

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 248: SCOTT MILLER

Welcome back to the Disrupt Yourself Podcast, where we provide strategies and advice on how to climb the S-Curve of learning in your professional and personal life. Stepping back from who you are to slingshot into who you want to be. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson. Our guest today is Scott Miller, former chief marketing officer at a leadership training company, FranklinCovey, a Wall Street Journal best-selling author, and host of On Leadership, an immensely popular, weekly leadership podcast with tens of millions of downloads. We previously had Scott on after he wrote his book From Management Mess to Leadership Success. Now he has written a book titled Master Mentor: 30 Transformative Insights from Our Greatest Minds. Scott calls himself a master aggregator of other people's ideas, a concept he didn't love at first but has come to embrace. And it's easy to see why he's brilliant at transmitting and translating the wisdom of outstanding leaders. Both are successes and, perhaps more importantly, they're mistakes. We always learned a lot from Scott. I know you will, too. So, Scott, you have written a new book titled Master Mentors. Why did you decide to write this book?

Scott Miller: Well, Whitney like you, I am privileged to host a large leadership podcast. In fact, now the one that I'm hosting for FranklinCovey has become the world's largest weekly leadership podcast, where again, like you, I'm privileged to interview some remarkable people of which you have been on our podcast. We'll be coming up in the not-so-distant future for your new book, which arrived at my house recently. Smart Growth. Looking forward to interviewing you for that. And after the course of, you know, 150 episodes every week, week in, week out for three years, I realized Whitney, which I'm sure you've experienced. Sometimes the guest says something profound off-air. It might be in the three or four minutes when you're leading up to the conversation or sometimes after the conversation. Maybe it's in the elevator or in some other relationship. And I wanted. In this next phase of my career, as I have left the corporate world as an officer of a public company, I want to become an aggregator, a pollinator. I want to be able to shine a spotlight onto other people's ideas and get them out to many millions more. So I thought there's such a great opportunity to pollinate the ideas on-air or off-air, with their permission out to readership. And that's what's happened. The book has done extremely well out in the last two months, and so I really wanted to provide access to many more millions of people on some of the transformational insights that our guests have shared. This is a shameless plug. You agreed to be one of the 30 mentors in the first volume, and I talk about you and the power of self-disruption. And now I am just finishing volume two, which will release with 30 new mentors coming out in 2022.

Whitney Johnson: So are you going to do a new book every year for 10 years? Did I hear you?

Scott Miller: I am. And maybe every nine months or so. Yes, I've already started working on volume three of master mentors, and at the end of the game, we'll have 600 mentors that will all be part of a big perhaps cohort group. And FranklinCovey can also call on them for advice and advisory and perhaps even partner with some of them on content that we're building for our past. So the podcast has turned into a bit of a juggernaut, not just for the firm, but hopefully for the millions of people watching it and listening worldwide as well. But yes, they'll be 10 volumes provided that my wife doesn't have different plans for me in the meantime.

Whitney Johnson: So Scott, what's your favorite part about interviewing people?

Scott Miller: I think it's the validation of two things. One is all of these people have an indefatigable work ethic. They're just hard workers. And I'll tell you, some podcast hosts have taken offense to me saying that, Oh, so you're saying just hard work alone? I didn't say that. What I am saying is regardless of someone's fame or influence or wealth or success, or maybe to quote you where they are on the S-Curve of learning, they're still working hard. They're doing four or five podcasts a day. Whether you're Jack Canfield from Chicken Soup for the Soul or John Gray from Men are from Mars. No one is resting on their laurels. So that has been reinforcing to me. But there's the value of good, old-fashioned hard work, and the second is what they all share in common. Is this what Dr. Covey, our founder, would say is an abundance mentality, not a scarce bone in their body. They are genuinely interested and sharing ideas and helping people, people they'll never meet or have any contact with. They just, there's no scarcity. It's just pure abundance. And so that probably is the best benefit other than, of course, that insane access to amazing people. We're going to interview Bill Gates in a few weeks. We're interviewing Ban Ki-Moon, the former secretary-general of the United Nations, and on and on and on wait to see who the 200th episode is in March. That will be interesting. Oh, you're going to make us wait. You're not going to tell us who it is.

Scott Miller: No, I'm not.

Whitney Johnson: That was spoken like a marketer through and through. But wait, the 200th episode!

Scott Miller: Well, Nick Vujicic, who was a friend of yours and a fellow master mentor was interview 100 and we've got something special planned for our 200.

Whitney Johnson: I love it. So Scott, how are you defining mentor in your mind when you think of the word mentor? How do you describe that? Because there are lots of different ways to think about mentoring?

Scott Miller: Yeah, maybe even a bit unconventionally. You know, I think mentorship Whitney can be formal or informal. I don't think you have to have met your mentor. The fact of the matter is you and I met for the first time two months ago, physically in person. We'd had numerous interactions before virtual. You have been mentoring me for three years through reading your books through listening to your podcast for, in some cases, even being a guest on your podcast. So I think mentorship is about connecting with someone that has wisdom to share from their own journey. Notice I didn't say necessarily educated or wealthy or smart or successful. Some of that has wisdom. Mentorship is about someone showing vulnerability. It might be that they had more bankruptcies than they had successes. Or perhaps you learned how to stay married because of their divorces. I tend to learn more from people that have made major mistakes than I do from those that have had a great run. Of course, no one's had a great run without mistakes. You just haven't seen them publicly. Mentorship is not about trying to turn somebody else into a mini-me version of you. It's here's lessons that I've learned, and to the extent they can be applied on your own journey, then that's mentorship. It's helping ask big, bold questions to quote you again. It's: Are you ready for a disruption and is something that I've learned valuable for you? The best mentors are those that talk little. Listen a lot and help guide the other person on achieving what it is they want to do.

