

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 223: SCOTT MILLER

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself podcast, where we provide strategies and advice for how to climb the S curve of Learning in your professional and personal life, disrupting who you are now to slingshot into who you want to be.

I'm your host, Whitney Johnson.

Whether it work or at home, as we climb our current S curves, we make a lot of mistakes. Some small, some large. With us today for an encore episode is Scott Miller, former Chief Marketing Officer at FranklinCovey and host of the world's largest leadership podcast with tens of millions of downloads, Scott is here to talk about some of his career mistakes. Mistakes that he calls "management messes." Scott is a delightful storyteller. I learned a lot. I hope you will, too. Enjoy.

WHITNEY Scott, welcome!

SCOTT Whitney, thank you for the platform, the invite. I'm a huge fan of all your books. An honor to meet with you.

WHITNEY Oh, well thank you. I'm delighted to have you. So here's, here's the question for you. You, you run a thought leadership practice at FranklinCovey, and it's probably not something you dreamed of being as a child. So tell us a little bit about where you grew up, and what you thought you were going to be when you grew up.

SCOTT Well, you are right. Thought leadership did not exist when I was a child. Right, I mean in many ways, thought leadership is the new public relations for most companies. Whitney, I was born and raised in central Florida in the early '70s, and I was a product of a nice upper-middle class family, went to college there. I joined the Disney Development Company, which was a subsidiary of the Walt Disney company, and after four great years there, they invited me to leave. Which is a nice Disney way of saying, "You know what? Probably not the right fit!"

So I, I left the Disney company after an amazing four-year run. And I was recruited by the FranklinCovey Company, so Dr. Covey and team invited me to join them, gosh, 24 years ago. I moved from Orlando out to Salt Lake City.

I kind of thought I might be in communications or broadcast journalism, but quite frankly, I learned along the way, there's two types of professionals: specialists and generalists. And, you know, specialists are my brother, right? That's the chemical engineer and the anesthesiologist, and I wasn't, uh, remotely as aptitudally smart for those kind of jobs, so I, I followed the path of a generalist. Which was, you know, quite fearful in your 20s and 30s, and then it kind of tends to come together in your 40s and 50s, and that's kind of how I landed where I am.

WHITNEY You know, that's an interesting observation. That when we're in our 20s, there's this fear of being a generalist. Like you feel like you need to specialize in something. And yet now, in your 40s, I think you just said, you are very comfortable being a generalist, and in fact it has served you very well. And you said that you wanted to go into broadcast journalism, and in fact, now you are, right? You-

SCOTT Well, yeah.

WHITNEY ... host your own podcast, you have your own radio show, and that is a, a form of journalism, um, which I think is really interesting.

So you introduced a topic - I want to throw a hypothesis by you. You said that you worked Disney for four years, and then they invited you to leave. I have this hypothesis, and I want you to either agree or disagree or maybe somewhere in between. My hypothesis is that whenever we are fired or lose a job, 'cause I've lost a job as well, that we are on the top of an S curve, or we are on the wrong S curve and we know it, but we won't go, um, and so the universe gives us a little bit of a, a nudge.

SCOTT That's exactly what happened to me, Whitney. As I mentioned, I'm a massive fan of your S curve methodology of your book, *Disrupt Yourself*. Disney disrupted me for myself, and gave me the courage and the motivation I needed to better kind of find where my voice would best be used and blossomed, and it became the FranklinCovey Company.

WHITNEY Mm. Okay. Thank you for sharing that. It's so interesting 'cause when we talk to people, and I'm sure you've had this experience as well, and we start sharing those stories that ha- were traumatic at the time, it's so often they end up being these pivotal moments where we're so grateful that it, in fact, happened.

SCOTT Whitney, can I expand on that?

WHITNEY Yes, please do.

SCOTT Because really, I mean, this will sound self-serving, I mean it to be true. And, and you, you know. I, I, we don't know each other well, but I am such a fan of *Disrupt Yourself* that I evangelize it in so many podcast interviews because you're, the book is so valuable. "Disrupt yourself before you are disrupted." And it's something I have taken to heart in my career. I think one of the things I've done well in my career from my lesson at Disney, where they disrupted me, was, you're going to be disrupted by your industry, by your employer, by your leader.

