

The Brain Behind Sharpie, Graco & Expo: Kris Malkoski on Building Billion-Dollar Brands

42 MIN · YOUTUBE · [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=X6MHJ2LZ8JG](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6MHJ2LZ8JG)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6mHJ2LZ8Jg>

SUMMARY

Chris Malcoski, CEO of New Brands, shares insights from her extensive leadership experience in consumer packaged goods. Growing up on a Nebraska farm instilled in her a strong work ethic, prioritization skills, and the importance of making a difference, which she applies in her leadership style today. She emphasizes the value of human connection, clear expectations, and feedback in fostering a productive work environment.

- *Chris highlights the significance of prioritization learned from farm life, focusing on what truly matters.*
- *She believes that making a difference in one's work leads to job security and team success.*
- *Chris stresses the importance of modeling desired behaviors as a leader to foster a positive company culture.*
- *She observes a generational shift in communication skills due to technology, advocating for more face-to-face interactions.*
- *Feedback is viewed as a critical tool for growth, both for individuals and teams.*
- *Chris emphasizes the need for clear objectives and leadership accountability in driving organizational transformation.*
- *She connects effective leadership to parenting, advocating for fair expectations and consequences.*
- *Chris believes that investing in people is as crucial as business strategies for long-term success.*

Elcome folks to inside the leader's mind where what's in the way becomes the way. I'm your host David Susan. I am so excited for my guest today. You know my focus is all about human connection and especially in the area of leadership and really getting into the head of of leaders and human connection and leadership and what they do. So my guest today is Chris Macaus. See I already messed it up. Chris Chris Malcowski.

Close. Malcolski. How do you say it? Let's help me out there. >> Malcoski. >> Akoski. Malikausski. All right. Malcoski. There we go. She's an international been an international business leader for more than 20 years in public and private branded consumer CPG. So consu CPG for everyone is >> consumer packaged goods. >> Consumer packaged goods and hardline companies. She is seen as a strategic change leader and has successfully grown, transformed or integrated brands and companies to drive meaningful revenue and growth. She's currently the CEO of learning and development at New Brands, managing global brands including Graco, Sharpie, Papermate, Expo, Daimo, Nuke. Did I say that right? Nuke Nuke and Elmer's. She has driven consistent performance and operating income growth at Newell and is leading the transformation of the company including improved operational efficiencies, global brand growth, increased topto customer partnerships and higher impact innovations, AI integration and supply chain consolidation. As member of the new executive team, Chris oversees a,000 employees, 3.2 billion in revenue. Chris previously served in leadership roles at Ark International, World Kitchen, Sears Holding Company, Ubiquiti Brands, and Proctor

and Gamble. She's also founded Pharmaceutical Corporation of America, which she sold to publicists. Is that correct? Public in 2002. She's on the board of FXI. Previously was on the boards of Aaron, Fluidmaster, Trustmark Mutual Insurance Company, and Banfi Vineyards. Chris graduated sumakumladi with a bachelor of journalism degree at the University of Nebraska and holds a six sigma certification from Villanova.

She's married, has three children and two grandchildren. Chris, welcome to the podcast. >> Thanks, David. I'm so excited to be here. This will be fun. >> Yeah. Thank you for bearing with me as I messed up pronunciation of everything. But that's the real world, isn't it? People do it all the time. >> It sure is. If we can't make mistakes, we're in trouble because nobody's ever perfect. >> No one's ever perfect. Absolutely. Well, I want to start here because you've led at a very high level for a very long time. And I'd love to start just a little bit earlier. You grew up in rural Nebraska, if I recall.

>> That is true. >> What was life like growing up on a farm in rural Nebraska? Well, on one hand, it was wonderful because you were outside every day and you had the circle of life happening around you with baby calves being born, baby pigs, baby chicks when I was really little. But on the other hand, you didn't realize it, but you were learning the meaning of hard work day in and day out. By the time I was 5 years old, my parents would pay me a dime for gathering 144 eggs or a case of eggs to sell to the grocery store. and eggs come out of the chicken coupe kind of dirty and so I had to wash them and pack them and not break them.

And then we had an apple orchard. We had a big garden where we did tons of canning. My father milked 50 head of cattle and at times I would help him particularly when my older brother was off at college. So there was always something to do but you didn't realize you were actually learning incredible work ethic. And I was just going to lead that part of the reason I asked that is to transition into what did that upbringing and waking up super early taking care of being on a farm. What did that upgra upbringing put in you or instill in you that still shows up today as you lead?