Whitney Johnson: So I'm going to turn the tables on you for just a moment, and then I'm going to ask you to share some stories of people that have mentored you. But I wanted to tell you a way in which you have mentored me. And that is, well, number one is you do a remarkable job of reflecting back to me what I've said, and I suspect that's one of your superpowers that you do that with everyone that you're with. And I think it's remarkable and impressive and

it makes me feel good, and I suspect it makes other people feel good. But the other thing that you have mentored way you have mentored me is I came to your book launch party for Master Mentors and your ability to throw a party, your ability to create an event. You're an ability to create a moment for people and to be so open and congenial and warm and to bring everybody in. It is just so impressive. And I love that about you. And so I wanted to just say thank you for mentoring me in that way.

Scott Miller: Well, that's gracious of you. And I mean this genuinely. I am appreciative that you agreed to be a mentor in the book that you took time out of your schedule to fly to Salt Lake City to be with 150 people, of which very few you'd met or even knew. It's always an awkward situation, and the fact of the matter is you had connections with many of the people there through speaking on stages or coauthoring, you know, articles or things. And so it was remarkable to see you and your selflessness for coming out. Thank you for showing up for me.

Whitney Johnson: Oh. You're welcome. I like how you just threw that right back at me, Scott, I think sometimes we call that a little bit of deflection, but it will take the compliment anyway. Ok, 30 stories. All fascinating. I think the one that I liked the best was actually the very last story where you mentored yourself, which is you responding to Viola Davis and Eric Barker? So tell us about what you learned and what you did.

Scott Miller: I'll try to condense this in as short as possible. Master Mentor Number 30, is a man named Eric Barker. He's a social scientist, wrote a compelling book called *Barking Up the Wrong Tree*, where he sort of scientifically dispels the myths like early bird gets the worm and nice guys finish last. But the big idea that I took away from him was this power of knowing your story. And I heard it from Viola Davis in an article that or a blurb that Bernie Brown wrote about her in her book *Dare to Lead*. And as I was preparing to interview Viola Davis once, I really started seeing this theme being in my life around knowing your story you know, I'm a Caucasian guy in my fifties, and that wasn't something that was natural, my upbringing knowing your story. It was kind of like yoga and sound bowl, good for other people, but not for me, so to speak. And I don't mean that to be de minimis at all. But I started thinking about this concept of knowing your story. So twice in two days, I heard this idea. I came home, you know, I'm the son. I am a son and the father of three boys that are now 9, 10 and 11.

Scott Miller: And I said to my wife, Stephanie, have you ever told yourself your story? She's like, No, what are you talking about? I'm tired. I'm going to bed. My wife is a full-time mom and house manager and director. Of all of that is our personal life. And so I got up one night, Whitney, and I walked to the kitchen of my house. Sorry for the visual, but I'm in a pair of Ralph Lauren flannel boxer shorts. I walk to the kitchen of my 100 year-old English home and I pull out a whisk out of the kitchen crock and I walk around at the age of 50 in my living room. For the first time in my life, I told myself my story alone in the dark, out loud, everybody's asleep. And you have to read the chapter, but I basically say my name is Scott Miller, I'm 50, here is who I am professionally. Here is who I am personally. And then I started to kind of unpack all the things that have been told about me by others that I had believed to become true. Some were true. Some were not. Some were malicious. Some were nefarious. Some were not. And I began to also tell myself out loud all the things that were told about me that I wanted to be true or I no longer wanted to be true.

Scott Miller: I'm a stutterer. I have a lifelong, somewhat debilitating speech impediment. I managed to mask it in my fifties because of Herculean effort and decades of speech pathology and braces and Invisalign and retainers and therapy. But it has been debilitating to me. I've made mistakes. I've had successes. Anyway, that night I walked around and I told myself my story out loud, and at the age of 50, I decided to build a new story for myself. The next morning, I went out and I landed myself a radio gig on iHeart Radio. I'm a stutterer. I wrote my first book that became an Amazon bestseller, my second book that became a Wall Street Journal bestseller. I ended up retiring from my 25 year-job. 25 years and, you know, nice compensation package and a lot of influence and became an entrepreneur. Partially because of your book *Disrupt Yourself*. I kind of blame you for my finances in a good way, but there's I think great power in telling yourself your story and deciding which parts do you choose to *Disrupt* to create your own identity going forward?

Whitney Johnson: What is something that while you were having that conversation with yourself and you were telling yourself that story that you said? I want to be more of that. People have said this about me, but I don't quite yet believe it's true, but I want it to be true. What was that?

Scott Miller: My entire life, people have always told me to slow down. Scott, slow down. You're going too fast. You're talking too fast. And I used to kind of have a mentality of, No, you just think faster. Just try to keep up with me. As much as maybe I thought those people were criticizing me, I think they were trying to help me. I do everything fast and in some cases that's been to my benefit and to others' benefit and in many cases, it has been to my detriment and to other people's detriment. I am fast at a dinner party. I'm fast at church. I'm fast at a drive-thru. And I think in many ways I don't live in the moment I live in the future. That's good and bad. I don't live in the past, but I don't live in the moment, and I'm sure there are other reasons why that is the case. So I think I have reflected on sometimes that probably was a criticism or a veiled, you know, critique of me. But for most times, everything in life is done better, slower and I am trying to appreciate that and integrate that, not just in my behavior, but into my mindset as well.

Whitney Johnson: I love that, and I think that that's a really nice segway to one of your master mentors, which is Ryan Holiday. What did he have to say and what did you learn from him?