I've become much more comfortable now of moving myself out of roles every five to six years. I think you said once that, you know, that every three years or so people tend to get bored or lose, you know, focus on their jobs, and I've taken that to heart. And I mention it in all of my keynotes.

One of the things we study at WLJ Advisors are those companies that have figured out how to be innovative over long periods of time. That have worked out a way, in this job market, to facilitate their employees' ability to learn, leap to a new S Curve of Learning and then repeat. As Scott said, he's been at Franklin Covey for 23 years, and has taken that idea to heart - continually disrupting himself until ending up in his current role. Scott started at Franklin Covey in Sales, then sales management, then shifted from sales to marketing (which is quite a pivot we'll talk about later in the interview) and finally becoming SVP of Thought Leadership.

Scott's book *Management Mess to Leadership Success* walks through 30 different challenges he's faced and lessons he's learned, we thought it would be fun to choose three different roles, and then talk about how the challenges and lessons have helped him move up the S Curve of Learning as a leader. His first leap was from individual contributor to becoming a leader in the sales organization.

SCOTT I was promoted from being a top salesperson to becoming a sales leader. Actually over a team of my peers, all of which were probably more experienced, and certainly were longer in the firm than I was. And it was a really difficult struggle for me. I didn't realize at the time how difficult it was. I think too often people are lured into leadership roles, not led. Too often in organizations, we promote the top individual producer, right? The most efficient dental hygienist, or the most creative digital designer, or the top salesperson in my case. And now they become the leader of people, and rarely do the competencies and skills that made you a great salesperson make you a great sales leader. In fact, they're often inversely correlated, right? Great salespeople are very confident, lot of bravado. They like to compete, win against their own team members. They like significance. Those are great attributes for a salesperson. Those are horrible attributes for a sales leader. So-

WHITNEY (laughs)

SCOTT ... when I was promoted to be a sales leader, I was under the insane idea that my job was now to go out and fix everybody, and turn them into clones of Scott Miller.

I ran a tyrannical team, trying to, you know, push everybody into my mold. I mean, my job was in fact to help them achieve the same results I was getting, just not in the same way.

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SCOTT So my job was to now realize, I had to get results with and through other people. The problem is, I learned that too late. I'm not sure I should have been a leader of people early on. I didn't have the maturity. And you know what, I didn't have the selflessness to realize, it's no longer about me. I still liked the limelight. I wanted to win. I wanted to save the day. And I think that is a fundamental learning, that when you become a leader of people, you have to metaphorically turn that spotlight off of you, and onto them. You know to quote our mutual friend Liz Wiseman, "I thought my job was to be the smartest person in the room, to be the genius in the room-

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SCOTT ... That was not successful. My job was to be the genius-maker of others in the room." I can share more about that. But as I led that first role, man was I humbled continuously. But you know, Whitney, no one sat me down and said, "Scott, you are a top salesperson. Here are nine things you do really well. We're going to promote you to be a sales leader. This list of nine, you got to stop doing four of them literally tomorrow because these are not skills that will work well for you." Now to quote, quote your friend Marshall Goldsmith, right, "What got you here, Scott, isn't going to get you there. And instead, Scott, here are nine new skills that you currently don't possess. You

got to learn these things. Not tonight, not tomorrow, but in the coming weeks and months, you've got to learn these new competencies."

No one did that for me. I don't blame anybody. Even inside of the, you know, FranklinCovey Company, I think we kind of just thought I would be an expert, and I wasn't. So that was a big struggle for me. Long story, but I think it's instructive.

WHITNEY Completely different learning curve, right? Completely different.

SCOTT Totally different.

WHITNEY Knowing how to sell is a totally different skill than learning how to lead. Okay, so, so on that, it sounds like that particular role, you didn't necessarily put your hand up. Your manager came to you and opened the door for you to take that management role, is that right?