>> Well, on the humorous front, I can't go past 4:30 in the morning without waking up. And it drives me crazy, but that's the hour that the house would wake up because you have to milk cows twice a day. So you get into a routine. If you do it at 5 in the morning, you do it at 5 at night. So people still tease me about how early I come in to work. But what on a more serious note, it really told me how do a couple of things. One, how to focus on the things that were most important because you never could get everything done on a farm. And so you had to make sure if the if weather was really good and it was time to plant, you focused on planting in the field as opposed to maybe cutting the hay or something like that because you could always do the hay at a later date, but if it started raining, you couldn't always get into the field to plan at the right time. It also told me how control I could and let go of what I couldn't because mother nature is not something you can control. You can't control if your herd of pigs gets a disease and suddenly you have to u you know take them off to be killed. And then the final thing you really learned that it was important to make a difference for lack of a better way of saying it. But you know I would take pigs to the county fair and show them at the county fair. I would I was in 4. I would I would sew clothing. And the more I focused on honing the requirements to deliver against the expectations, the more I learned you got benefited by it. You got ribbons, you got payment for getting a purple ribbon or a grand champion. And it really helped me to say, "Hey, if I put in a good quality job and I make a difference and I overd

deliver, I will get rewarded for it." And I feel that way today about my work. That's really cool. And the and the first one is really sounds like prioritization, too.

>> Correct. So, as you look, you know, one of the things that over the years I've met people who also grew up on a farm. A buddy in college would be up at 4:30 in college, which is unheard of. And I'm like, why do you wake up so early? And he goes, cuz I've been doing it since I was four years old, right? You know, feeding chickens or whatever. So, often times people I meet say work ethic was the biggest thing. And I know that's a general umbrella as you look back if you had to identify one thing about that life growing up and you say okay out of everything where I am today the thing that probably has given me the greatest success is what is it work ethic or is it one of those three or is it is it something else you when you really look at and go what's unique about Chris >> it's it's hard to just pick one it's actually a combination of work ethic for sure. But the other part is this part of making a difference. My mom would say to me, you know, you're a farm girl, Chris, and you know, there's kids who have a whole lot more than you and who can afford to go to, you know, Ivy League schools, but if you always make a difference, it doesn't matter what your background is. And that was really important.

>> And has that been have you seen that as a thread throughout your leadership life? >> Absolutely. So when I joined Proctor and Gamble, PNG recruited at the top 20 MBA companies and they got people with MBAs, you know, Stanford, Wharton, Harvard, and I came into Proctor and Gamble a little bit backdoor with an undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of Nebraska. And I know a lot of people didn't think this 21-year-old because the average starting age was 28 and 80% were male and I was female. So, I didn't come to the right place. I wasn't the right gender. I wasn't the right age. And I think a lot of people expected me to fail. But the thing that I knew is if I made a difference on my business, I was not replaceable easily. And that has kind of been my mantra through my entire life.

And when when I try to rally teams, put strategies together, it's about how can we go above and beyond the norms or the expectations because one, then you also have created a winning team and winners love to be winners and they double down to win some more. But two, if people really make a difference, you know, they're not going to be the ones that are going to get let go if you know the company is doing a downsizing or something like that, which is happening a lot in corporate America today, which is why I brought it.

>> You know, it's interesting how many people don't because I make this comment when I do workshops and I do keynotes, the exact same comment. And I said, "Look, when you really differentiate yourself," and people for whatever reason argue with me because they haven't if they haven't been a high performer, they don't see that. What What's been your experience with that? >> Absolutely. I mean, but I try to when people ask me that question, I try to make sure that I give examples and demonstrate it myself with my behaviors and show them the strategy that they're part of and how it's going to make a difference for the company that we're part of. Because just saying it, to your point, if you don't haven't lived it, haven't experienced it or haven't observed it might like be puzzling like what do you mean make a difference? you know, everybody around me is showing up doing the same thing. But if you can demonstrate through examples or show how the strategy will drive the behaviors, not everyone always follows along, but you start winning as a team. And people get on the bus really quickly because they want to be part of a winning experience. And I think some people get that exposure earlier

and they learn this and others don't realize it earlier in their career and they wonder why they're stuck in the middle or they're stuck where they're at. Would you say that does that >> I agree with that. You know there's a person Mandi who said be the change you wish to see in the world. And sometimes when people don't understand me saying, you know, make a difference in what you do and it will have high impact and help your career and they're still like puzzled. I say I say the change you want to see in the world and they kind of go, "Oh, I get it."

