Alison Dean (00:09):

This is The Breakthrough podcast, an ongoing series where we interview game-changing leaders in technology, business, government, and entertainment about their experiences and perspectives in life and leadership, learn about their latest breakthroughs, and hopefully inspire you to have some of your own. Welcome to The Breakthrough. I'm Alison Dean, and today I am very excited to be speaking again with Dr. Ron Glickman. Not only is he chief information officer at Trader Joe's, but also author of the newly released book Lead for a Change, which is actually listed on many Amazon bestseller number one lists, but it was also listed on the management science bestsellers list. So, well done.

Dr. Glickman (00:59):

Thank you.

Alison Dean (01:00):

Ron sent me this quote from John Burroughs, "Leap, and the net will appear." How are you, Ron?

Dr. Glickman (01:08):

I'm doing well, thank you. Thanks for having me back. It's great to see you.

Alison Dean (01:11):

Let's talk about what that quote means to you. I thought it was appropriate given that the last conversation we had was talking about a book. "Leap, and the net will appear," yes, share the meaning.

Dr. Glickman (01:23):

I love that. So when we talked last week, we talked about breakthroughs, and my definition of a breakthrough is when people think what you're trying to accomplish is impossible. So then, you have some work to do to get them to think it's possible and get into progress and actually make something happen. So when you think something's impossible and you've never done it before, or you don't know how you're going to do it, this quote gives me motivation to say, "Get started." And you know what? Once you take the leap, the net will appear, and that means you'll figure out how to do it, you'll guide yourself towards the destination. You can't sail a sailboat unless you are in motion and you have wind. So you have to get started on the journey and then navigate along the way. "So that's really what that means to me. And I love that quote.

Alison Dean (02:11):

I feel like there should be a Slack bot built into every company's Slack infrastructure that's a daily quote from you.

Dr. Glickman (02:21):

I tried to put a few in the book. I tried to find some ones that would be fun and interesting, and maybe talk a little bit about what the chapter was going to bring.

Alison Dean (02:28):

Yeah.

Dr. Glickman (02:28):

I love that one. Thank you. That's a good one.

Alison Dean (02:30):

That is a good one. I want to talk about the first breakthrough that you remember that set you on your career path, like the defining thing that launched the trajectory for Dr. Ron Glickman.

Dr. Glickman (02:42):

Oh, my gosh. So I'm going to pick an incident that is pretty simple. When I first started in my career, I worked in a computer operations room. I was with electronic data systems and I was supporting a healthcare group. Overnight I used to print these things called blue sheets. They were big pieces of paper that identified all of the exceptions from a claim that a consumer might be filing.

Alison Dean (03:08):

Mm-hmm.

Dr. Glickman (03:08):

For several nights in a row, I printed like three boxes of these blue sheets, and I still remember the lady's name, it was Peggy Merritt. And I was just very curious about why I had to print all of these pieces of paper. So in the morning when my shift was done, I followed the blue sheets to the person who was going to deal with the exceptions, and they took the first page off and recycled the rest of it.

Alison Dean (03:31):

Okay.

Dr. Glickman (03:32):

I said, "What's going on there? What are you doing?" And they said, "Oh, that's Peggy Merritt. She gets dialysis three times a week, and the system thinks you can only have it once. So it's telling us that she had the same procedure multiple times, but she can't live unless she has the procedure." So I went back and talked to the people who were running the shop and got to talk to the analysts, and ultimately figured out there was a bug in the program. They fixed the bug, and we stopped printing the Peggy Merritt blue sheets every night. I picked that because it was an aha moment around intellectual curiosity, wanting things to be as efficient as they could be, inquiring rather than just doing what you're told. So that sort of got me really curious about being an analyst and ultimately becoming a programmer. So that was a pretty big breakthrough moment for me.

Alison Dean (04:22):

That's so interesting. The first chapter of the book, Happiness Is Not The Goal, and I love that. That's a great leaning into an opening of a Lead for Change style book. So one of the quotes that you call out, "If you strive for happiness by direct means, you end up less happy than if you forgot about happiness and focus on other goals," which I think is an epic quote. I just want more of

extracting really the impetus for happiness is not the goal and how that really does work into when you're contending with many different stakeholders, how you balance all that.