SCOTT Oh, it was probably some of both, right? Because I realized if I wanted to make more money, if I wanted-

WHITNEY Yep.

SCOTT ... a better office, if I wanted, you know, promotion and move up, I had to take on that responsibility. So, you know, knowing me and my sort of unwise bravado, I probably pursued it. I just didn't know what it meant to be a leader of people. I learned it certainly along the way. It's a lot more difficult. I, I thought it was going to be fame and fortune and-

WHITNEY (laughs)

SCOTT ... no! I mean, it was unrelenting. Right? It was, it was, you know, high courage conversations, and, and, you know, holding people accountable. People who were my friends yesterday, right? So it was a vast different learning curve for me.

WHITNEY Okay, so now let's do this. So you've this book of 30 challenges. In that situation, if you are now coaching Scott of 23, 22 years ago, which challenge would you have given Scott?

SCOTT Oh, definitely number three. Listen-

WHITNEY Number three.

SCOTT ... listen first. I, I've learned so much, right? I mean, like you Whitney, you know, um, we're, as leaders we're trained to be great communicators, right? Master the stage, master PowerPoint, build your vocabulary, clarify mission, vision, values, clarify your strategy, repeat your goals, talk, talk, talk, talk. Be in influence-mode. Be in persuasion-mode. Those are leadership characteristics. The problem is great leaders aren't just great talkers. They're also great listeners. They need to know when to shut up. They need to know when to be empathetic. They need to know when not to steal the spotlight. And I had no self-awareness around that. I thought my job was to always be in convincing mode, in sales mode. And quite frankly, I dominated. I ran a rough shot over a lot of people. I intimidated a lot of people.

And one of the gifts that Dr. Covey gave me is this understanding that, you know, talking can be quite selfish. Listening is quite selfless. So I learned a lot about some skills that were counterintuitive, right? Like this skill about being a great question-asker, right? Peel the onion and get to the root cause. Business skills that can be very valuable in certain business aspects, but they can be really detrimental when it comes to building relationships. Always asking questions on your

own timeline, your own agenda, your own need-to-know, from your own reference, from your own paradigm. So I think the biggest gift I could give anyone listening today, as you're moving into or trying to master the role of leadership, is really check how willing, how selfless are you able to be to stop talking and start listening?

WHITNEY Did you have a moment, Scott, where you discovered, "Oh, I've got to do this differently. I have to start listening." Did someone say something to you? Did you have a moment where just things weren't working? Like what was the, where was the moment of epiphany where you said, oh, got to change.

SCOTT Oh, I had lots of moments. I wrote a book called *Management Mess to Leadership Success*. I have a lifetime of moments-

WHITNEY You have 30 moments!

SCOTT ... I got 30 moments, my friend, yeah. I got about 300 moments. You know, Whitney, I think it was a maturation process. I think one of the, one of the wisest things I learned from Dr. Covey, a mutual friend of both of ours, was that, "Scott, there's two types of mindset, right? There's an efficiency mindset, and there is an effectiveness mindset."

I'm a very efficient person, Whitney. Very productive. Lots of lists. I get up at 5:00 AM. I'm at Home Depot at 5:10 buying the marigolds. They're planted by 6:00, the car's washed by 7:00, the yard's raked by 9:00. Right? I mean, I've a very efficient person. And there is a place in life for that. Efficiency can be good in some processes, some meetings, in some conversations. But great leaders need to learn how to differentiate between when to be efficient and when to be effective. And in all of our relationships, it's much more beneficial, mutually beneficial, to become effective.

And for me, I've had this deeply entrenched mindset around being efficient, being busy, being productive, get things done, life is short. And I think the wisest thing I learned from Dr. Covey was differentiating between when to be efficient and when to be effective. And it was his quote that he said, "With people, fast is slow, and slow is fast." So I've had to learn to slow down because I realized that my style with mowing the lawn was not working in building relationships. And I think as I matured, honestly, Whitney, I'm 51 now. As I matured into my late 40s, I began to realize that my productivity, my sort of bias for action, was an asset that was a liability with my relationships, my friendships, my marriage, my parenting style. And I've kind of come into that maybe a little later than most people in life.

