

# Disrupt Yourself Podcast

## EPISODE 275: REGGIE FILS-AIMÉ

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, disrupting who you are now to slingshot into who you want to be. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson. Before we begin this week, here's a quick dive into the email bag. You can always email me at [wj@whitneyjohnson.com](mailto:wj@whitneyjohnson.com) because I read and respond to every single note. Here's one from Deanna. She says, "I listen to your podcast, and I particularly enjoy how you connect the guests with your work, your book, and research. How do you develop the questions you ask? What system do you use?" Well, first of all, thank you for the compliment, Deanna, and let me see if I can answer your question. For starters, I always want to know the essence of a person. Who are they? What is their heartbeat, if you will? And how do I uncover that? So, my first question is usually about a formative or crucible experience. This allows you, our listener, and me to feel connected to them. I also spend at least 2 hours preparing, sometimes much more if they have a book. I read their book so that I feel that I'm being respectful of the person I'm speaking to and of their time. There's always an arc to the interview. First, get to know the person, then focus on the topic at hand. Why did I invite them on the podcast? I'm always looking for how what they have to say will help you grow. How will it help you move along the S Curve? Then we go to some personal reflections, giving them an opportunity to reflect on the conversation and then wrap up with takeaways, my reflections. Every interview is unique, but this provides a roadmap so that we don't have to start from scratch. As for advice to other interviewers or podcasters, don't stick to the roadmap too much. If the guest says something intriguing, I'll stop them and ask for more. Basic human curiosity will make any conversation better. Thanks again for all of your emails, podcast reviews and

discussions on social media. Knowing that I'm having a conversation with our guest and with you makes it so much more fun.

**Whitney Johnson:** Now on today's podcast, we invite you to level up with Reggie Fils-Aimé, the former president of Nintendo of America. During his 16-year tenure with the company, he became its public face in the West, and video game fans around the world looked forward to his presentations and game announcements because they could tell he loved Super Mario Brothers, Pokémon, and The Legend of Zelda as much as they did. Reggie has a bit more street cred than your average video game executive. But also, Reggie presided over a disruptive time in games. The industry was stagnating, and the market was narrow. Nintendo took some big swings to bring new audiences into the fold. The result was some of the best-selling game systems in history the Nintendo DS, the Wii and the Switch. And even if you're not a gamer, which I'm not. Chances are you've encountered one of these in the wild. After his retirement from Nintendo in 2019, Reggie wrote a book titled *Disrupting the Game*. This recounts the successes, the risks, the mistakes, and the many mentors he's found along the way. After chatting with Reggie, it became very clear why so many people love hearing from him. I know you will, too. Tell us about a formative experience, something that helps us have a better sense of who you are.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Sure. Well, first, Whitney, thank you for, for the opportunity to spend time together. When I consider my formative experiences, I really start with my decision to pivot off of what I thought was going to be a career in banking and finance. And instead, my decision to join Procter and Gamble and their brand management program. To put this in perspective. All of my key classes at Cornell University focused on finance, accounting, yes, business management, but really a heavy orientation on finance. I was a teaching assistant for a finance course. I interned at banks. I saw in my mind's eye I was going to go be a banker. And if that involved going off and getting an MBA, I was going to do that. And it really was a left turn to be invited to interview for a job at Procter and Gamble in their brand management program. And it was a left turn because at Cornell they were almost exclusively interviewing candidates with MBAs for the role. And the only way to be recommended to be interviewed was through a personal recommendation from a faculty member. And to this day, I don't know who recommended me, but I was recommended. The more I learned about the role, the more I became interested in the role. Fortunately for me, I was, I was given a job offer and that decision to pivot off of a career in finance, to really a career in business, business management or marketing was a defining moment. I would not have been the senior person at Nintendo of America if it not had been for that pivotal choice and that moment in time.