Scott Miller: So this is a mentor for which I have absolutely nothing in common with right, you know? Ryan writes books about the Stoics, right? I don't. Ryan is a remarkable author. He's very deliberate. He's quite contemplative. He wrote a book among many books called Stillness is the Key. Whitney, you know, nothing about me screams stillness. And that's probably good and perhaps a liability. But I learned from Ryan the power of sometimes checking out. I was raised in a family in an era. I'm a Catholic, so I kind of have that sort of Catholic guilt, right? And my mother is a Methodist, so I have that Protestant work ethic. And so I was raised in an era where your duty was to watch the news. Your duty was to be informed. Your duty was to know about every military coup and every vote and every legislation that was kind of your duty. I think I had a bit of an overload, especially during the last presidential administration, right? And so what Ryan taught me is you don't have a duty to know everything. Unplug. Stop reading some, stop listening some, don't fill every waking moment with information or noise. Leave your phone at home. Go on a walk for a half an hour. And just listen. Listen to nature, listen to yourself, listen to your cadence, listen to your breathing. You know, Bob Whitman, who is one of the master mentors in the book and the chairman of FranklinCovey of all the things Bob said to me in 25 years of working for him, the most profound was: thinking is a legitimate business activity. And I think that is really helpful for people in my generation that had this sort of busy, busy, busy moniker and we get caught in the trap of activity and looking busy - productivity. Thinking is a legitimate business activity. Heck, it's a legitimate marital activity and parenting activity. So I've been taught by Ryan to unplug, slow down and listen to myself.

Whitney Johnson: And do you do more of it now?

Scott Miller: Oh, no question. When I'm in the car, I am consciously turning off NPR. I'm turning off Sirius radio and thinking about, OK, so how am I going to create an interaction with my son when I pick him up from school? Who's 11 and I'm not cool? How am I going to make that a bonding moment on our drive home, right? How am I going to drop him off and not be on a conference call with some high-powered person interviewing them or prepping for an interview? But take that 12-moment ride with my son to talk about how he's going to make the day better. Yeah, I'm a better spouse and parent because of Ryan Holiday. I hope.

Whitney Johnson: You mentioned Bob Wittman as another person who has mentored you. Tell us the story about him and how you're a different leader because of Bob Wittman.

Scott Miller: Now you know, Bob, of course. You've met Bob. Bob, again has, Bob's unlike me. He's very deliberate. He's very contemplative. He's never reactive. He's in remarkable control over his words and his emotions. And, you know, we're like father and son in good ways and bad. And I love him and he loves me and he's my boss. Bob has had amazing success in life, you know, been enormously financially successful, had many setbacks in his own personal life with health issues with his family and his spouse and others. Bob is the essence Whitney of a servant leader. Bob has enough money to hire anybody, and everybody to do everything for him. But we were once at a corporate event where there was a fire alarm and it disrupted the meeting, I tell the story in the book and how we went over to a pizza parlor with like 150 people that had flown in to this corporate sales conference. We were losing money by the hour, right? One hundred and fifty people and half had flown in. We were in a parking lot for two hours, waiting for the hotel to give us the all clear. So Bob and I have this idea to go over to a pizza parlor across the street. Fortunately, it can sit us all.

Scott Miller: One hundred and forty-seven people walk in and sit down sort of King Arthur's court style with their fork in one hand and their knife and another, including all of the executives. And it was my administrative assistant, Janette, myself, and Bob Wittman, for an hour and a half. Laid out napkins, poured soda, ran cheese sticks, ran pizzas. And Bob Wittman, who was the CEO, I glanced over and I saw him serving the two company presidents and an executive vice president who were sitting in their seats. I do not mean to diminish them in this book. I mean, to elevate Bob that literally sometimes servant leadership means that you are serving other people. And I share a second story in the book that I won't have time to share now. But I just meant that to say from a guy who could have bought and sold everybody four times over right? Who easily could have in his position, sat and been served. I walked over and I caught someone asking Bob for a refill on their root beer, and I kind of wanted to punch them. Are you kidding? It's the CEO, but I just think that the metaphor there is sometimes servant leadership isn't a metaphor. Sometimes it's a literal act.

Whitney Johnson: Can you think of a moment or a situation that you were in? You channel Bob and you say, Oh, this is what Bob would do.

Scott Miller: I'm going to answer it differently on this case. Bob and I have this a lot in common. I spent four years at the Disney company. Prior to joining the FranklinCovey Company, and before that, I worked for a U.S. presidential candidate who once eventually became president in the eighties and George H.W. Bush and George Bush. President Bush taught me a lot about service, and he was a consummate gentleman. So I was always raised with a service mentality. I worked in restaurants all through high school and college. So in this case, Bob and I have this in common. I didn't pick up any new insights. I just had my behavior validated, but I'll answer it differently for you. Sometimes I think I serve too much. The dinner party and I'll have four couples over and I'll spend five hours serving everyone and I won't enjoy it. I'll be refilling their water. I'll be cleaning up their spill, I'll be serving their dinner. And sometimes I think I'm making them uncomfortable. I'm enjoying it. I'm enjoying this, but sometimes I think I'm over-serving and maybe I'm becoming a martyr or a victim. I'm mindful of that. So I'm conscious of when is my service making someone else feel comfortable? And maybe when is it making them uncomfortable? When they just want me to sit down and they can go fill their own drink, but quite frankly, they're here to see me. They're not here for a gin and tonic that makes sense. So I'm mindful of sometimes, me over serving others.

Whitney Johnson: That's interesting. And when you said that and you mentioned earlier that you were Catholic, so of course you will be familiar with the New Testament. I thought of Mary and Martha story. Of knowing when it is time to serve and when is it time to sit? That's lovely.

Scott Miller: Nicely said.

Whitney Johnson: All right, let's go to another.

Scott Miller: Look at you bringing it full circle. Nicely done. See, this is why your podcast is so huge.

Whitney Johnson: Thank you! Ok, so next person I thought was super interesting to you. I'd love to hear you talk about. And I've chosen actually, in part, the stories because I was intrigued by what you're, you know, not only their stories, because their stories, of course, are compelling, but your response to their stories. And that's what's intriguing for me. So Nellie Gillen. Tell us about, a little bit about the conversation with her, and I love her saying, buy a building. What did you do differently after you spoke to her and tell us about her? Because I bet a lot of people won't know who she is.