WHITNEY So if I look at your challenges, I'm trying to help people map back that are, you know, going to pick up this book and wanna be able to map what they're hearing from you to your book. Is there one particular challenge... I'm looking through the table of contents as we're talking... that you would point people to around this idea of effective versus efficient?

SCOTT Number 10. Number 10: Make time for relationships. Right? Your job is your career, your job is not your life. In your workplace, there is this adage that people are every company's most valuable asset. That's total bunk. It's not true. People are not any organization's most valuable asset. There's a subtle difference. It is the relationships between people that are a company's most valuable asset. You can copy everything: patents, logos, technology, supply chain, board of directors. What you cannot copy is how Whitney and Scott work well together, how we diffuse our conflict, how we pre-forgive each other, how we have your skillsets complement my deficiencies. So number 10 is all around making time for relationships because as you know, Whitney, people don't quit their jobs; they quit their bosses, they quit their cultures. But people don't quit leaders who love them. People don't quit leaders who care about them.

WHITNEY That is so good. The asset is the relationships. I've never heard someone describe it that way before.

SCOTT Really? You know what, my genius is well-served on your podcast (laughs).

WHITNEY (laughs)

SCOTT Just so you know, that's not original to me. That's original to our chief people officer, Todd Davis.

WHITNEY Well, well done, Todd. And, uh, clearly he has conveyed that to you as well. All right, let's go to another example. So talk about a move from a new role-

SCOTT Yeah.

WHITNEY ... from one role to the next. Walk us through how it happened, who instigated it, you or your boss, the culmination, and then a lesson learned in that role.

SCOTT Yeah, so that would be moving from being basically, uh, a sales vice president, we call them managing directors, where I was leading, uh, about a 15-state region out of our Chicago office. Was there for six years, had about probably 17 salespeople. Uh, was, well, fairly successful in that. After six years, I disrupted myself and left that job. My more junior colleague took my place and took that, uh, operation far beyond my capacity. I came back to be the leader of marketing. Which is kind of an odd transition, right? Moving from sales to marketing. I think it was one that I loved to evangelize because I think the best marketers hail from sales. Because you and I know, one of the perpetual conflicts in organizations is that, that aggravating fight between sales and marketing, right?

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SCOTT Sales blaming marketing, marketing blaming sales, pointing the finger. So I moved into marketing with probably not a lot of marketing background. I was a creative person, I knew our industry, I had a high quality. You know, I'm willing to disrupt myself and take on new roles. But it was my sales background that made me so credible, where I eventually earned the spot as the company's only ever Chief Marketing Officer. I think it was the CEO, Whitney, that realized, you know what, I can teach Scott marketing. But I can't teach Scott to appreciate the role that sales, revenue, clients, cash, you know, play in our organization. So I do think I probably brought some ingrained marketing talents to the role, but it was my respect, my love, my experience on the sales side that made me relevant and successful in marketing because the salespeople knew that Scott was going to be in their boat, rowing-

WHITNEY Yep.

SCOTT ... with them in the same direction. And that was the currency that I used in my marketing role.

WHITNEY Does that happen a lot? Have you seen that a lot where-

SCOTT Never! No!

WHITNEY That makes no sense.

SCOTT No! It, it, it's usually why most CEOs end up having marketing report to sales. Because, Whitney, I'll share something... And this was not a mess for me, I do think I brought some maturity.

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SCOTT When I was, when I was promoted to be the Chief Marketing Officer, which in this company was an executive-level position. You know, a named executive officer in a public company. I was a peer. We were both, um, EVPs to the sales EVP. Yet I decided to take a little bit of a deferential role to him. Which is not a word people would use to describe my personality, deferential. But I chose, if I'm going to be successful in this this role, I've got to be in his boat, rowing with him. Not forcing him to be in my boat. And quite frankly, the CEO didn't need both of our egos, didn't need the conflict.