>> I love that. I love that. Where did you get the perspective that you have? Like was it another leader family? Was it that farm upbringing? M it was the farm upbringing. My parents didn't have the kind of money to go on vacations all the time. Didn't have the money actually to pay for college for my two brothers and myself. We all ended up getting to college on scholarships. And the way you get scholarships is a you get good grades and b you participate in activities and show that you can win.

And so I was constantly entering competitions, whether it was a speech competition, a math competition, just to try to build proof points that I could make a difference and that I was worthy of getting a scholarship to be able to attend school. >> Well, so you kind of build that muscle memory to know I do X and I get why, right? And I think a lot of people don't have that. That's really cool. That's really neat.

>> Well, I'll tell you a funny story if you don't mind. when my kids were teenagers, there was a art facility close by and I went over to the facility and I said, "Hey, if I ask you to hire my kids and pay them \$10 an hour, I'll give you the cash and you can pay my kids, but I want them to learn what work ethic means." because we lived in a pretty nice neighborhood in Illinois and so my kids would go to work, they'd get paid cash every Friday, they'd bring it home to me. I was supposed to put it in the bank. I'd turn around. I'd bring it back to the art facility and they got repaid every week.

But they learned how to be responsible and they learned how to have a job. It's really brilliant. I love that. That's really cool. Now, you said to me, and this might be what you've already kind of told me about. When we talked earlier previously, you said you didn't come from the traditional starting point for someone who ends up where you are. Is it that what basically you were implying with your upbringing that you weren't in the MBA in these top schools or was there something else that I missed?

>> No, that that was that's what I was referring to and it was interesting because I always like to figure out how to inspire people and it was actually through an advertising competition for Herz or for the I'm not saying it right, not Herds, the media company. and I ended up winning that caught the attention of a VP at Proctor and Gamble who took me through the interview process and through all that he they decided to offer me a job but I clearly didn't fit in and and I remember being at a young professionals cocktail party and somebody with an MBA from the right program who started at the same time I did said, "What are you doing here?"

>> Oh my gosh. Do you so did you see yourself when you look back right you think about the early career did you look back and say goal is to be a CEO my goal is to achieve or was it more of I'm just going to do my best I'm going to work hard I'm going to differentiate myself and then it came do you know what I mean like my f my

first job at IBM I met it was my first year and there was a gentleman that I worked with and he had been there like a year or two years he's like I'm going to be the CEO one day and I'm going to be a manager in 12 months and I was like, for me, I'm like, I'm going to just show up and be the best I can be. And I had a different mindset, maybe because the way I was raised. What What What was your thought process?

>> I did not know how far I could go or where I would someday want to be. When I started out, I knew that I wanted to make a difference. I knew that I enjoyed figuring out ways to excite and delight people. And so, I really enjoyed my job. I loved brand management. I still love brand management, but it wasn't until I probably was general manager on Craftsman VP and general manager working on how what do we do with that brand to maintain its love and value over time and that did mean leaving Sears and not being just a private label brand for Sears and that's when I realized I really did understand how to manage business in a bigger way. The other thing I will tell you and somebody asked me this question once of well how do you understand business if your background was journalism you know which isn't really P&L sheets and accounting statistics and things like that. Every night at the dinner table we listen to the market report on the radio and talked about pork belly futures and the price of corn on the marketplace and things like that. So indirectly my dad was training me how to think about business from a financial standpoint.

Was that super intentional with your dad or was it just he had a passion or he was trying to groom you or was it just this is a dad being a dad just like teaching you good manners? >> I think it was none of the above. I think he was out. This was back in the day when you didn't have radios on tractors. And so he finally got into the house to sit down to have dinner and he turned on the radio to understand where the market was so he could think about what is he going to do with his grain full of corn or you know what's the right time to go bring the calves that the dairy cattle birthed up to the market in Northfor Nebraska to sell. And so it was not intentional at all but it was a wonderful byproduct. Now, do you also think the era you grew up in, because you just described it, right, for getting a radio, now they have so much technology. As you look at younger employees that are coming on now, you know, there's this big debate about kids are growing up with phones, they're growing up with technology, there's less human connection. And think when you grew up, you didn't have all that. So, you had time to spend with your dad and have the influence from him. What what do you see is happening now with the younger generation coming on board?