Scott Miller: So Nellie Gillen is Cuban-born and American by choice. She was raised in very humble upbringings. She's Latina, obviously. She was the first-ever female Latina executive producer of a U.S. television network, Telemundo. She was introspectively one of Donald Trump's Celebrity Apprentice guests many years ago and raised some fantastic money through, then the celebrity Donald Trump, prior to being president. She wrote several books one book called Self-made. She has a new book coming out called Buy Buildings, Not Shoes. It's aimed at entrepreneurial women and Nellie's big insight is about hyping your failures. She makes it not just permissible, but kind of almost a requirement as leaders to talk about our failures, to hype our failures, to teach through our mistakes. When you look at all the people that we see as being famous, right, that Matthew McConaughey, I

interviewed Matthew McConaughey for our podcast and he'll be a master mentor in the next volume. Matthew McConaughey didn't have a lot of successful acting gigs. Everybody sees, you know, *A Time to Kill* where he became a celebrity overnight. I mean, he can tell you what time from what time did he become a celebrity? He can tell you the date and the time from no one knowing him to everybody in the world.

Scott Miller: Breaking news at night and him from one hour to the next. Lots of failures. Lots of parts he didn't make. Nellie really inspired me to write my first book: *Management Mess to Leadership Success*. This idea of teaching through your mistakes. I think the best leaders, Whitney are those that have the confidence and the humility to teach through their mistakes, not necessarily an open kimono or making the workplace your confessional, but to deliberately and intentionally gather around your troops, your team members, and say, Let me tell you about the biggest sales deal I ever screwed up and lost. Let me tell you the decisions I made, the behaviors that I exhibited, that led to this failure because I want you to learn from them and avoid them. And it's Nellie Gillen that has really instilled in me a competence of responsible disclosure. I think some people can take it too far right? Some people can take it too far and make people uncomfortable. And are you really credible? But there is a leadership competency called vulnerability. And allowing people to not just learn from your messes, but to own theirs as well.

Whitney Johnson: Oh, I love that, responsible disclosure. So here's the question. I know you said you decided to write your book *Management Mess to Leadership Success* because of your conversation with her. Was there a story that you decided to tell that you had not previously told as a consequence of having that conversation with her?

Scott Miller: No doubt. When I was first promoted to become a leader of people at FranklinCovey, it was, well, maybe with my second promotion, I got demoted once at FranklinCovey, early on. And I went on to become the chief marketing officer, right? Second from the top. And you know, I'm diversity at FranklinCovey, right? A Catholic boy from Florida making it to the executive team in a Utah company is not exactly an easy feat and a wonderful journey to still have in that company. Whitney I was once promoted to become the leader of the education division overnight, wrongly promoted because that was the top salesperson to become the leader of salespeople. How often many people are promoted wrongly because they're an expert, individual contributor and as you know, there's an inverse correlation and what makes you a great individual producer or makes you a great leader of people? I'm promoted and I write about this in the first book. I talk about how one day I came in and had a two-day meeting. Everybody was late. They were late the first day. And they were late the second day, but I was prepared for them, so I went to the store and bought, I think, 12 copies of the Salt Lake Tribune and I took out the classified ads and I was ready to have my finest leadership moment with them, day two.

Scott Miller: They came in late and I slammed down. I can't say with a straight face. I slammed down the Salt Lake Tribune want ads. And I said to everybody, If you want a job from nine to five, Dillard's is hiring. And then as if they didn't get it, I gave everybody a highlighter. Well, they stood up and they walked out, and I thought it was like my finest moment, I am in charge. I will, I mean, it took me several minutes, hours, days to realize what an idiot I was, what leadership is and isn't. But I write about that in marketing mess or sorry management mess, the leadership success. But I have a lot of those that I very freely share. Similar to what Amazon wants, that I was just gratuitously sharing all my mistakes, I thought, I'm sorry, you see it that way. I was sharing these so that others who might think what I did was smart could say, No, no, that's horrifying. Don't do that. And here's why, right?

Whitney Johnson: So that was a mess. A hot mess.

Scott Miller: That was a hot mess.

Whitney Johnson: Is that a story that you had not told as much and you started to tell it more frequently being inspired by her?

Scott Miller: I had never told that before. Correct.

Whitney Johnson: You had never told it. Ok, well, you just segued us beautifully into Liz Wiseman, who you said wrote one of the most influential management books you've ever read. Tell us about how she influenced you.

Scott Miller: So I know Liz Wiseman to be a mutual friend of yours and mine for being a leader in a leadership company for 30 years, you'd think I would have mastered leadership. Of course, I came late in life to realize that leadership is about achieving results with and through other people. And that is a simple but profound statement. Leadership is about achieving results with and through other people, not rushing in and saving the day, not just doing it yourself because you're a martyr, not refusing to train people because you don't have the time. And Liz, what this book called Multipliers And is a long story about how I received the book, which I won't share right now, but you know, sometimes you read books and you realize, Oh my gosh, this book is about me. This book wrote my memoir, I do this. Liz just released a book called Impact Players. In fact, that book, I believe, is my memoir. I am an impact player. I resonated with it. Tim Scott wrote a book called Radical Candor that is my memoir, I resonated. Liz Wiseman wrote a book called Multipliers and I basically said, Oh s, this is not me, I am not a multiplier. I am what she calls an accidental diminisher, of which there are nine of them.

Scott Miller: And I checked about 8.9 Of the boxes and it was Liz's book Whitney that began my transition out of becoming the chief marketing officer. Now, if someone were to read my books, you would think I was a horrible leader. I didn't make it from the front line to the C-suite by being a horrible leader. I didn't build relationships over decades by being a horrible leader. I think I have a lot of great leadership characteristics that have improved over the decades. I think a lot of people who worked for me would tell you I was perhaps both the best and worst leader they ever had. But it was Liz's book around multiplying people is about not being the genius, but rather the genius maker of others. And until reading Liz's book, I thought my job as the chief marketing officer was to be the genius was to be the most well-read, the most credible, the most creative. There was a joke, Whitney, in the marketing division, of which I led close to 45 people. The best idea wins. As long as it's Scott's. It was reading Liz's book that realized I need a break, I need to step away.