So I intentionally went back to my team and said, "Team, our job is to serve sales. They fund our paychecks. And that doesn't mean we're going to roll over. That doesn't mean we're not going to express our opinions." The EVP of sales and I had some big fights. But they were behind closed doors in his office, and when we left, we got on the same page, including if it needed to be his page. Because my job was to tee up the leads and the business for them to close, so I intentionally... And that wasn't always easy for me, right? Because like I said, I had a big ego, and I'd earned the same role, but our company was better off by us willing to work well together, and I'm sure he probably deflected to me more than I give credit for. But I think that is such an important, symbiotic role-

WHITNEY Mm.

SCOTT ... in organizations to work well together. Take off your marketing hat. Take off your sales hat. When you're in the CEO's office, you're wearing your executive team hat, and your job isn't to advocate your position, your solution, but to work well together. I kind of saw it as, you know, being a member of the President's cabinet. You know, whether you're the Secretary of State, Secretary of Labor, Secretary of Defense. Your job is to serve the President and serve the nation, not serve only what hat you're wearing.

WHITNEY So you were in sales, then they say, "All right, we need to figure out what we're doing with marketing." You basically took a lateral role, became a peer with a number of-

SCOTT That's right.

WHITNEY ... senior sales leaders, focused on marketing, still had a P&L, so you were proving yourself in that particular functional area. And then several years later, you were able to, because you were willing to take a step back or at least take a step sideways-

SCOTT Right.

WHITNEY ... you had earned the right to slingshot forward into the Chief Marketing Officer EVP title, is that accurate?

SCOTT Excellent recap, it's exactly right.

WHITNEY Okay.

SCOTT And I think, I think the learning there is... And I, and I share this advice when I coach people that are younger than me, I think the law the harvest is so applicable in careers, right? It's that potato farmers sometimes have to plant money-losing crops to replenish the soil to grow bigger potatoes the next year. The same in your career. Sometimes you have to plant, fertilize, water, sow, plant again, fertilize, before you can harvest. I took a lateral, and kind of earned more street cred that allowed me to slingshot up, this is your word. So I-

WHITNEY Yeah.

SCOTT ... I think, a good career advice is, you know, sometimes I think people try to harvest too soon.

WHITNEY I agree. Before we hop off of this, um, any management, um, success, or-

SCOTT Yeah.

WHITNEY ... leadership success, I would say, challenge that you would point people to that I think is illustrative or would help people be effective in this particular situation that are trying to map back to the conversation?

SCOTT Sure, I'd say it's challenge one, which was demonstrate humility. I mean I am not a naturally humble person.

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SCOTT And my wife would laugh if she heard that. That's like an understatement.

WHITNEY (laughs)

SCOTT One thing that I learned from Dr. Covey, again, is that humble leaders are more concerned with what is right than being right. And I think I spent most of my early career focused on being right, and I think I was, I was able to... You know, later in my career, Whitney, differentiate between knowing what's right versus me needing to be right. So I was able to step back a little bit and, and I'm Catholic, so I'll use the word genuflect, is you know, maybe genuflect a little bit to this sales side and say, hey guys, ladies and gents, I'm here to serve you, what do you need? And I think that served my career in retrospect very well.

I used to equate humble people with being very shy or retiring or even weak. That's not true. You can be charismatic and be humble. You can still be loud and be humble. Humility comes from confidence. You know, our mutual friend, Karen Dillon, the former editor at the Harvard Business Review, she taught me this concept in her book *How Will You Measure Your Life?*. That humility comes from confidence. Confident people can be humble people. It's arrogant people who are incapable of showing humility. I was absolutely arrogant in my 20 and 30s, and as I was willing to check my ego and learn from others, I didn't reduce my confidence any, but I definitely increased my humility some.

WHITNEY Yeah. You know, it's interesting listening to you, Scott, is because when I, when I think about your career and I think about the, the book that you've written, sometimes when I think about the arc of someone's career there's sort of this moment in time where everything changes.

SCOTT Mm-hmm (affirmative).

WHITNEY With the call, you know, the hero, hero's journey-

SCOTT Yes.