**Whitney Johnson:** And someone who recommended you. It's interesting that you never found out who it was.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** You know, in fairness, I, I never really pushed. And what's interesting is so now jump maybe five, six years later still at Procter and Gamble. But now I'm heading the on-campus recruiting for Procter and Gamble as a senior executive at P&G, going back to my alma mater. And so, I certainly saw the process from the other side and the wide range of different professors that you talk to and how you really look for multiple recommendations before inviting an undergrad candidate to, to be part of the panel. So, I saw it from the other side, but I never learned which of my professors, which of the people I potentially worked for on campus was the one who recommended me. Maybe it was all of them that I had spent time with.

**Whitney Johnson:** All right. Let's go to a crucible experience. So, something that really forged you as a leader, you're now in the workplace, something that was challenging, that shaped you?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** This would be again from my time at Procter and Gamble. And so, at this point, I had been with the company roughly, roughly six, seven years. I had reached that brand manager level, which is just so critically important without a graduate degree, getting to that MBA level really was my ticket. I would never have to go back to get an MBA. I could really continue progressing forward. In my career. I was working on a brand called Crisco Shortening and I had worked on Crisco earlier in my career, and now I was brought back to this brand as a, as a more experienced brand manager. And this is a business that generated tremendous profit for the food and beverage sector that I was part of. But the volume on this business had been declining and had been declining for years and years and years. So, here I am, dropped into this business with a mandate to turn it around to drive profit-driven growth. And I was fortunate that I had a great team of folks working on the business. I came with a lot of

knowledge of how to drive businesses forward from my prior experience. And I knew the business, I knew the brand. So, we created some really compelling television advertising. We created a program that used recipes to get younger consumers knowledgeable about, about shortening.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** What is this? What is this? Cooking fat. Everyone really understood what an oil could be used for, but what do I use a shortening for? And we paired the advertising and the recipes into a direct response program that drove tremendous growth in tests. And so, here we are going into the peak selling season for the brand. And I made a critical decision to start the advertising early. By the course of about four weeks. Now, this doesn't sound like a huge decision, but first, it was a decision I wasn't authorized to make on my own. And second, by jumping the advertising early, it moved the spending into an earlier quarter. So, imagine the spending happens on a business and with marketing initiatives, the volume tends to happen later. So, the spending happens in one quarter, drives negative profit for the brand, and has a negative impact on the sector that I'm in. And all of this done on my own authority. It was both chaos and a situation where I was being reprimanded by my management because I essentially did the cardinal sin at Procter Gamble. I overspent my budget with the learning for me was on a number of fronts. First, I took complete responsibility for this. There were questions put forward to our advertising agency, did they do this?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** They were going to be potentially fired from, from the business, which is a huge deal in the Procter Gamble culture. So, I made it clear I did this on my own authority. I owned the issues involved in the intervening time of making the decision and the negative profitability coming to light. I had been promoted to now there was talk of do we rescind the promotion and, and what potential impact does that have on my career? So, massive issue. The learning of taking responsibility. The learning of really articulating why I did it, which was because I was convinced that it was the right thing to do. And I was convinced in my decision that it would be the right thing to do. And I was impatient. So, I learned an important lesson around patience as well in terms of how to move business ideas forward. But it was a critical learning experience for me that I took forward. In the end, it really did lead to the end of my career at P&G. I left probably a year later, but it also reinforced for me what, what excites me about a business. I love growth. I love bringing disruptive ideas into the marketplace. And I have a passion for, for moving businesses forward.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah. And thinking about that, too. One of the things that, that caught my attention was that it actually worked. So, your idea was a good one, but something that you brought out and just kind of to, to emphasize for our listeners is that you realized, and you did this in the future, so you did learn your lesson, the importance of getting buy-in for other people that you want. When you want to do something disruptive, you're disrupting everybody else, and you've got to make sure you're bringing them along. That's what I heard you say in your book. Is that accurate?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Absolutely. It is the importance of bringing other people along, clearly communicating what it is you want to do, why you believe it's right. Selling that idea, dealing with objections. Right. Objections to, to disruptive ideas happen all the time. How do you deal with that in a positive and constructive way? These were all critical lessons that I had to and did apply to all of my future experiences.