Scott Miller: I need to recharge. I need to be an individual producer for some time, two decades of leading people, which, by the way, you know, can be unrelenting. It can be unrewarding, right? Leading people is tough. It's not for everyone. And so Liz's book multiplier has had a profound impact on me, and I think it gave those who worked for me a breath of fresh air because you know me, I'm a ferocious person. I have a large personality. It is hard to shine under me. And what's interesting is I came back after I left the marketing division, not in a huff. We had a great transition. It was all my idea. The CEO asked me to stay multiple times. He was probably glad I moved on. And I came back like nine months later to the actual physical division, expecting to see, you know, the carnage of my departure. Oh my gosh, Whitney. Their emails were better. Their postcards were better. Their manuals were better. The websites were better. They were able to unleash their creativity that I had been accidentally, hopefully holding back because it all had to be approved by me. And so. Thank you, Liz. My team thanks, Liz.

Whitney Johnson: I have noticed over the years that I have more mentors now than I did when I was younger, and I suspect that that is because I have become more mentor-able. And so my question for you is, do you think that you have, over the years, become more mentor-able?

Scott Miller: Oh, there's no question, right? Just from the sheer fact that I am more mature. I didn't say mature. I said more mature. I'm more deliberate. I'm more humble. Nothing about me screams humility. I have to work to be humble. I don't think I'm arrogant, but I have a healthy confidence. I once had an executive in the company say to me, Scott, you make too many declarative statements. And it was the only feedback this person has ever given me, a very wise person. It's all this person said. Scott, you make too many declarative statements and they are right. And so as I have become a parent, I got married in my 40s, I married, I was single for most of my life. I think I am definitely more mentor-able. And have more mentors because I'm more open to seeing someone's experience. And so what got them there for good or for bad? What got them into that bankruptcy? What got them to their 40th anniversary? What got them into their third divorce? I'm definitely more malleable and mentor-able because I think I'm more willing to check my ego. I'm a better listener. I'm not naturally a good listener. I have lots of talents, right? Lots of genius. But there are things that I'm more self-aware that are weaknesses in me. To try to build those, either minimize those or build them into strengths, I don't try to turn all my weaknesses into strengths. Marcus Buckingham gave me the gift to stop doing that 20 years ago.

Whitney Johnson: I do think it's interesting because you'll talk to some people and they'll say, I have so many mentors and then other people who say, I don't have any mentors. And I thought to myself, I wonder if we have more or less mentors because we're mentor-able and it's a function of us. It's not a function of the people out there.

Scott Miller: That may well be true, and I'll bet those who say they don't have mentors. I'll bet they do. They just maybe be defining it, maybe too narrowly. Or they haven't asked someone to be a mentor. Like I told you, I have. I have lots of mentors that haven't met me, but I deeply invested in their knowledge and their journey. So I think it all depends on how you define it. But also, you know, you may not have a mentor because you haven't asked. You may not. You may not have asked someone, Hey, could I ask you a question, could you mentor me on this? And you may need to set some parameters, right? We're not meant to me for five years. My request for mentorship will not end up in a request for you to invest a million dollars in my business or you'd open your Rolodex for me, right? You have to set some parameters on what that looks like and how long that will last and when it will perhaps end. Mentorship, there is both an art and a science to it both ways.

Whitney Johnson: That's such great advice. Probably 10 years ago, I wrote an article with Bob Nesta about mentoring and getting the mentoring equation right, and I love that you're scoping it. Will you mentor me on this specific thing? Here's why I want you to mentor me, why you're the right person, and then have it very like you said, scoped out so that it doesn't feel like it's indefinite. Great advice. You know, you said something that caught my attention. I want to ask you about this. On the one hand, you said it's been a really big challenge that you were a big stutterer. And I did not know that until I read your book and I was struck by that. And on the other hand, you have this tremendous amount of confidence. And I just wonder, how do those two play together? How do those two things coexist?

Scott Miller: You know, Dr. Daniel Amen is a good friend of mine, the famous psychiatrist, a neuroscientist. He's one of the mentors. And there is a diagnosis for someone who takes on someone else's personality. I think it's called adaptive personality disorder or something like that. Hopefully, that's not me, but here is my answer. When I was in my teens, I looked around my community. I'm from Orlando, Florida, and I looked around not consciously kind of just serendipitously and I formed in myself an opinion of what I thought success looked like. Right or wrong, I thought success looked like being the leader of a company, being the mayor, driving a nice car, having a nice home, having the respect of those around you. Some of that was healthy, some was unhealthy and so many ways I was a bit of a shy kid in my early teens. You know, always real thin and not super athletic and had no sense of identity for myself outside of just being a, you know, the butt of jokes at school, right? And so I looked around and I kind of made a conscious shift. Maybe not overnight, but rather quickly. I started to take on the personalities of people in town who I thought defined success, what the mayor acted like, what the top real estate broker in town acted like, what that person who was, you know, a mentor or an icon at my parish at church acted like. Perhaps that's wildly unhealthy. Or maybe it was very healthy. I don't know. Leave that to my future therapist. But I did take on what I thought were the strengths and personalities of those who I defined as being successful. Maybe that was maniacal, or maybe it was serendipity.

Whitney Johnson: I mean, that's what a role model is. You see someone in a role and they model for you the behavior you want. Ok, fascinating. All right. Let's go to the next mentor.

Scott Miller: You just need years of therapy. Thank you. Notice how quickly Whitney moved off that to your guests and listeners.

Whitney Johnson: Well, I just think it's so interesting. But we can go back to that. Do you want to stay there?

Scott Miller: No, no. Please. No. Please keep going. I also I tell you, I will tell you this. I, early on in life in junior high school, realized if I had to rank a successful competency, it was verbal communication. Early in life, I realized the most influential people, the most powerful people, the most respected people, were those that could communicate effectively their ideas. They could influence others. And so I worked hard on building my vocabulary, reading massive amounts, improving my articulation, working to slow down my speech pattern. I slur, as you can tell a lot of my words. And so I've worked very, very diligently to triumph this stutter, which, by the way, can be insulting to some people who have a more prolific stutter. Because stuttering is an absolutely debilitating issue for a lot of people, and for some people, it's neurological. For some, it's physiological. It's a very complicated affliction if you will. And I've had many parents reach out to me in desperation, and I feel guilty sometimes having them ask me to coach their children. I'm not a speech pathologist, I'm not a neurologist. I'm just a guy that learned to conquer my stutter. That doesn't mean it's transferable.

