it. It was just going through motions. When these teams arrive on the six week, they don't say morning, they cuddle! It's a much richer experience than going to the office every day because they're coming together, because they want to. They've not seen each other in person, so they're getting the best of all worlds.

Mark A. Mears

Yeah, and you're getting the most out of them because they're getting the most out of each other. And that's that collective 'we' and I am just saying it's about 'we growth' versus me go! So we all have an ego, right, but that me go that thinking of myself first versus we grow. We grow together and I think that your approach is helping to accomplish that.

Keep leading the way, and on my website, Jeff, at markamears.com I have a purposeful growth self assessment and I would love your viewers and listeners to take. It takes about five or six minutes, but what it does is it goes through the four sections of my book *The Purposeful Growth Revolution - Four ways to grow from leader to legacy builder*. And then it allows you to answer questions on not only yourself, but then how is your workplace, you know what's their view of purpose and are they providing the tools, the resources, the nurturing environment for you to fulfil your purpose in both life and work? And then, when you're done, you can download your customised report and it will give you your scores as well as seeds for growth. So the number four is important for me because I used to lead with the rule threes and now I believe in the higher power of fours. That used to just be leadership, engagement, accountability. Now I include fulfilment. And what I think about

why that is. It's like 'duh'. There are four directions, not three. There are four seasons, not three. There are four chambers to the human heart, not three. There are four elements to an atom, the source of life, not three. And I could go on and on with this. Four play, but you get the idea. So there's a sense of balance and symmetry with four.

45:59

And so when you go through the four elements or subdivisions of the book, it's about cultivating your field for purposeful growth. So those of us who live in an agrarian world, I live in Kansas, the middle of the heartland of the country in the US, we don't just rush out and plant a seed. We got to cultivate the field and get it ready for growth. So the first part is about understanding why growth matters and why purposeful growth matters even more. The second section is about planting your seed for purposeful self, which is all about you and helping you be a better you and growing into a better leader and ultimately a better legacy builder. And then the third section is really more work related. It's growing you forward for purposeful work. That's where the whole model of leadership, engagement, accountability, fulfillment come in, all revolving around purposeful growth. And then, finally, it's scattering your seeds for purposeful life.

How do you create a generative and regenerative environment where you're going from leading people and that's again, not a bad word - but creating a living legacy, not a legacy of something you bequeath after you're dead and buried? But what can you do every single day of your life? To plant, fertilize, water, grow and then scatter seeds to leave a living legacy where they think about. What is it like to work with Jeff doing? What lessons did I learn from him that I now go do with my team, and what lessons have I learned that will help me be a better person, not just a better worker or employee?

If you think about it from that perspective and the power you have as a leader, it's immense. So what would be more fulfilling? And I go back to the purpose statement that I wrote now, several years ago - I don't want to just make money and retire, I want to make a difference and inspire. And that goes back to that virtuous cycle of reciprocity which you talked about, which is, you know, making a difference in the lives of others and inspiring them to want to go do likewise. I think of it as a ripple effect, or what I call 'paying it backward'. And I call it paying it backward, Jeff, because I'm a growth junkie, but I'm also a Starbucks junkie.

Jeff Dewing

I want to be behind you in the queue at Starbucks!

Mark A. Mears

I'm the one that pays for the car behind me. I can't physically pay for the car in front of me. They've already gone, so I'm paying it backward and, based on the law, reciprocity would suggest that when someone does something kind to you, you feel deeply moved to do something nice for someone else, and oftentimes in greater measure.

So now imagine the car paying for the car behind them, the car behind them, and I'm told it happens. And so now you think about in your sphere of influence. We all have a sphere of influence, whether we know it or not. What are you doing each day to plant seeds that

maybe create a living legacy in the life of someone else? And that, to me, is what gets me up every day. That's why I'm now motivated to do what I do, because I'm trying to lead the purposeful growth revolution and how we can get people to grow on purpose and, in doing so, help fulfil their life and their work and, in doing so, make our communities even stronger.

Jeff Dewing

Absolutely, and send your people home happy. I love all that.

So I'm now going to ask you two questions. The first thing I want to ask you if there was only one thing you could say - I'm sure there's loads but if there's only one thing you could say, what would you say you were most grateful for?

Mark A. Mears

Easy! I'm grateful to have had caring mentors who walked alongside me and saw something in me I didn't see in myself and really helped shape and mould not only my career but my life.

Jeff Dewing

Brilliant answer.

And the second and final question if there was only one message you could send out to the listeners, what would that one message be?

Mark A. Mears

I would say you need to look at yourself and see if you are acting on the second commandment - loving others the way you're first loved and if you love others the way you are loved by your creator, you're going to see a more fulfilling and more enriched life for not only yourself but everybody in your sphere of influence that you touch. It all comes down to love. At the end of the day, we can strip everything else away.

Jeff Dewing

Of course, mark, it's been absolutely spectacular. Thank you for the time you've given us today. It's been really wonderful talking to you. I've ordered your book. I ordered it the second I knew you'd been booked, so I'm looking forward to receiving that and I'm going to have a good read through that. All of the details will be in the show notes for the listeners, for your website, for your book and the various other bits and pieces you do, and I'll just want to once again say thank you so much for taking the time to speak to me it's been great.

Mark A. Mears

Jeff, it sounds like while we may talk a little bit differently. We are brothers from a different mother. And I so enjoy your listening to you, learning from you, and I appreciate so much you having me on to hopefully add some value to your listeners and viewers, but keep doing what you're doing. I want to encourage you to keep leading the way.

Jeff Dewing

*Well, big thanks to Mark for spending time with me today, but we agreed after the show that we were brothers from a different mother, which I found quite funny. The bit I loved from this conversation - there was lots, but the framework that he's created and he's promoting through his book, *The Purposeful Growth Revolution*, had so many synergies with the great leaders of today, especially in terms of love and kindness with your colleagues and your teams. The other thing that was really interesting in that conversation was that we had a great conversation after the show, and I urge you to visit his website and take the four-minute assessment on the leadership, where you get the results emailed back to you, for a bit of clarity on how you may well be perceived by your peers and by your team members. Now all the details and references for today's show will be in the show notes, so please, please, go take a look for that incredible resource.*

There are loads more episodes for you to enjoy, so please do listen back to some of my earlier conversations. There are some absolute crackers in there. One of my latest episodes with Garry Ridge, the ex-chief exec of WD-40, when I asked him what was the one message that he would send out to the audience. His response sent the shiver down my spine. His message to the audience was 'it's not about you', which, if you realise that leadership is about serving the people and the teams around you. There's never been a truer statement made.

My podcast website has had a massive refresh and I would love your feedback when you get the chance to take a look. And that's where you can find all of the episodes from all the seasons, as well as a snippet of overview of all of the episodes placed together. You can listen to all the episodes for free. Just head to jeffdewing.co.uk and click on podcast. And, of course, you can watch all of these episodes, too, on YouTube, when you get to actually see the body language and the conversation in full flow. You'll find the link to the YouTube channel in the show notes.

And finally, a big thank you to my team Gabriella Ortega and Nichola Crawshaw at Cloud, my PR team at Thinking Hat and of course my production team, Sam Walker and Michael Blades at What Goes On Media. Thanks for listening.