

Transcript:

Is Your Ladder Leaning Against The Wrong Wall? Richard Mobley on Leadership and Calling | Part Two

Jeff Haffner: 0:01

Welcome to TCNtalks and Anatomy of Leadership. We continue our conversation. "Is Your Ladder Leaning Against the Wrong Wall? Richard Mobley on Leadership and Calling." And now, here's Chris Comeaux.

Chris Comeaux: 0:18

Well, now we're going to go into our next segment and want to talk a little bit more, maybe unpack a little bit more from your story. You shared that when you retired, you didn't yet have a giant why. Just talk a little bit more about like what that season was like for you.

Richard Mobley: 0:34

Our company had been bought. I had an opportunity to s to to m which happened four times in 25 years. Um and I always went with the new company, and it always always was a step up to you know the the ladder kind of thing. More responsibility. Um and we had that opportunity when we were bought the the last time, and they wanted us to make a move, and I was tired. I'd been on a plane for 25 years. Um I was I was tired. And so I think it was fifty-two or three at that point in time, and I said no. A great city in the Midwest where the first time I visited the river was frozen over. Okay. Beautiful town, great people, great, great organization. I said no. And I thought I was just gonna coast on home. I didn't have a great goal, I didn't have a big why, I was tired, and so fatigue makes cowards of us all. And I was pushing off those decisions. My phone began ringing, it was former customers, it was former clients. Hey Richard, can you help with? Yes, I can. And so all of a sudden I became a consultant, and so all those terrible jokes that I'd told for years about consultants, okay. You know the one. Those that can do, those that can't consult, and so on, and so I I'm that guy now. And um we had a great couple of years, uh, and then in 08, um, and an an administration change in Washington put a lot of people into their foxholes. A lot a lot of people, my customers, um, who were concerned about how healthcare finance was going to be changed, if any. And they went into their foxholes waiting to see what the administration was gonna be. And and and so I I was tired already still, and I hung it up. Jackie and I had had a um she'd been watching HG TV and had seen um you know this great little house get remodeled and fixed up thirty in thirty minutes under budget on time, no flaws, okay. And had an itch and wanted to go play house for a while. And so we bought a little house and and did the work ourselves and blah blah blah. I'm a builder. I'm a builder. How much is enough? More you know even without a whole

lot of thought. And anyway, over time that became a couple of dozen rental houses that we managed and did ourselves. And and that was the quote work that I was doing when Jackie had this conversation with me because I was frustrated. There's nothing wrong with that work. I think all work is honorable, but it wasn't my work. In fact, I had joked about I'm taking a good a job away from a good plumber when I go try to do this thing. Okay.

Chris Comeaux: 3:41

I'm gonna use that with my wife. I like that one.

Richard Mobley: 3:46

Many gifts, right? And and so just because you can do a thing doesn't mean you should do a thing. This is this is delegation that all leaders need to be begin to understand. Anyway, the only thing we ever thought about was that stuff right there. I and it was because I didn't want to do it, because it wasn't fulfilling to me. Spreadsheet was great, but no joy. No joy. Richard, go find a job. Blah blah blah blah blah. Um and here we are 15 years later, um, where I am fulfilled, and I am providing value, and I am joyful in what I am able to do, and I do get to help folks problem solve.

Chris Comeaux: 4:30

Was it like a eureka moment, Richard? Was it more like a great journeyer of discovery that you kind of uncovered that next stage of the why, the significant why?

Richard Mobley: 4:40

Yeah, you sound like a CEO. Okay, wait, where are we gonna be in 10 years? Okay, and you know this. You don't really know where you're gonna be in 10 years. You chart a course, but then you're like that sailor who you're not gonna go straight across that ocean, you're gonna attack and you're gonna backtrack. And you know, we think the line of success is from bottom left to upper right, a straight 45 or maybe 60 degree angle. Yeah, like straight up. But we all know that the real line of success is a squiggle up, back, around, down, start over. And I'm very much more the latter. What I've learned, I think the piece of wisdom I've taken away from that, is a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, right here in Birmingham, Alabama. You don't have to see the entire staircase in order to take the first step. Okay, so take a step. And that's what Jackie helped me do, Richard. It ain't working. We got to do something different. Okay, and it wasn't a J-O-B because I'm unemployable, but but but it was go find something that makes a difference at a time that it makes a difference with people who want to make a difference.