Whitney Johnson: In our framework of personal disruption, framework number three is embracing your constraints and how so often the thing that you think you don't have enough of is the very thing that you need to create. And what you're telling me is the fact that you weren't able to speak the way that you wanted to. You were very aware of it and started to figure out, what am I going to do this? How am I going to refine this? And it's turned out to be one of your superpowers. And what's interesting is that I have found one of the challenges for women in particular and organizations that aren't haven't practiced speaking and articulating their ideas. If you're like you said, if you can't articulate your ideas, it doesn't matter how good of a writer you are, you're sunk. You have to be able to talk.

Scott Miller: Or when you have a PhD or you're a Rhodes scholar or you have a disability, if you cannot effectively communicate your ideas verbally.

Whitney Johnson: Verbally, it can't just be in writing. You know what else is interesting? I don't know if you knew this we had not too long ago on the podcast Mike Rowe and he was a stutterer as well. Did you know that?

Scott Miller: No, I did not. Yeah, I hear President Biden was a stutterer also.

Whitney Johnson: So interesting. And then you turn into these great orators. Ok, next story. Trent Shelton, tell us a little bit about his story and how he's changed you.

Scott Miller: So Trent Shelton is one of two of the 30 master mentors that I deliberately chose to put their exact transcript from the podcast into the book. Kim Scott, the author of *Radical Candor*, which is probably my favorite story in the whole book, is from Kim Scott and her quote *Intervention* from Sheryl Sandberg *When They Both Worked at Google*. That's worth buying the book alone. Trent Shelton is a former NFL player he calls NFL not for long. He worked and played both on, I think, the Indianapolis Colts and the Seattle Seahawks. It's a riotous story of like back and forth and back and forth, and you're in and you're out. And Trent Shelton has gone on to be a massively influential social media icon, author, speaker, and he's a remarkable person. We have almost nothing in common in terms of our upbringing and our talents and in that, but Trent really. Trent brought to life something I heard once from one of Dr. Covey's friends, a former member of the Ugandan Football Association. Go figure! A man named Stone Kimbati. And Stone Kimbati once said in my presence, sometimes a disappointment leads to an appointment. And I think it is Trent Shelton who manifests that you can either have, you know, a sort of prison mentality or you can have an opportunity mentality, he uses different words about that, but Trent really talks about how your perspective is everything. And it has changed the way I look at everything in life. I'll have a client who I think I have a six-figure deal with or a book that I'm going to publish with X number of publishers and they choose to pass on it.

Scott Miller: And now I look at it to say, OK, so how am I going to use that ten-thousand hours, literally? How am I going to use those seven days? I was going to go to Mexico and how am I going to use that time on something better? He's talked to me about the power of your perspective. It really. I'm in a bit of a battle right now with a vendor that I've hired to work in my home. And it's an unusual level of angst. And I'm really wrestling with so how am I perceiving this? Am I perceiving this through my own lens or through their lens? What is it like to work for Scott Miller? What is it like to be an interior designer in the middle of a pandemic and a supply chain fiasco? What is it like? I'm trying to see it through their lens, not just through my lens, because through my lens I have demonized this person. I'm shocked, I'm offended. I'm, you know, thinking of litigation for the first time in my life. And so right now, I'm in a place that Trent has kind of taught me. Ok, let's shift your perspective. How can this disappointment turn into an appointment, I don't know where that will end. But the chapter, I think, is powerful. It's a transformational insight for me.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah, it goes to resilience and there are so much I mean, right now where so many people have been pushed off the S-Curve that they were on that they thought was so important and so valuable. And now what do we do at the bottom of a new S-Curve?

Scott Miller: It's perspective, right? If my biggest problem is my dining room table, my 12 custom chairs haven't arrived. That's a problem that I should be ashamed of, right? So I'm trying to be as instilling in me a level of

gratitude for what I have and what I don't and what's important to my life and maybe a little bit of humble pie around that as well.

Whitney Johnson: And it's a great problem to practice this on where the stakes are relatively low, right?

Scott Miller: Well, said.

Whitney Johnson: Rachel Hollis. She is not in the book, but you talked about her twice, so I suspect there's a thing or two you are learning from her. What have you learned?

Scott Miller: First, this is why you are such a competent podcast host because you've actually obviously read the book to discover that. So thank you for providing that respect to me. That is the hallmark of a great host that you took the time to read the book. Thank you for that. Second, Rachel Hollis has been a big influence in my life. She's had a tough two years, most self-created. This woman was, in my opinion, becoming one of the most influential people in America. And through a series of missteps, has dramatically diminished that influence. I'm still a fan. I'm still loyal to her. I like her. I respect her. Rachel Hollis wrote a book called *Girl Wash Your Face* that became the second biggest selling book in America in 2019, second only to *First Lady Michelle Obama*. And then she wrote a second book called *Girl Stop Apologizing*. Maybe I had them out of order, but these books sold tens of millions of copies. Rachel Hollis went in one day from making \$3000/speech to \$150,000/speech in one day, three thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. And everybody sees that what they don't see is *Smart Girl*. What they don't see is *Party Girl*. They don't see the first six books she wrote that no one bought. And so I like to use Rachel Hollis as an example of: there is no such thing as overnight success, there is overnight fame, which is often ill-gotten or fleeting. But there is no such thing as overnight success for those people who look at Rachel Hollis and they see massive success, but they don't see is the 15 years that she spent building her blog, building her podcast, building her brand.