>> Well, I do think and running writing brands, I'm seeing this in clinical studies and evaluations that all of this tech really is not helping people learn. And we have data that shows if you do analog writing, you have better memory. If you use a pen instead of a keyboard when you're in grade school and middle school, you have better reading comprehension, better spelling, longer word or a bigger vocabulary of word sources to use. And so I actually believe we are going to be seeing a revitalization of spending more time talking person to person, not using digital tools for learning and growth, not even having there was just something on NBC Sunday morning this week about restaurants that are making you deposit your cell phone at the door so that you actually have conversations at the table. And I think we are going to move back to that way in society. And I'm excited about it because I do think the last generation of children who primarily grew up with digital all around them have missed out on learning how to communicate effectively really expanding their memory capabilities and language capabilities and we need to reverse that trend.

>> Are you seeing this yet? I mean, we try our best to hire the best, but are you seeing any of this impact in your organization? You have what, thousand people that you're responsible for? >> Yes. >> Are you seeing this with the new hires, people coming out of college yet? Do you do you get wind of it? Is it filtering up to your level? >> Yeah. What I do see, and I do think social media maybe indirectly plays into this, is I do see a level of entitlement. you know what social media does is it kind of whoever has the best show is like the person that's emulated you know and so I think people feel if they show up good they are entitled to things that they maybe aren't because they haven't demonstrated their ability to make a difference they haven't demonstrated great analytical and strategy thought process and so I do believe we need to build that back into the analog nature of communication whether it's talking or writing.

>> So as you're leading teams, you're leading people, do you adapt? And this is the tricky question that that a lot of the CEOs I I advise have to deal with. Do you adapt to the way they are today or do you say this is the way we are, you need to adapt to us? It it's it's tricky. What what's your take on that? >> It is tricky, but I will tell you the experience that I expect in meetings today is people are off their laptops unless they're presenting and they aren't fiddling around on their phones, but they actually are actively engaging.

And people like it. They really like it. Now, I won't name names, but at a previous company, everybody brought their laptop in and they answered emails while the meeting was going on. and you would walk away from the meeting and you would say, "What did we agree to? What happened?" It was it was so disruptive for people to be answering their emails while they were in the meeting that big things moved much more slowly than they should have. and again, you will see corporations in America today that are probably doing the best are the ones that are agile and quickly responsive and have good communication. So, one of the expectations I have here at New Brands is that brand teams, multifunctional brand teams operate with an agile mindset. An agile mindset requires a 15-minute meeting every morning at the same time with all of the players. They identify here's the things that need to be done and they come back the next day and they very quickly report are they on track, off track, what do they need help with? But we were able to take a product that hadn't even been identified on February 8th of this year and I told Walmart, I'm going to make a deal with you. I'm going to have a brand new product that is trend forward in exchange for you giving me an endcap in Q4 of 2026. And they were and I said and I'm going to not even self-manufacture in the US. I'm going to source it internationally. And they were like, you can't do that because normally that takes 12 to 18 months. We presented it to them on March 17th, I believe it was. We got the PO a week later and we have a brand new trending product showing up at Walmart in Q4 of this year. And it's because of that agile experience where you talk with each other. You don't email each other or text each other. You get together once a day for 15 minutes and you say, "What do I need to do to make sure I deliver?" So what's the lesson here for other leaders that are listening or want to be leaders or people that want to move up with this this whole conversation about you know people on their phones and people on laptops what what's the learning lesson for them? So the learning lesson is to me I've seen this my entire life it's just getting accelerated with things like AI or crises whether it was COVID or now tariffs and things like this that multifunctional teams need to quickly act together in a regular basis with a shared set of objectives and a shared common view for what can be accomplished by when. It really is about the personal interaction and you need to model first by behavior. I'm in the office 5 days a week, reach out. I walk down and talk to brand assistants, brand managers, directors, VPs, but I'm constantly trying to model in my behavior the expectation that I have of people.

>> And and something else I'm hearing, and I you didn't say it specifically, but what I'm hearing you also say is you're setting the expectation. You are saying this is how we operate. This is the culture we deal with. We're putting laptops away. We're not on our phone in a meeting and these other organizations like the one you talked about in the past and I'm seeing this too when I go into organizations. It's acceptable. They accept that people will be on their laptop and in a meeting and distracted.