**Whitney Johnson:** You've had a very storied career. We are not going to go through all of your S Curves of your career. So, let's now jump forward to Nintendo because that's what everybody is really waiting for. Joining Nintendo in some ways was disruptive. It was you know; it was considered a declining sort of on the wane. What was your calculus in making that decision?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Up until that point, I had 20-plus years of marketing, branding, business-building experience. I knew how to turn around businesses. I knew how to grow them aggressively at that point in time. I also had roughly, roughly ten-plus years of gaming experience. I was an avid gamer. I had played the earliest systems in my junior high and high school days. I played arcade games during my time at Cornell. I spent time away from the gaming industry as I was building my career at P&G, but, but got back into gaming. So, I knew the industry as a player, and I knew Nintendo's franchises as a player. And I was convinced that based on my knowledge as a player plus based on my capabilities as a business executive. I was convinced that I could bring new and novel ideas to the business to drive it forward. There was one thing that I needed to be convinced of, and I needed to be convinced that I would have a partner, a receptive ear at Nintendo, who would at least hear out my ideas and ideally be someone I could partner

with in pushing the ideas forward. And so, true to my nature of being disruptive during my recruiting process, at the point where I had been given a job offer to be the head of sales and marketing for Nintendo of America. At that point, I asked to have a video conference with the global head of Nintendo, a gentleman by the name of Satoru Iwata, and I wanted to meet with him in order to have a better understanding for him to understand his perspective, to start building a relationship, I needed to be convinced that I could work with this person, sell my ideas in a positive way. Coming back and learning from that Crisco experience. My closest advisors were actually telling me not to take the job, but I saw potential and I saw an ability to make a real impact at the company.

**Whitney Johnson:** And disruptors play where no one else is playing. So, let's talk about Clay Christensen. He obviously influenced me as I co-founded the Disruptive Innovation Fund with him and his son, and you talked about his work and how it influenced your business. Talk to us about that for a moment.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** So, this is the early 2000s. At this point in time, only about one out of every three people are playing video games. So, so video games. More of an insular passion at this point in time. Nintendo saw an opportunity to expand the gaming universe, get more diverse people playing video games. So, younger players, female players, older players over 50 years old, you know, a very nontraditional type of video game player. And Nintendo believed that the key to unlocking this opportunity was not the current vectors that the industry was pushing on. The industry was pushing on better visual graphic capabilities. They were pushing on more lifelike visuals. They were pushing on more complicated control schemes. Nintendo saw the opportunity in simplifying the game, having a simplified controller, simplified ways of consumers interacting with the content. Creating very different types of content versus what was traditionally being made. And as we were thinking about how to best communicate what it was that we were doing, we leveraged Clayton's book, *Innovator's Dilemma*, as a way to explain the choices that we were making, because we knew that in order for us to be successful, all of our constituents needed to understand exactly what we were doing. Our constituents being our business partners like Electronic Arts and Activision, our employees, everyone needed to understand what it was that we were doing. And *Innovator's Dilemma* was a great way to explain how pushing on different vectors as a way to innovate was a way that, that made sense for us and, and was a worthy approach. What was really interesting is I ended up getting into debates with, with fans, and with other business executives that no Reggie, you should use a different business book. That better explains what Microsoft and Sony are doing. But it was a great way to demonstrate the depth of our thinking using his book.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah, I love that. And clearly, that Crisco experience paid off.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Well, it did. Right. So, the recognition that we have to communicate, that we have to bring people along in order for our intentions to be well understood and in order for others to join in the journey that we're trying to take.