Chris Comeaux: 5:56

That's so good. And yeah, that answer, yeah. It does. And it goes back to what you were saying earlier about on the bike, just kind of forward momentum. You'll love so I'm

working on my second book right now, and um, I keep debating. I want the cover to be exactly the basic line you just said, the squiggly line. The trend hopefully is like this, but the actual journey is more exactly what you did. And so, yeah, you may be tipping me the scales because that just feels very profound to what because I do think that, you know, with all this high performance and leadership gurus today, I think it creates this facade of, well, then I was just doing it wrong. So if I just follow your tips, your tactics, it's all going to be that perfectly straight line. No. I mean, the best, the best heroes in the history of mankind weren't that way. The people that we talk about and write books about today, just it ain't that way.

Richard Mobley: 6:45

Chris, do you think leaders are afraid of failure?

Chris Comeaux: 6:49

I think so, yes. And um, yes, I absolutely think they're afraid of failure. Yes.

Richard Mobley: 6:55

Because the standard, we've got this false standard. We've got our ladder leaned against the wrong wall.

Chris Comeaux: 7:01

Yeah.

Richard Mobley: 7:01

Where we think failure is final or fatal. And in fact, failure is just the other side of the success coin.

Chris Comeaux: 7:09

Yeah.

Richard Mobley: 7:10

Like, like it's the same coin.

Chris Comeaux: 7:12

You know, and the reason the reason why I hesitated when you asked me that question is because I want to add more context. So, number one, Wall Street expectations, right? We're we all want more return on our investment. So then it creates this false expectation that the numbers always go up. So then people end up being, let's cook the books because you know you can't make it always go up. Um, I think that's part of it. Also, the disruptive innovations. So um, you know, the best analogy of the definition of disruptive

innovation was if you and I were a buggy whip manufacturer when the automobile came online, holy crap! Well, it took hundreds of years for that innovation. Well, several years ago, my wife gave me a Garmin for Christmas. That was cool as crap. Now I have that on my smartphone. So those disruptive innovations are moving so quickly. So I think it's creating this interesting environment. So that's why I hesitated. That, yeah, I think they're scared of failure, and the external environment is almost making it so that it's not even acceptable anymore.

Richard Mobley: 8:11

Chris, I wanted to mention this when you were talking earlier about um the whole peer review and and the I don't mean to be unkind, but what is sometimes viewed by outsiders as herd mentality when it comes to health care. Nobody everybody's afraid to do something. I I'm putting all that in air quotes because I know that's not really true. But we as leaders, and particularly within healthcare, you you've got that fine line, that narrow lane that you need to find between innovation and compliance, and celebrating the ones that are able to get in that lane and go do something different, better. What if, what could a great future look like? You know, the the the innovators there um whilst being compliant.

Chris Comeaux: 9:04

Yeah, it makes you making me reflect of you know there's so many people like um atul Gwandy, um, Berkshire Hathaway, Chase, uh JP Morgan Chase did create a healthcare company. And then guess what? They shut it down. And I kind of got the some of the articles that are like, you guys are impossible, man. Healthcare is just screwed up. Um, you've got Best Buy that had this huge, so all these huge retailers, well, oh, surely we can do healthcare. And then they're picking up their toys and saying, screw this. It makes me wonder what you're poking on as part of that core reason of why it's been so difficult for people that have been very successful in other innovative places have kind of crashed upon the rocks of healthcare.

Richard Mobley: 9:45

I have an authenti I have an opinion or or or a theory, and I I think they've lost, they've got their ladder leaned against the wrong wall. If I may illustrate what I'm trying to say, folks say all the time, oh, healthcare is broken. U.S. healthcare is broken, and it's not. Healthcare finance is pretty broken. And when I say that, what I mean is if we polled our audience, I'll bet a lot of them, and particular, and if we polled your your your the community you're serving, and all the employees on the in the United States, uh I bet m the majority of them don't know who pays for health care. They think, quote, insurance unquote pays for and they don't realize it's their money. That's that's my money. And so healthcare finance is that's the what I mean when I say healthcare finance is broken. Healthcare is awesome.

Like we can get care. And and the and the specialty that you guys do to um take care of folks in the most difficult moments is incredible. But even y'all have trouble with like the finance is hard.

Chris Comeaux: 10:57

Yeah.

Richard Mobley: 10:57

The finance is hard. Yeah.

Chris Comeaux: 11:00

That's so cool. We actually did a podcast last year with a lady named Rita Numeroff. She writes her Forbes, she's written several different books. I think she marries what you just said and and kind of says it in a different way. But I I love you, just have such a great wisdom of phrasing things. Um, because you're right, it is the finance portion. So then how do you kind of marry the best of those worlds? There's a she and I actually think she's applied. There's a group that RFK is putting together. I'm praying she'll be sitting at the table because that podcast was, hey, Rita, RFK calls you, what would you do? And she just went off on that podcast. It was pretty awesome. Well, I want to get to this because I'd never heard this concept before. I'm gonna probably butcher the way to say it. Avo day. So there's a Hebrew word, Avo Day. The idea is that our work can be an act of worship. How did talk about that concept? How did you learn that when you were younger? Did that come in your older?