Do you think that's a I hate to I I you know I don't like to blame but do you think that's a leadership I mean it's a that's a leadership issue isn't it? >> It is. It is. And what I find in anything that a company wants to do, whether it's transforming to a new business model or whether it's ensuring AI adoption is most simplistic and usable for all is it takes leadership to model the behaviors that they want to see. And it starts at the top. And I feel fortunate because the executive committee here at New, we spend a lot of time together. We go to off sites and we mo we talk about what behaviors do we need to model to ensure that new which has gone through a transformation over the past couple of years really accelerates and starts to become the darling of Wall Street.

>> It's really cool. You know, the other thing I also heard from you that I want to point out for our listeners is you you proactively defined at least in your mind, but you articulate it. You define what that behavior and what that culture and the expectations are. And it sounds like or what I've experienced with other organizations sometimes they don't take the time to define this is our behavior and this is what's expected and this is how we operate and this is how we're you know agile and I I'm curious if you've seen this in other organizations where if it's not thought it's not defined that a a culture just kind of grows out of that.

>> It does and it might not be the culture you want. So if you come into an organization like the CEO and there has been phenomenal leadership for the previous 10 years, things don't fall apart the next day. But over time, if you're not continuing to model the values and the behaviors that have been there that have made the company what it is, things will not go right. And I've seen this across the board, whether it was years ago with some leadership at PNG or I've walked in, I've worked three different private equitybacked companies where you didn't necessarily have that executive suite alignment. And right away, that was one of the first things that I would observe to the CEO who was running the company or I'd observe to HR. And the good news is all the places that I worked at whether it was the board, whether it was you know the senior leadership team for the most part they embraced this idea of the leadership agenda the behaviors start at the top because if it's not coming from the top how do you expect people down below to know what to do >> and that's when we start seeing fingerpointing in organizations. Yeah.

Fascinating. Now, in our prep call, I had asked you what you love most about your work, and your answer was seeing people grow and develop. >> Yes. >> Where does that come from in you? >> It's just so rewarding when you see people achieve their goals in life. I mean, you know, it's kind of like being a coach for an athlete and that athlete, you know, makes a professional team or something like that. is it's to be able to help people grow and to know that you made a difference in their life is just to me personally very very rewarding.

>> Now is that because I'm sure you run in circles with other executives over the years and even today. Do you think that's unique for certain types of leaders or certain more successful less successful like what do you what's

your take on that? >> Yeah. So let's let's come back to the question you asked earlier. Did I know where I was going to land when I started my career? No. Not for a good long period of time. Did I know what was possible? And therefore, I wasn't competing to be at the top of the scrap heap all the time. And I do think sometimes when people have goals, whether they're realistic or unrealistic, but they're they feel like they need to compete with others, that's when they worry more about themselves than they worry about growing the team around them. What I have learned in life, and this is why I'm so excited to see people's careers grow, is my team and my business performance is as good as the weakest link. So if everybody is growing and developing, the tide is raising and the performance is going to be that much stronger. And then a byproduct is they continue to grow their careers and get the advancements that they deserve.

>> You know, it's so funny you mentioned that. It's almost like you watched my last keynote because at the end of my keynote, I have this thing about pushing up people, right? Doing exactly what you talk about. And I talk about why a lot of leaders don't help their people succeed and grow into VP and CEO roles. And often times it's their own ego gets in the way and they don't want to see other people. And I and I exactly what you said. I said, you know, it's that that famous line of a rising tide lifts all boats.

>> Yeah. >> And they don't see that. So what in your mind, in your experience with other leaders that hold people back and don't help them see the light bulb and don't grow, what what do you think it is why others don't do it? It seems so obvious to you and me. Maybe >> it seems obvious. I do think that some leaders are insecure, some are competitive, but what I try to model and show people is that if they surround themselves with people smarter than them, that actually frees them up to become smarter, too. They can spend more time on strategy because they don't have to be in the weeds because they have weak performers around them. They can spend more time on identifying the next new big opportunity for the business.

they could spend more time on do I have the right people in the right roles to really make sure that I overachieve the growth objectives that I've committed to my board and to shareholders. So, and I and I you just need to taste it once and you're sold because what it does to free you up as an individual leader by getting the right people around you is powerful. >> And this might this might go into another question I have. So it's a you currently run the group you run is 3ome billion >> 3.2 billion. Yeah.