WHITNEY ... call to adventure. But as I hear you talk, it doesn't sound like necessarily there's been one or two sort of punctuated exclamation mark points. It's been more of this sort of gradual, you know, up a little bit, down a little bit, up a little bit more, down a little bit more, and sort of this gradual refining and polishing of who you are as a leader. Is that accurate?

SCOTT You know, that is accurate, but I, I'll give a twist to it since you asked. I think getting married was a defining moment in my maturity. Whitney, I was married late in life. I was married, was married when I was 41. And I married my wife who was, we've been married for 10 years now, was much younger than me, about 12 years younger. And, I never thought I would get married. Kind of a confirmed bachelor, and then, you know, it, it changed for all the right reasons. And when I was married, it gave me some self-awareness. It gave me a bit of a governor. My wife would say, "You can't say that! You can't wear that! You can't do that! You said what?" And I think I never would have made it on to the executive team had it not be for my marriage and my wife's wisdom, who by the way is not a professional. She's a full-time, by choice, stay-at-home mom to our three young boys. But my wife has a lot of wisdom in the interpersonal realm.

So it was, it was that relationship that gave me a much better sense for kind of, you know, what's right and what's wrong. Doesn't mean you need to, need to get married, but I think for single people out there, people who perhaps were married, aren't anymore, I do think it is vital to have relationships in your life that give you coaching, that build your self-awareness, that help you understand what's it like to be in a meeting with you, what's it like to work for you? What's it like to date you? Those are very important pivot points.

So I think you're right, mine has been gradual, but in my personal life being married... I don't agree with much, what, what she says most of the time. Doesn't mean she's wrong, means I don't agree. But it's been instrumental to my learning curve to have her, you know... I, I, my, my most dreaded night of the week is the drive home from the dinner party where she says, "You had to go there. You had to say that. What were you thinking?" We've all been there, right? It's that dreaded drive home where our spouse, you know, gives us kind of the one-uppance, right?

WHITNEY It's interesting. Two thoughts come to mind. First of all, tribute to your wife and I do think that if we have a good partner or good spouse, they are the best kind of truth-teller because they love us in a way that no one else can, and yet they can tell us exactly what we need to hear, and it sounds like your wife has done that for you.

And I also think it's interesting, I remember reading in Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill, which a lot of people haven't read but everybody's heard of, but one observation that he made that was so powerful is that, he said that every single person to a one that had been successful, and this was 100 years ago so they were all men, but they all had a person who was there for them, that loved them deeply. And I think that, his lesson has shown to be, or demon- demonstrated to be true in your life as well, so-

SCOTT Very much. Yeah, very much.

WHITNEY ... so thank you for sharing that.

SCOTT No- not to mention a few very pivotal leaders that, to quote Dr. Covey, "Believed in me more than I believed in myself." I could name those, but we've all had those in our life.

WHITNEY Are there one or two that you can name?

SCOTT Oh my, my gosh. There's 10 I could name. Chuck Farnsworth. Chuck Farnsworth is the man who actually hired me from Disney and constantly believed in me more than I believed in myself. Was so patient with me, he saw a long-term investment in me, he never bailed on me, wasn't afraid to have high-courage conversations and call me out. Chuck Farnsworth was instrumental. He was the founder of FranklinCovey's education division. We are great friends to this day, and he really gave me permission to be myself. And he gave me courage to make mistakes, not let me hang myself with it but learn from them. Kind of my second dad.

WHITNEY Mm. Wow. What a tribute. I hope he knows that. I hope you shared that with him.

SCOTT He does. He does. I write about him. I tell him. We hug, we cry. Absolutely.

WHITNEY Oh. Okay well, so-

SCOTT And he fired me a few times along the way around 9:00 in the morning, and hired me back around 4:00 (laughs).

WHITNEY No! Seriously? Seriously?

SCOTT Well not formally, but I was on the edge. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I mean I told you. I was arrogant, right?