Richard Mobley: 11:51

Yeah.

Chris Comeaux: 11:51

And how did it shape your thinking about work?

Richard Mobley: 11:54

Yeah, pretty recent. Um maybe seven, five, six, seven years. Avo dah. And so I 15 years ago became certified as a Maxwell coach, speaker, trainer. Um the enemy in my head said, Richard, you're not a coach, speaker, trainer. You're a guy who wrote a check and got a piece of paper. And you know this. The best lie is the one that contains just enough truth to make it believable. And so it was pretty, really, pretty true. Um but but I am a guy who's willing to go do the work. And so I stepped into the process and I do love people and the interaction with people, and I've always wanted to be involved in that business that had universal demand, but I didn't want to be in food service. Okay, so okay. And this leadership thing that I've been able to do for the last 15 years, there's a universal need,

but there's not a universal demand. In other words, I cannot go away from my house. Well, in fact, I can't even get out of bed without finding uh somebody who needs a little bit better leadership development. Okay, so so even here in my own home, or certainly out there in the marketplace, everybody's got a need for better leadership. There isn't a universal demand for it. And so all of a sudden, 15 years ago, I'm able to talk to literally anybody I run into with this great new thing.

Chris Comeaux: 13:44

Okay.

Richard Mobley: 13:45

So I spent a couple or three years wondering. I'm I'm I'm answering your Abo Dai question. I'm just long-winded. I'm sorry.

Chris Comeaux: 13:53

No, this is good, actually.

Richard Mobley: 13:56

But I began asking myself, well, am I in a business? Because I know how to do that. I've done like I can do that. Or am I on a mission? Or am I doing ministry? And he's about as smart as he looks. It took a couple of years for me to realize, oh, yes. So all that. Yeah. When I think of your client, he or she who's listening to this podcast, are they in a business? Of course they are. Are they doing a are they on a mission? I think many of them are on a I don't know how you do this work without being on a mission. Yep. And are they in ministry? Most of them are in ministry, yes. And so the answer is yes. And I literally stumbled over the word. I was looking for a concept, a way to distill this long story that I'm telling you, right? How do I distill that down? And God was way ahead of me. In the Old Testament, the word avoda is used only a few times, and when it is used, it's translated as work or service or worship. And the meaning of the word is let your work be done as if it were worship. It's work, it's mission, it's ministry, and Avodized this concept of whatever you do, do it as unto the Lord. Okay. Uh that made a big difference for me.

Chris Comeaux: 15:30

That's you. And I love where you started it because, you know, to say kind of that imposter syndrome was telling you, well, you just wrote a check. But yet, you know, I've always wanted to meet John Maxwell, and maybe one day I will. But in the meantime, if all I get to meet is Richard Mobley, I'm cool because I feel like, I mean, you just you embody that wisdom of John, that fatherly presence. That so that's what I see. And and maybe you've lived into it, but I bet if I still met you that first day when you got that certificate, I would probably have still said what I just said. So I think that kind of that ministers to me

because, and to our listeners, wherever you're at on that journey, if you can turn that into work as worship, you may feel a bit of a fraud, that imposter syndrome. We did a whole podcast with Maureen Zapolo, who's one of those top two speakers in the country in imposter syndrome. It's all of us. But the more you live into it, I I bet today that feels truer though, Richard, truer in terms of you're more authentic to you, you you always deflect my compliments, but my guess is my compliment feels truer to you today than it did a year ago.

Richard Mobley: 16:35

Well, it has more truth than it did. There are examples like like I can look back and see. And so you asked me superpower. Well, it's helping somebody with a problem. And yeah, there's a catalog now of folks who um have been able to do that, or and and I've been able to step into that. Yeah. Thank you.

Chris Comeaux: 16:56

Well, you said something when we were uh kind of just catching up with each other and asked you to do those podcasts, and I wrote it down because it's kind of counterintuitive or counter-cultural, certainly counter to a lot of the leadership books. If I got it right, you said you don't tell people to follow their passion. Why do you think that advice is not a good thing?