>> 2 point. So most of the people listening to this podcast probably are not people running a multi-2 billion dollar organization, right? What what is something that most people not at your level don't understand about what it's like to be a CEO of an organization that has that that size and the visibility of brands you have. >> Yeah. So I think when you're growing up in a brand organization, you are into the details. You do like look at what your share was last week compared to this week at this customer and that customer. And the biggest difference when you get into a role like mine is you know you have people who are managing the day in dayouts related to the brands and the business but nobody is managing organizational design organizational effectiveness I mean sure you have HR partners and things like that but 50% of a business performing well is the people 50% is the business plans the strength of the brands the effectiveness of the marketing and NPD.

Nobody spends that time on that 50% that is all around the people and that is my responsibility. >> It is crazy. I

remember the the term years ago was human capital >> and that was the big buzzword and I remember the first time I heard that I'm like human capital and I literally had to think about it before I really got it of you know we invest in capital of everything else marketing and and and hard goods and product and manufacturing but that other 50% gets ignored why do you why do you think that is not ignored but you know what I mean >> some of it is probably how people were brought up in companies Nice. I was so fortunate that by the time I was not even 30 years old and I had a brand team reporting to me, my boss pulled me aside and said, "Okay, now you're running a brand with people." And so I'm going to judge 50% on your business performance and 50% on how well your people do. And I'm going to continue to look at how well your people do when they move on to other brands to see if you created the right long-term skills. So, I got lucky because I started at a company that put early emphasis on that piece. I just don't think many people are as lucky as I was or people have been succeeded because they're in a type of business where just run fast go has been successful for for the time being. It's not sustainable, but it could be successful in the short term. Like if you've created the world's best widget, you will be successful until a better widget comes along.

>> Yeah, I worked for one of those companies. We had the best widget and the culture 100% turnover every year and it was a horrendous culture. I learned a lot. But because we won, people stayed there because they made money and they they put up with it. And it it's crazy though when the market changed and then their stock plummets down to \$6 a share and they're like we don't understand why you know and they don't know how to turn it around >> and it's toxic because then people come to work and I want people to come to fun and growth and personal and professional enjoyment.

>> I love that. Now, you also said something to me when we spoke first that stuck with me because you said something about leadership and parenting that there's a correlation and if you're a good leader, what do you mean by that? >> Well, first of all, I had three children in 20 months. So, I had to learn to provide the right level of discipline because I couldn't do one- on-one discipline building with three kids at a time. But I have found that if you parent fairly and transparently, but you have consequences for actions and you deliver on the consequences, not with emotion, but just here's what we said, here's what didn't happen, here's the consequences, like we talked, you usually can get a fine set of children from that experience. And I think I have three incredible grown adult children.

That is the same way with work. But what's interesting is it is I find that many people find it harder to provide consequences at work to employees than it is to provide it to your children. I think people worry, well, what if they quit on me? What if they say something bad about me behind my back? People want fair, parent expectation setting. They want to know what the consequences are if they don't deliver. They want to know what the rewards are if they do deliver because I find 99.9% of employees if you tell them what they need to do and you set clear guide rails around you know here's the performance here's how you need to behave here's what I expect from a strategy or analytic standpoint they deliver and then they feel good about themselves >> isn't that just the definition of >> parenting >> leadership ship. I'm like, I am so dumbfounded right now. Are are people not doing this in your experience?

>> It's interesting. Over the years, I've seen great leaders at this and I've seen some not so great leaders at this.

And again, I think it's about what motivates them. If they're so caught up in their own personal success and they're, you know, worried about somebody being the smarter person in the room, they maybe don't focus on that. If they're, you know, if they didn't have the right training, they maybe don't know how to deliver it. But I truly find that when I set the proper expectations with the proper benefits and consequences and I just calmly deliver on what I say, whether it's, you know, you get a higher bonus because I told you if we delivered these numbers, we would get more than 100% bonus or it's gee, I'm going to have to give you a didn't meet expectation rating, you know, which does mean you're not going to qualify for the merit increase in this cycle of merits and you just deliver it fairly and evenly and that's key. You have to be fair and consistent but you get the behaviors that you want usually.