WHITNEY (laughs)

SCOTT I mean I, I had a lot but Chuck was that leader that, you know, had to really make some tough choices in moments where I probably didn't deserve to stay. But he-

WHITNEY Huh.

SCOTT ... you know, he showed patience. He showed calm, and to this day, the biggest transition figure in my life, bar none. My, Chuck Farnsworth.

WHITNEY Love it. Okay, so last question on your book before start to, start to wrap up.

SCOTT Yeah.

WHITNEY This book has been out for a number of months. Are there any challenges in here that you feel like have gotten short shrift, that are sort of hidden gems and important that no one's really identifying or talking about that you'd like to, to call out and have people focus a little bit more on?

SCOTT Wow, that's a great question. You know, uh, I mentioned Liz Wiseman earlier, Liz Wiseman with the seminal book called *Multipliers*, and where Liz really talks about, you know, the need not to be the smartest person in the room, right? And I think that concept really hit me hard. I always thought my job was to be the smartest person in the room. It's challenge 21: Allow others to be smart. And as I became the Chief Marketing Officer, I thought my job was to be the most educated, the most creative, the wisest, the decision maker, the know-it-all. And I realized after five years into my six year appointment in that role that I was not supposed to be the genius in the room. I was supposed to be the genius maker. And Whitney, in this book, as you know, I've been quite vulnerable. My wife says I'll never get a job again if anybody reads the book. And the book has done very well, close to 25,000 copies in five months.

But what I realized is because I was convinced I needed to be the smartest person in the room as the Chief Marketing Officer, subconscious or consciously I didn't hire people who I thought were more talented than I was. 'Cause I was afraid. I was too insecure, I was too afraid of being eclipsed by somebody else's talent. So I hired smart people, talented people, but not people who I thought were more talented than I was. So as a result, I didn't hire the world's best UX designer, or the world's expert on marketing automation, or that the most talented person on digital design. I hired people good enough, but I was so insecure as a leader that I wouldn't allow other people to eclipse me. And then I just became to realize, gosh, my job is not to be the smartest person in the

room. My job is to attract and retain the best talent possible, and let people blossom beyond me. Not to be afraid that they'll know something that I don't know.

And I think that came late in my career, too late for some people. Not too late to be on your podcast and share it. So I would say to people, challenge 21: Allow others to be smart. Are you confident enough where you could actually hire people who are palpably, noticeably, visibly, audibly more expert at their area than you are even though you're the leader, and allow them to move beyond you? Step back, and then blossom with them, and then be able to place them in roles throughout the organization. I once heard that the true sign of a leader is not who you grow in your division, but can you step back, can you survey the broader organization and see who have you placed outside of marketing into sales, into operations, into finance, into innovations? That's kind of the sign of your legacy, not just you hoard them in your own division. And so I've learned a lot about that. I think challenge 21 gets a little bit of short shrift, allow others to be smart.

WHITNEY All right. So the question then is, how are you doing on that? In terms of in your organization, now that you've learned that lesson, are there are a lot of people at FranklinCovey that are Scott Miller alums?

SCOTT Oh, no question. I, I think it's actually my key talent now. I think if you were to stack me up against any leader in the organization, I think they'd say, "Scott can be a jerk sometimes, and Scott's a little harsh. Scott can be a little domineering," but when it comes to building careers and pollinating talent, I think I'd rank at the very top.

WHITNEY Bravo. You're eating your own cooking.

SCOTT I'm trying. I'm trying, my friend.

WHITNEY So which of the 30 challenges are you working on right now?

SCOTT What do you mean? All of them! (laughs)

WHITNEY Oh, come on! You can't do 30 at once.

SCOTT Well, you know what. I, um-

WHITNEY (laughs)

SCOTT ... I, I think there's one that I struggle with the most, and that's challenge 19: protect your team against urgencies. You know, you can tell, right? I mean, I have a lot of energy, I've never met a crisis I don't love. If one doesn't exist, I'll cook one up to feel relevant. I love working in firefighting mode. That is exhausting to people. You know, everybody can work at urgency mode for some time, but people we burnt out to your, as a leader, urgency addicted personality. And I, and I am a bit of an urgency addicted person. Like I-

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SCOTT ... mentioned, if one doesn't exist, I've been known to cook one up to make myself feel relevant. So I think as leaders, we have to understand, when, when are you the problem as the leader? Are you constantly firefighting because you need to feel relevant because you're trying to make your team relevant? Is there a time to step back and say, not just protect your team from outside urgencies protect your team from yourself?