**Whitney Johnson:** I'd like to just for a moment, as you said, you're, you're an avid gamer. And one of the questions that sometimes comes up is parents say, oh, my children are playing you know, they're playing too many games. And I would love to hear your thoughts on what are some of the skills that you find gamers develop. And when you're, when you were interviewing people, you thought, oh, if they're a good gamer, that means they're good at X. Can you talk us through some of that?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Sure. So, I mean, look, first off, from a parent's point of view, everything in moderation is always an answer, right?

**Whitney Johnson:** Yes, that's fair.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** In terms of video games, you know, specific video games really develop and enhance some key capabilities. So, there are video games that help you in your strategic thinking skills, literally helping you think through. Do I do choice A or choice B? Each one has different ramifications. Each one has different benefit versus cost type of issues. Thinking through these choices is the core in strategy and strategic thinking, and there are some key games that focus on this as a key part of their component. For younger players, there are video games that help you with your reading skills. When I was at Nintendo, I had parents sending us letters about how they really enjoyed that their kids were playing Pokémon. So, this is a game where you have to read text in order to progress through

the game. And they highlighted your game, helped my child learn to read faster and more effectively. So, games that help you with your communication and working with and alongside other people. So, these are all core skills that are developed, dare I say, enhanced through certain video games that, that are real lifelong skills.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, in our work, we talk about the S Curve of learning as a model for what growth looks like. So, you've got the launch point where growth feels slow. The sweet spot where it feels fast and it is faster than mastery, where you taper off, the growth tapers off. And so, what I'd like to do is ask you a couple of questions. The first is about a launch point. So, you say that sometimes you don't start strong. You're at the launch point with an important colleague. Would you tell the story about Flip Morse and your recommendations for how to flip or turn a situation around when you don't start off strong with someone?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Flip Morse, who's now a dear, dear friend and someone who I partnered extraordinarily well with during my time at Nintendo. But when I was first interviewing for the executive vice president of sales and marketing for Nintendo of America, Flip took me to lunch and Flip's role was head of Human Resources and I have a passion for developing people, helping people progress in learning new skills and new capabilities. So, I was asking the head of HR around people development skills and focus and how, how that's managed at Nintendo of America. And he literally said to me, Reggie, we don't do much of that here. And I was taken aback. So, Flip, please tell me more. And his orientation was, look, we're a subsidiary of a Japanese company. It's not an area that we've put in a lot of focus. We have long-term employees and that's okay. We value that. And literally, it led to a debate over lunch, right, by the candidate with the head of HR around how I fundamentally believe that the approach they were taking was wrong.

**Whitney Johnson:** You're interviewing for the job.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** I'm interviewing for the job telling the head of HR that I fundamentally disagree with the approach that they're taking.

**Whitney Johnson:** Okay, good.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** And you know, I took the time to explain my point of view in terms of, look, you know, as a leader, the way I think about things is there's so much that I personally can do. But if I'm really effective in positively affecting five people, ten people, 100 people, we could do just so much more. So, my job as a leader is to increase the capability of the organization through learning and development and coaching and mentoring. That is my role. Yes, my role is also to make tough decisions. The thorniest, most difficult decisions that rise to leadership. You have to be prepared to make those. But you, you need to focus on people and people development. So, as you can expect, we got off to a bit of a rocky start. Luckily, right as he and I worked together. What I came to understand was that it wasn't that Flip didn't believe this stuff. But Flip didn't have a passionate ally pushing forward on these ideas that he could then take and sprinkle across the entire organization to get buy-in, to get momentum, and to move it forward. And so, as I joined the company for my business unit, I started to do all the things that I believed in. I put in place a mentoring program. I put in place a more focused developmental program. We talked about people's strengths and weaknesses, understanding that we all have strengths and weaknesses, right? We're not all perfect. And what he did, and I'll give him credit for this, is he saw this and then began to sprinkle it into other parts of the business. And when, when I was promoted to president and he clearly began supporting me in that role, focusing on how we could best attract, develop, retain, grow our people in our organization. And it turned into a wonderful partnership and a wonderful effort in growing the organization. It all started from really clarity in what I was trying to do. A clarity in what his concerns were and what his past obstacles were, and then working together to solve those and to move it forward.