>> It sounds so simple simple but not easy maybe for some right. Yeah. So if we look at the 50% of the business which is human side people if you were and you maybe have alluded to it or said it but I I just want to ask more pointedly. If you were to say, "Here's my secret of getting the most out of my employees so that they're engaged, they want to show up, they don't quiet quit." In your mind, what is that the root cause, that keystone, that one thing for you personally that brings out the best in your people?

>> I think it's this piece about setting clear, transparent expectations, but I think the other piece is showing that you really care. Maybe I'm crazy, but I truly care about the people who work for me because if they don't show up, you know, people have personal issues. I had somebody who worked for me whose husband was in the hospital, another person who is treating cancer right now. And if you don't let them take care of their personal needs at the time along with helping them deliver their professional goals and you can balance all that to get to a good place, they'll be more loyal to you down the road and they will perform better for you down the road because you cared.

>> Absolutely. So if you look at other organizations and I know you're not in other organizations but for our listeners when an organization needs to transform what usually is getting in the way first of the this transformation >> I would say number one lack of clear objectives and expectations. Number two lack of a leadership down setting of behavior expectations and then demonstrating them day in and day out. and to me those are the two things >> and as you look back over as we come to the last few questions here as you look back over let's say the last however many years what is something that you know and believe now that you didn't back early in your career the biggest thing that you >> feedback is a gift fee to me feedback I give to others if you don't know what you're not delivering or what you are delivering well. How do you know what to do next? I remember the very first person who on my very first brand team was not performing and I was told I needed to tell this individual that they just weren't probably going to make it in brand management at Proctor and Gamble. And it was hard for me to tell them that, you know, because I only like to tell people good things. But over the years, what I did actually in that particular case is I sat there and I thought about what does this person do really well? And I thought, man, they might be really good in sales. And so I encouraged the person to go into sales.

And this was before cell phones and texting and everything. And about 5 years later, I got a letter from the individual thanking me for pointing them in the right career direction because they had been promoted three

times at the company they went to and they're having the time of their life. And I was like, "Wow, I am so glad I gave them feedback." And and you know, having a couple of experiences like that starts to make you realize just how valuable feedback is, both giving and taking.

>> I love that. I love that. All right, last question. So, those of you that have heard my podcast before, this is your first time listening. When I was a kid, I would aunts, uncles, family, I was, you know, a kid and they say, "So, David, how are you?" "Good. How's school?" "Good." And in the back of my mind, I'm like, why don't they ask me about blah blah blah because they didn't know to ask me. And then I have a I have three kids myself and I'll ask, you know, my daughter a bunch of questions.

Dad, you're too nosy. You ask too many questions. But then in another breath, it's like you don't know anything about me. It's like, okay, what? So, what question should I be asking you? So, the question for you is Chris, what question do you wish people would ask you? They just don't know to ask you. Why do I love creating brands? Creating improvements to brands to delight and excite consumers. And why do I think I can do it pretty well? I've run a lot of big brands over the years. and they have grown underneath my tutelage. So, people don't ask me how do you figure out how to offer the right feature or the right benefit or the right whatever to drive the growth on the brands. And the answer is when I was a little girl, I wanted to be a detective. And I would literally go to shopping malls and I would watch people behave. And even to this day, my husband and I will go out to dinner and I'll say, "You know, those two people over there with that kid look like you would think they were married, but I can tell they aren't married." And he would say, "How?" And I'd say, "Well, look at this. Look at this. Look at that." I love figuring out what makes people tick or what's going on. And I really feel that has made me highly successful in figuring out how to excite and delight consumers with benefits that the brands I'm running bring to the consumer because I figured out their unarticulated unmet need that they have.

>> What a fabulous answer. I love that. I love that too funny. Thank you for sharing that. And you know what, Chris, thank you so much for being a guest. you've been just lovely and amazing and I love your perspective on leadership and and I know our listeners will get a lot out of it. So, thank you so much for being with me. >> Oh, it's my pleasure. Thank you. >> If someone wants to learn more about you, connect with you, learn about new, etc. What's the best way for them to follow up or learn more?

>> I think reach out to me on LinkedIn, Chris with a K, Melkausski, M A L K O S K I, and you'll find me. >> Beautiful. Beautiful. Well, Chris, thank you again. And folks, thank you so much for listening. I appreciate it. If you have enjoyed this, please comment, please share, subscribe. You know that. You know the drill. But I want to thank you so much for Inside the Leader Mind. I'm David Susan and we'll see you next time. Thanks, Chris. Bye.