Richard Mobley: 17:14

Yeah. Uh I don't know if you remember the example that I used for that. Um let me back up a step. So following your passion often when when I see it out there, when I see people talking about that, it often seems foolish, irrational, spur of the moment, escaped. It often, I've for me, what I've seen is it often demonstrates an a an unwillingness to do the work to be successful where you are. If you find yourself in a hole, what should you do? Stop digging, number one. Okay. And uh so so that that whole kind of thing. And the exam the way I make that example is what if Richard Mobley's passion was to be a Kentucky jerk derby jockey? You're laughing because you know the answer. Yeah, yeah. How tall are you exactly? I'm a very large man. So I'm 6'7, 260.

Chris Comeaux: 18:17

I know. I remember I feel like my head was like at your chest when I first met you. I was definitely the one looking up at you for sure.

Richard Mobley: 18:23

Thank you, God. Like uh it's just a gift. It's just a gift. Okay, no better, no smarter, no more able, but completely disqualified to be a jockey, despite what my passion is. Okay, is there such a thing as a Clydesdale jockey? I don't think there is. And it's just a silly example to

try to demonstrate. Well, wait a minute. Following your passion might lead you down a path that doesn't lead to success for yourself or others. And so I I help, I try to help people think into well, what is my gifting? What am I good at? And what need do I see in the world that I'd really like to see solved? And I think calling is where passion and gifting intersect. And if you can find that thing, by the way, we can often create that thing. Bloom where you're planted. Do the work where where did Paul write all those awesome letters because he wanted to be in prison? Was that his ideal writing spot? No, he bloomed where he was planted. He made the best of a bad situation. You got a bad boss, you're working for a bad organization. Well, you can change that, but that doesn't mean that you but be prudent about it. Find the thing. Find the thing that makes you sing, makes you laugh, makes you cry and make a difference.

Chris Comeaux: 19:51

That's really good. So as you look at your life today, what brings you the deepest sense of fulfillment now?

Richard Mobley: 19:58

It's that moment when gestalt occurs over there on the other side of the camera or the other side of the table. The aha moment where they say, Oh, I get it. And I'm going to go do it. So what? Now what? The so what moment is pretty common, but the now what moment is less common where people say, you know, that's going to be hard, but I'm downshifting here, and we're going to go into a lower gear, and I'm going to go do some work. That is an awesome moment for me. I get to say, I helped. I helped.

Chris Comeaux: 20:45

You're a great master of the English language, by the way. That's another one of your superpowers. You have a great way of phrasing things that make them sticky, which I'm a huge student of because I've something I'm always trying to aspire to grow and learn.

Richard Mobley: 20:57

Great leaders simplify the complex. I'm not caught, I'm not saying that for myself, but when we can distill it down, people can remember.

Chris Comeaux: 21:08

Well, maybe that's a good one to our last question. So if our listeners took one idea from this conversation and lived it out, what would you hope it would be?

Richard Mobley: 21:16

Um I I would say God don't make no junk. And what I mean for you, listener, is find the thing that you were created to do and go do it. There is joy immeasurable in making the

right difference. And when you do that, not selfishly, Philippians 2, 3, and 4. Richard, Richard, don't look out for your own interest. Look out for the interest of others. There that I and I don't mean paternal, and I don't mean in a better than hierarchical kind of thing, but it is a way to be a helper. When you look at The person that I model most, the one that I want most want to be like, that person interacted with people at all levels in a direct one-on-one, I see you, I hear you, I'm listening to you kind of uh way. And I think if you can go do that, you will be successful.

Chris Comeaux: 22:24

That's so good. Well, you're a treasure. Thank you for taking the time to do this. Um, I'm looking forward to I think we're gonna, this is gonna probably air in the February, March time frame, and uh, but you and I will be together in April. So I that is gonna be the highlight of my year of getting to be with you for a whole week at the elite leadership summit this coming year.

Richard Mobley: 22:42

Chris, my pleasure. Thank you.

Chris Comeaux: 22:44

You bet. And to our listeners, thank you. At the end of each episode, we always leave you with a quote, a visual, to create a brain bookmark, a thought prodder. This one's gonna be really fun because there's so many great just one-liners that Richard use. But the idea is to create a thought prodder about our podcast subject to further your learning and your growth, and thereby it sticks. We're going for like a brain tattoo. Please be sure to subscribe to our channel. Pay it forward to your friends, your coworkers, your leaders throughout hospice powered care, even outside of hospice and powered care and healthcare. No, Richard's gonna pay it forward to other folks he knows as well. Um, we're gonna include links if you want to get in touch with Richard to his website. We're gonna include all that in the show notes as well. And if you also have always a copy of my book, The Anatomy of Leadership, as well. So, you know, it's easy for us to reel against the world and be frustrated by things. Let's be the change that we wish to see in the world. So thanks for listening to today's show. And here's our brain bookmark to close it.

Jeff Haffner / Brain Bookmark: 23:38

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