**Whitney Johnson:** It's interesting, too, that you say that it sounds like at some level there had been a bit of helplessness and he was looking for a passion ally and you became that and so, you were able to work together. Now my question is, who forgave whom first?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** I believe that I forgave him first if you will. But I think it really was all mutual. I mean, it really did come down to.

**Whitney Johnson:** You both wanted it to work.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Exactly. We both desperately wanted it to work. We saw the challenges in growing this organization. We saw the challenges and making sure people had the skills and capabilities to move forward. He and I were passionate that as we retired and we both retired on the same day, that as we retired that we were leaving behind the organization in a much better place than when we had first joined.

**Whitney Johnson:** I love that you both wanted it to work, and so, you both made it work. All right. So, you just talked about retirement when you announced that you would retire from Nintendo. You took people by surprise. How do you know? So, this goes to the question of being at the top of an S Curve. How did you know that it was time to go?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** For me, there were a couple of things that happened. First, my, my good friend and my mentor throughout my time at Nintendo had passed away in 2015. This is Satoru Iwata, the global president of Nintendo. And he and I worked side by side in the launch of industry-defining products like the Nintendo DS, the Wii, and he and I worked together on the formative work for the Nintendo Switch, which is dominating the marketplace today. With his passing it really for and he passed as a young man, you know he was in his early fifties. It forced me to think about the type of legacy I wanted to leave behind at Nintendo. It forced me to think about it's not all about work. That I want to affect others in a broader way. I wanted to do things like teach. I wanted to do board service. I wanted to just affect a broader swatch of the population than I was able to as a Nintendo executive. So, his passing was the first piece. And then this desire to do more, this desire to affect more. This desire really to also give back and to help that next generation of leaders grow in their own way and develop in their own capacity. Those were the things for me that drove the decision and said, you know, it's time. I need to do this when I'm still young and I still have energy. I need to do this when I can find unique opportunities to give back. I also have a strong passion in education, recognizing that it was education and my intellectual curiosity that led to my own trajectory and personal growth. So, that's how I knew that, that it was time for me to do something else and to continue in my own personal journey, but on a different path.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, Mr. Iwata is passing away, was kind of this wake-up call of caused you to reevaluate. And then as you started to evaluate, you said, I think there's something more for me to do. The sense of I'm, I've achieved what I wanted to achieve at some level, and I need to keep climbing. And keep climbing was to give back.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Exactly right. And, you know, to keep climbing. Yes. To give back. But also wanting to learn new skills board service is a completely different skill than being the executive in charge. So, I wanted to develop those skills. I wanted to spend more time at the front of the classroom and sharing my knowledge in that way. You know, interestingly, when I retired, I didn't envision myself writing a book. That's something that came together later. But also writing the book and doing speeches are just another way for me to share my thoughts, my principles, my lessons, but again, in a much bigger and broader way.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, Reggie, you've intimated, but what S Curve are you on now and where are you on this curve? Are you at the launch point, the sweet spot, or mastery?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** You know, I would say in my current journey. Right. And so, I'll define my current journey as empowering the next generation of leaders. I would say that I'm not right at my launch point, but I'm not yet at my mastery either. And I say that because while I have a lot of experience in public speaking and while I have a lot of business experience. You know, I'm still early in defining how I take those lessons and impart them in a way that's going to be powerful. How do I impart them in a way that others will be able to take? What's the lesson versus the big uber story? In the book, I frame it as the "So What?" I want people to take away the so what of a story. The so what of my journey. The so what of my successes and failures and be able to apply it to their own journey. So, I've launched. I'm not quite yet at mastery yet, but I feel I am on my way.