Scott Miller: All they see is Bam. A million copies sold. And so everybody has got their version of *Smart Girl* and *Party Girl*, the books that she wrote as part of the first five or six that no one bought. So I use her as an example of no shortcuts in life. And if you want to build influence and success and leadership skills, it takes decades. Look at me. 25 years at the FranklinCovey Company, and I'm slowly building this influence. Rachel's made a lot of mistakes along the way, and she's owned up to many of them, and she's been pilloried in the press and by other people. I actually talked to her just a couple of weeks ago. Her marriage ended. I interviewed her former husband, Dave Hollis, two days ago. Her business imploded. She's building it back differently now. Many, many things to learn from Rachel, what to do and what not to do. For those who don't know Rachel, I am a raving Rachel Hollis fan, and I lived my life on a premise of pre-forgiveness. People make mistakes. When you are in the public eye, you are going to say things that are going to get you in trouble because you are speaking more than other people. So I operate on a life of pre-forgiveness. I tend to pre-forgive people until they do something that is unforgivable and that's never happened to me in my life. It has happened to others. I have a friend who is a rising author who is an academic and a PhD at a renowned university.

Scott Miller: A week ago, he posted on his Instagram a quote and wrote his name at the bottom. And he texted me a week later and asked me how to build his influence. He was watching my brand. I said #1, stop plagiarizing quotes on Instagram. The quote is clearly a quote from someone else, and I said two words. Rachel Hollis. Rachel Hollis accidentally co-opted a quote from Maya Angelou a couple of years ago, and she was taken down over it on social media in the middle of social justice and the Black Lives Matter movement, and she was culpable. I do not think she was intentional on what she did, but she and then she made some mistakes about not taking responsibility on her social team, which probably was an accurate statement, but not well received. And so I wrote to this person two words: Rachel Hollis. And then I called them up and said, you are an academic at an Ivy League institution. You cannot repeat this mistake. I know who said that put that person's name on it because you could lose your influence overnight accidentally. It was a good teachable moment. Rachel Hollis in many ways has given us a gift, not just from the things she's done right, but from the things she's done wrong. And I don't mean that to drag her down. I mean, to use that, as Dr. Covey would say, be a light, not a judge. Be a model, not a critic. And I'm trying to live my life that way every day.

Whitney Johnson: And so, so, so hard. I mean, just thinking through. I didn't know the whole story that you've just shared because I'm not reading the news all the time. Sometimes good, sometimes bad. But according to Ryan Holiday, that is a very good thing and you as well. I do think it's interesting, though, just thinking about what happens. You know, you talked about Matthew McConaughey of like, overnight, no one knew he was and then everybody knew who he was. And then Rachel Hollis, you know, three thousand dollars to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars and then back down. I mean, talk about an opportunity to get a sense of who you are and a sense of self and a crucible. You know, the thing is if she can come through this, then you know, there's this wonderful quote from Robert Bly and Marion Woodman. They wrote this book, and they said that the longer you stay basically, and I'm paraphrasing, the longer you stay in hell, the more powerful the voice. And so if she can come through this, it will be astonishingly important.

Scott Miller: You know, I don't know Rachel extraordinarily well. I know her moderately well. I have spent time alone with her in her office. I've been to her office and given a keynote to her, her staff. She said something that I thought was, I thought was indicative of her character, and she has millions of haters and millions of followers and lovers. For the haters of Rachel Hollis, I'd say pre-forgive Rachel Hollis. I sat in Rachel's office once after I gave a keynote to her. She called it a fireside chat to her team because she became a fan of my first book *Management Mess*. Rachel was leaving that morning to go do an appearance on *Good Morning America*, and she was rushing out of the office and I said, So where else are you headed? She said, Well, I have two keynote speeches. I'm making this up one in Columbus, Ohio, that wasn't the city for \$3000. And the next day, I go to Detroit for \$150,000. Those are the wrong cities, but those are the right price. And I said to her, Why are you doing that? She said, I made a commitment. She said I made a commitment that a year ago I told this organization, my rate was \$3000. I could have raised it, but she wasn't bragging. She wasn't grandstanding. And there are people who will, I'm sure, find some nefarious effort to attribute to her. I saw it as a sign of character alone in an office, talking that she was honored and privileged to have made this big jump. But she was honoring commitments to those for which she had made a \$3000 commitment to. And then the next day, it was \$150,000, and some might think I suffer fools lightly. You would be mistaken. After three decades in business, I think she is generally a good person that has made some public mistakes that all of us can learn from.

Whitney Johnson: So you recently made a decision to *Disrupt Yourself* to jump to a new S-curve. What are some things that you are learning as you have become an entrepreneur at the launch point of this new curve? What are some things that are surprising you? Challenging you? Reflect for a moment.

Scott Miller: This will sound like I am pandering to the host. But a year and a half ago, I interviewed Whitney Johnson on our podcast. She wrote at that point, two books that I was aware of one called *Build an A-Team*. Another was called *Disrupt Yourself*. And although I had had a lifetime of self-disruption; moving, buying, selling homes, changing careers. I'd always moved myself out of a job a good year before the boot was coming, I think you named it for me. I think like Seth Godin, your superpower is naming things that we live, but kind of can't address them until we put context around them. I think you're great at naming things. It was your book *Disrupt Yourself*, that I realized it was time to *Disrupt myself* and leave the comfort and safety of this executive role with stock options and a big salary and a lot of influence that I wanted to take the next 20 years of my professional career and do something more entrepreneurial, more fun, more challenging. It was you who gave me the permission to listen to what was going on in my life, this idea of the S-Curve and where I was, and where I was comfortable. You talked a lot about average career tenures. You talked a lot about where we are on the S-curve of learning and about that same time, another executive in the company said something that was horrifying, insulting, but piercingly accurate. And she said, you're never in the room when your career is decided for you. And it was profound, and I did not want my career decided for me by other people. So I stepped down after some great conversations and protracted negotiations with the CEO and the board, who I have exceptional relationships with this morning. To this day.