Dr. Glickman (04:59):

Well, that's a tricky part, right? Because everybody defines happiness differently. That's the fundamental challenge or paradox about happiness. Right? When you're in a service business, like you are in, and when you're writing programs or you're consulting or you have clients inside a company that might have different departments that are consuming your technology services and you try to get a project done, you want to make people happy. At least that's where I started. That was the premise: If I make them happy, I'll be successful.

Alison Dean (05:26):

Right.

Dr. Glickman (05:26):

And I quickly realized I can't make everybody happy. So if that's true, then how does one define success and feel good ultimately about an outcome, even if one or more people are not happy? So I used an example at the Duty Free shops. I was the CIO there, and sales dropped in half overnight after 9/11, and our customers stopped traveling. We had a problem. We needed to really quickly cut expenses. When we cut expenses, the CFO was very happy. All of the people who did not get laid off were reasonably happy, although they didn't get all the service they wanted. But people who got laid off were very unhappy.

Alison Dean (06:07):

Right.

Dr. Glickman (06:07):

People who couldn't get the easy reports and the IT services that they wanted were grousing and unhappy. So that's sort of where I began to form this idea that really setting expectations-

Alison Dean (06:18):

Oh, yes.

Dr. Glickman (06:20):

... and meeting or exceeding them is how best to define success in the context of a business or a project. So all of my efforts from that point forward were about just trying to be clear about expectations, acknowledging everyone may not be happy when we get to that destination, but that's where we're going. So you have to decide how you want to deal with that. And then I agree wholeheartedly with you that when you do a good job and you meet or exceed those expectations, sometimes happiness is an unintended consequence, and that feels great, right?

Alison Dean (06:54):

Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Glickman (06:55):

But I think when you strive for happiness and you're in a business where you can't make everyone happy all the time, that sets you up to be uncomfortable, at least, and unsuccessful over the long haul.

Alison Dean (07:08):

Right.

Dr. Glickman (07:08):

Does that help?

Alison Dean (07:09):

Yeah, no, I think so. And I think you segued us perfectly into the next chapter of your book, The Value of Well-Defined Expectations, because I agree, Ron, it's almost like if you know that everyone is probably not going to be happy with an outcome, I think that's where the importance of setting clear expectations around all the possible outcomes can help to prime the audience so that nothing is really surprising. I was very compelled to read everything about the Duty Free Shoppers project in the book. Can you speak to examples of a project where there was suffering because there maybe was a lack of clarity? Just to give context for people, it's not always rosy.

Dr. Glickman (07:53):

Rarely is it rosy. That's the whole point about setting expectations. If it was rosy, we wouldn't have to do it. Right? The first thing I want to say about this expectations idea is that the next level of that conversation is around gaining commitment to work towards achieving that expectations, whether you agree or you don't.

Alison Dean (08:14):

Right.

Dr. Glickman (08:14):

And that's a really important conversation when you are working with people to say, "We're going there and we all can understand how we're going to measure what success looks like. Now, are you in or are you not?" And that doesn't mean do you agree or do you disagree because I'm quite comfortable having you disagree and commit.

Alison Dean (08:34):

Yeah. Right. Right.

Dr. Glickman (08:35):

And if you do that, it creates a virtuous circle of learning because if you disagree and commit and we are successful, you learn something about your assumptions, about being part of that team, about making something happen. If you disagree and commit and we determine, or I determine as a leader, that wasn't a great decision, good people make bad decisions. If I can own it and course correct, then you're going to learn that you can trust me not to run us over the cliff, and then I

could admit that, "Hey, you know what? Maybe that idea could have worked out better," as opposed to you don't agree, therefore, you can have veto rights and stop the whole project or keep people from moving forward.

Dr. Glickman (09:16):

So while happiness is not the goal, and setting clear expectations is the primary driver, the next series of conversations is around, can you commit either whether you agree or disagree? And if you can't disagree and commit, then we need to have a conversation about whether you belong on the journey. Because you're going to make it hard for everyone else, you're going to make it hard for yourself, and maybe you belong on a different journey where you could be much, much happier. Does that make sense?

Alison Dean (09:43):

No, it definitely does. I think for me, though, it's not necessarily the conversations at the top, right? Because obviously there's certain buy-in that needs to happen depending on who's involved, but ultimately there's going to be people affected that are not part of that decision-making. There's everyone else, basically, right? And it's, how we can lean into right at the onset of a project, identifying what the risk is for all of those people, people that aren't in the room to make those decisions, so that it's lessening the impact ultimately for once something is launched, if there's layoffs that are going to happen, whatever it is, it's like, how do we lean into the change management philosophies to just set expectations? And I think a lot of companies like to go, go, go.