**Whitney Johnson:** Tell us about your famous first words. What are they and what's the story behind those words?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** So, imagine being up on stage in front of 1,000 people and saying, "My name is Reggie. I am about kicking ass and taking names and we're about making games." That's how I kicked off Nintendo's 2004 press

conference. At this point, people had heard my name, but they didn't know who this, this Reggie person was. Planting a definitive flag about a new face for Nintendo, a new approach for the company, a level of aggressiveness and grit in how we were going to move forward. The back story of how this came to pass is that I knew as I was coming into the company that my role was a very senior and visible role. I knew that I would have to play a key part in the public persona that is Nintendo. And that E3, which is the big industry conference for video games, would be my opportunity to make an impact. And almost immediately with my hiring, I spent time understanding the products that we would be launching. I spent time looking at past presentations, and I spent time with a dear friend who worked at our PR agency, a gentleman by the name of Don Variu. He and I began crafting what would be the presentation and the speech that would be delivered at E3.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** And, you know, imagine this is a 60-minute conference with me doing what was about 85% of the speaking at this conference, this brand-new person. So, with that as the background. We, we started framing what it was that we wanted to do. And Nintendo at this E3 press conference had a number of great products that we were unveiling. We're unveiling the Nintendo DS, which went on to sell over its lifespan 150 million units of hardware, one of the best-selling systems in gaming's history. We also were unveiling footage for a brand-new game and The Legend of Zelda franchise, a very beloved franchise. So, we knew we had the goods to back up a very aggressive stance, but it needed to be delivered with gusto. So, those were the famous first words, the background and how we got there. And the impact was immediate in terms of industry fans and executives kind of standing up and taking notice in terms of, wow, who is this person? Wow, this is a different type of Nintendo. Wow. They really showed off some great new products. And it was, it was the beginning of, of a trajectory for the company that that was fantastic to be part of.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, Reggie, do you remember how you felt? Did you feel at all like were you like, yeah, I'm going to say this or was there a little piece of you that thought, whoa, I am. I'm, I'm putting myself out there. Do you remember how you felt?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Oh, it was clearly that I was putting myself out. I was, I was passionate that it was the right thing to do.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** I was confident in my delivery of the, the messaging, even though as recently as, as 24 hours before I delivered that line, we were we're making edits. The closing part of that line were where I said, we're about making games. Earlier on in rehearsals, it was, I am about making games. And what we were finding is that that wasn't working because I'm not a developer. I don't write code. That's not what I do. It is we. It is all of Nintendo and our business partners. We're the ones making great games. And so that little change, you know, 24 hours prior was critically important. But I knew I was putting myself out there. I didn't know that I would become a meme. Right. And that that was completely unplanned. But we knew what we were doing in terms of the passion, the push, the change in tone was completely calculated.

**Whitney Johnson:** You've had some great mentors like Mr. Iwata, who you've spoken about. What's interesting to me, though, is that you've had not just from Mr. Iwata, but many great mentors since you were young. What makes a person mentorable?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Over time, I recognized that, for me, I needed a couple of things to happen. First, I did need to stumble. And what I mean by that is here I am. I get hired into this prestigious company. I'm doing things as a 22-year-old that my peers are 28, 29, 30 years old. I was pretty full of myself, and I needed to stumble. I needed to stub my toe a few times to be ready to accept perspective and insight from other people. So, that's the first thing I would say as a potential mentee is you really need to be ready to accept the perspective of others and accept it as a gift. Accept it that it is well intended, but your mind needs to be open to accept that, that perspective. And then the second thing you need to do is you need to ask for that support. I was in a situation in my career a pretty tough situation, and I actually made the mistake of not asking for support. And this is after I had had a couple really good mentors. I knew the value of mentorship. But for whatever reason, at that point in time, I did not reach out for help. It was a critical missed opportunity. So, that's the other piece of learning that I took away is you need to reach out.

You need to be asking for that support in addition to, to being willing to receive it. So, both, both parts need to be there, I believe, for that, that mentor-mentee relationship to exist.