Scott Miller: What I have learned, and after 30 years and thirty-five people working for me, I could delegate a lot of things. I could take on a tremendous amount more than I was willing to execute on. I could make a lot of make and keep a lot of commitments because I had 35 people that, at the end of the day, I was the leader, and now I have about one full-time person and three part-time people. So I have to be much more deliberate about how carefully I can damage my own reputation by making but breaking commitments. So I have to be much more measured about my bandwidth. And I'll tell you, like a lot of entrepreneurs, when you leave a corporate job, you're craving some validation. You're craving people valuing you. And so I'm taking on a lot of things that I need to be thoughtful about,

right? Organizations that are licensing my content for six thousand people and people that want to write books with me in published books and TV programs and radio programs and reality series and host this and host that. I'm like, Yes, yes, yes, yes. People love me. And what's happening is I'm imploding, so I have to be much more deliberate. By the way, not everything is going well, so I don't want to make that sense that everybody wants Scott Miller. That ain't the case, but I've got to be more mindful of making and keeping commitments. I don't have thirty-five people at my beck and call right now to do everything for me. I guess I'm learning the power of capacity, right? And how important my reputation is based on doing what I say I'm going to do.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. And it sounds like there are two things that are happening. Number one is deciding what you're going to do.

Scott Miller: It's true.

Whitney Johnson: Sorting through, like you said, there's so many opportunities and having gone through the same thing that you did of leaving corporate America, where you've got all these resources and also wanting to be validated. I remember having that experience if it was, you know, Whitney Johnson, Merrill Lynch and then it was Whitney Johnson and you, you know, any time anybody wants to do something, you know, they like me, they like me, in the words of Sally Field. For those of you who are old enough to remember that. And so you have to make the choice. But then, as you said, don't make so many choices that you can't keep the commitments

Scott Miller: And Whitney if you know this, but I'm in a very interesting situation because although I left the company as an officer, I became a contractor on a multi-year contract where I am still leading eight people in the organization. I'm still leading the thought leadership strategy. So their books division reports to me; public relations reports to me as a contractor. And so I'm still responsible for the careers and the growth and the coaching and the performance conversations of nine people as a contractor. And I have to be very careful about not using the company's resources to support my own business, but I'm still an author for the company. I'm still leading their podcast, so I'm in this sort of lock one place, you know, to make sure that everything is very ethical, that everything is very deliberate, that I don't seem self-serving, but I'm also growing my own brand and division outside the company, but not at the expense of the company. So I have placed myself in a phenomenal and very precarious position that I have to be extraordinarily mindful of because people are watching me inside and outside the company. It's a great opportunity and I have to be really deliberate around making wise decisions as you just said. Sometimes a clean break is better than not a clean break.

Whitney Johnson: Oh yeah, but to your point, there are a lot of advantages that go with that. So being a wise steward, learning about capacity, learning what to say yes to, what to say no to, lots of great lessons. What was most useful to you in this conversation?

Scott Miller: I think you gave me permission to model my successful behaviors after other successful people. I think my entire life has simply been an aggregation. I once read somewhere that less than like 0.0001% of all humans have ever had an original thought in their life. And that was insulting to me when I got over it and realized I am an aggregator. I'm a master aggregator. I understand copyright. I understand trademark. I understand attribution. I understand cultural appropriation. And I think you've given me permission at age 53 to be proud and comfortable, perhaps patterning my successes after others.

Whitney Johnson: Any final thoughts as we wrap?

Scott Miller: You're a great host. You have lowered my blood pressure. You have such a nice cadence about you. I'm honored to be your friend, Whitney literally. Your book *Disrupt Yourself* is phenomenal. I had just received your new book, *Smart Growth*, and I'm reading that this weekend because you're coming up as one of the rare second appearances on the leadership. So, I believe your book lands in January, January 11th, 2022. Excited to read this book and anticipating some great nuggets as well. So, thanks for the opportunity. Thanks for shining your spotlight onto me and to master mentors.

Oh, you are welcome. Thank you again. Four key takeaways from my conversation with Scott. Number one. Hard work isn't everything, but it is huge. Scott has interviewed many successful and influential people, and while their backgrounds vary, there's always a common thread. Hard work. And yes, as Scott learned from Bob Wittman, thinking is a legitimate business activity. There's also an abundance mentality. They have no scarcity of ideas and projects going, and they are genuinely interested in helping people they'll never meet.

Number two, you can't have wisdom without vulnerability. Scott shared so many examples of why we learn more from people who have made mistakes. This is somewhat counterintuitive. History is written by the winners, and we want to know what successful people did, right? But as Scott points out, behind every Matthew McConaughey or Rachel Hollis or successful town mayor, there are many bad movies or books or politicians that no one has ever read or voted for. Learning from mistakes, our own and others', combined with hard work is what will get you there.

Number three, am I an accidental diminisher? Scott was at the top of his game as CMO, his bosses loved him. And on paper, he was a great leader. But true leadership is about achieving results with and through other people. Scott had to do a lot of work to figure out he was standing in the way of his team. It was hard for people to shine underneath him, and when he stepped away from being the boss and became an individual contributor, everyone had a better time. This is probably one of the hardest lessons to learn as a high achiever, but if we heed Scott's advice, we can uncover it. Talk little, listen a lot, and guide others in achievement.

Number four, it's time to redefine mentorship. We live in an extraordinary age when a podcaster, a YouTuber, a TV host, an author, you name it can be your mentor, even if you don't know them personally. If you think you don't have mentors, you probably do. You just need to change the definition. But for those people we do know personally. Don't be afraid to ask for mentorship. This shouldn't be an open-ended question, but a clearly defined scope. Can you mentor me in writing or accounting or whatever skill you're after? We'll include a link in the show notes to the article I reference titled [Get the Mentoring Equation Right](#).

If you enjoy this episode, you may also want to listen to Karen S. Carter on how to receive mentorship: Episode 42. Liz Wiseman, the author of *Multipliers* on Episode 102. Micro, who also talked about his stutter: Episode 231. And finally, given his reference to vulnerability, you may want to give Brené Brown another listen. Episode 189. Thank you again to Scott Miller for being our guest and to you for listening.

Thank you to our team. Matt Silverman, Producer; Whitney Jobe, audio engineer and editor; Steve Ludwig, assistant producer; and Cassidy Simpson, production assistant.

I'm Whitney Johnson.

And this is Disrupt Yourself.