WHITNEY Mm.

SCOTT And that's something that I have to really struggle with, is I love to take on a lot of work. I love to make commitments. I love to save the day, and part of my insecurity as a leader is, if I don't feel like I'm not saving the day, I get paranoid about my relevance. So definitely learning to protect my team from me is an important trait. And how we've done that is, I'll call the team together for a two-hour meeting, and I will go to the first hour and a half because they need time to get things done without me. They need time to have me not cook up 10 new ideas because I just got some creativity or I'm bored. So I've recognized and they've recognized, uh, what not to share with me, right? Sometimes they have to protect me from ideas because I'll want to go tackle them. And sometimes my talent isn't always right. So I think when you have a high trust team, and everybody knows everybody else's competencies, their messes, their successes, sometimes the leader needs to step out of the way.

WHITNEY Well said. I think leaders everywhere need to remember that. All right, so for our listeners who are intrigued by you and your work, um, we're actually going to give away two signed copies. Yay, everyone. So, um, we'll include in the outro how you can be eligible for those copies. Um, but if people intrigued, how can they further engage with you, uh, beyond, uh, going to Amazon right now and buying your book?

SCOTT Well thanks for asking. So my wife says it's kind of hard not to find me these days. I'm on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn. It's easy to find me. Scott Miller at FranklinCovey. You can, uh, go to franklincovey.com, and like your podcast that I listen to regularly, they can subscribe to mine, it's called [On Leadership](#). Like you, we interview guests every Tuesday. And you also can go to managementmess.com, which is the site for this particular book.

WHITNEY Excellent. All right. Scott Jeffrey Miller, thank you for being our guest on the Disrupt Yourself podcast. It has been a lot of fun.

SCOTT My honor. Thank you Whitney.

Three major takeaways.

First. It's not failure, it's simply learning. Remember how Disney invited him to leave? It could have been a failure if he'd never tried to do anything ever again. But instead, it was learning. Failure became a constraint, a tool of creation. He went on to have a 25 year career at FranklinCovey. This story reminded me of talking to Scott O'Neil, who runs the NBA Team, The Sixers, about when he was fired from one of his jobs. But both Scott Miller and Scott O'Neil do is that they are able to reframe their stories not as failures, but something that they learned one of their latest adventures along their life S curve.

Second. The importance of listening and recognizing that most of us are pretty good listeners. Think about people in sales, for example, if you're successful, you're a good listener. You're understanding what problem people are trying to solve and then solving it. But then, as Scott learned when he became a leader, it didn't quite translate. It didn't mean he didn't have the skill. It's just that he didn't quite know how to translate it to another part of his life. I think that's true for many of us. I think about in my coaching, there are times when I'm a brilliant listener, but with the people who work with me, who work for me, or with my children, brilliant is not the word I would use. But the thing is, I have the skill. I know how to listen. It's just a matter of applying this in a different situation. I think that's true for most of us.

The third takeaway is something he said about relationships. It's a quote. I loved it so much, I'm using it in my upcoming book, Smart Growth. So thank you, Scott. Here is the quote. He said, "It's not people who are your company's most valuable assets. It's the relationships between your people that's your company's most valuable asset." Boom.

Thank you again to Scott Miller for joining us. For those of you who want to hear more from Scott, including hearing about his biggest fear when he recently disrupted himself, leaving FranklinCovey after 25 years, you can listen to him on my linked in live interview. We'll include a link to the live in our show notes.

Thank you, Scott, for joining us. Thank you to you for listening. And thank you to our team, Emily Cottrell, Whitney Jobe, and Steve Ludwig.

I'm Whitney Johnson
And this is Disrupt Yourself.