**Whitney Johnson:** I've had the thought that if people are not if they're not being mentored if they're not getting advice, then they probably need to wonder what are they doing that people aren't willing to give them advice because we want, we want to invest in people. And so, it sounds like you did get to that place where people were willing to say, okay, he's going to listen, and I think he can be successful. So, I'm going to tell him what I'm thinking.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. I also think and this is where an organization can help, I personally have put in place mentor-mentee types of programs. And the thing that I learned was forcing those couples together didn't always work. But what did work was a signal to the organization that we value mentor-mentee relationships, and we encourage you as a mentee to look for a mentor. More seasoned executives, we encourage you to be receptive when someone reaches out and asks you for that type of support. That was incredibly powerful as we put in place these formal programs.

**Whitney Johnson:** What's been useful for you in this conversation?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Thinking deeply about my personal S Curve has been really instructive for me. I think about S Curves in a business, right? You think about, okay, I'm going to launch it. It's going to go through its high growth phase, then it's going to plateau. And then we need to go through that cycle again. Thinking it as a personal journey has been really helpful for me in processing that. So, thank you for that. Thank you for that, that thought. And then also spending time talking about mentorship, the value of mentorship. I cobble together a number of thoughts that I've heard over my time. And, you know, differentiating between a coach, a mentor, and a sponsor is something that I've given a lot of thought to. Right. A coach has done it before. Right. So, they're there instructing you in how to do something. A mentor is giving you that, that advice, that perspective. And then the way I use the word sponsor, the sponsor is the person who talks about you when you're not in the room. And being thoughtful that you need all three in life, not just in a career. You need all three in life to be effective.

**Whitney Johnson:** I love that person who talks about you when you're not in the room. Any final thoughts?

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Again, thank you for the opportunity to, to talk about my, my lessons and my principles. I really, really enjoy the conversation. And loved, loved, loved to be now aware of the relationship you had with Clayton. I wasn't aware of that before we started the conversation.

**Whitney Johnson:** Reggie, thank you.

**Reggie Fils-Aimé:** Thank you so much.

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I had a lot of fun talking with Reggie and found his experience so insightful. Here are three takeaways. Number one don't be afraid to ask for support. As you heard, Reggie made his share of mistakes along the way. He doesn't regret them, but he does wish he'd had the courage to ask for help when he needed it. We're so resistant to this. We don't want to look weak. We often don't even want to admit we made mistakes in the first place. But asking for help opens the door to one of the most important things on our journeys, mentorship, sponsorship.

Which brings me to number two. Plant the seeds of this mentorship, this sponsorship early and often. I like what Reggie said about company culture, sometimes pairing people up into mentor relationships. It's not effective but creating opportunities for it to happen organically across your entire organization can have big results. Even in his early days with Nintendo, Reggie pushed for better career development resources. The HR leader wanted it too, but he just didn't have an ally to help him push. Reggie then found a way to instill those values of having these allies as president, and Flip gave it momentum.



Number three, inclusion. It pays off. When Reggie joined Nintendo, there was common wisdom about who a gamer was, it was a narrow definition. The game's there for everyone. As we've learned from many of our guests, inclusion, and diversity of thought has a big payoff for business. Nintendo knew that older people, younger people, girls, and women were hungry for great games, too. Their investment there widened the market for the entire industry.

For more on asking for support, listen to [Episode 185](#) with Ben Shewry. He's an award-winning chef in Australia. For more on mentoring, listen to Scott Miller, [Episode 248](#). And on the topic of playing where no one else is playing, taking those disruptive steps. Listen to my solo episode. [Episode 100](#). Take the right risks. Speaking of asking for support, if you enjoyed this podcast, please subscribe and share it with a colleague or two. It would be lovely of you and very much appreciated by me. Thank you again to Reggie Fils-Aimé for being our guest. Thank you to you for listening. Thank you to our producer, Matt Silverman, audio engineer and editor Whitney Jobe, and production assistant Stephanie Brummel.

I'm Whitney Johnson.

And this is Disrupt Yourself.