Dr. Glickman (10:32):

I think that's true, but I think it's really, really important, to your point, for leaders to explain to people who are doing the work, who may not have been involved in the decision process, the conversations that took place and why the decisions were made, whether you agree or you don't. I'll give you a great example. I was talking to somebody, they have an office policy where everyone has to go back to work after COVID.

Alison Dean (10:53):

Okay.

Dr. Glickman (10:54):

Lots of people were complaining and making very rational arguments about why that was not the best policy from their point of view as workers. Right?

Alison Dean (11:02):

Mm-hmm.

Dr. Glickman (11:03):

"I had better work-life balance. I was at home. I was more productive when I wasn't driving." There's a whole bunch of really valid, logical reasons to argue against that policy.

Alison Dean (11:14):

Right.

Dr. Glickman (11:15):

But when you broaden out or you add other lenses to look through to analyze the decision, there are political lenses and emotional lenses. Right? So if the decision was emotional, and the leader is saying, "As the leader, I have to see my people. I want us to collaborate. I need us to all be in the same building," all the rational arguments in the world can't change that perspective. So my suggestion was, the conversation needs to be, "This is not rational. I understand you're making all these rational arguments, but this was an emotional decision. The leader made that decision. We all need to disagree and commit and get in the office and make things happen. Or you have to decide if you don't want to go along with that policy, then you have a choice that you have to make. But just complaining all the time isn't useful."

Dr. Glickman (12:01):

But I think it's really key to explain to people why things were decided the way they were, and then give them the choice to join or not. But when we don't take that step, we end up with people who are disgruntled, disengaged, not really interested in helping you to take the steps necessary to make something happen. And that's a real leading indicator that a project is doomed to fail, in my opinion. Does that make sense?

Alison Dean (12:27):

Yep, and I agree with you, Ron. Okay, but is there a project that comes to mind, going back to all of the epic things that you've done in the past where maybe a project suffered because of a lack of clearly defined expectations?

Dr. Glickman (12:39):

Yeah. I mean, almost every project that I've worked on itself, but sometimes it's not only unclear expectations, it's unclear definition of the words used to set the expectations.

Alison Dean (12:50):

Oh, wow.

Dr. Glickman (12:51):

Okay?

Alison Dean (12:51):

Mm-hmm.

Dr. Glickman (12:52):

So I worked at a company, a logistics company that was global. We had operations in 69 countries. I was hired by the owner who bought 50 businesses in 69 countries to create sort of a global supply chain brand. And my job was to unify IT and make an enterprise-oriented function for this group of businesses. Well, that was not as easy as I thought because what I found out and discovered was that the owners of these businesses who were acquired had a reward system that drove behavior to maximize profitability and minimize cost. But in order to unify the organization

and take advantage of global investments and things like telecom, sometimes costs were going to go up in one country that were higher than other countries, but on average, the costs would be world-class and great for the enterprise. So now there's a disconnect between the people running the business who are trying to minimize cost and the corporate group that's trying to optimize.

Dr. Glickman (13:55):

But everybody understood and had an expectation that we were going to become one unit at one cohesive organization. But when you got below that, that meant we were going to spend money and we were going to impact people's reward systems, and we needed to make sure we were rewarding the right behavior to get everybody to play and row in the same direction. So once we said that some of the investments we were going to make at the corporate level were not controllable and impacting somebody's bonus, they were quite happy to spend other people's money to improve their systems. Right?

Alison Dean (14:27):

Right, right.

Dr. Glickman (14:27):

So setting clear expectations is one thing, and measures go a long way to clarify what you mean. But then, understanding what the words mean behind things like digital transformation, what do you mean by that and how is it ultimately going to affect how I feed my family or manage my career is really where the rubber meets the road around gaining engagement and commitment from individuals to help you make that happen.

Alison Dean (14:52):

Yeah.

Dr. Glickman (14:52):

So that's an example that comes to my mind that might help clarify that a little bit. Yeah.

Alison Dean (14:59):

Okay. The next chapter, Authenticity Fuels Change Leadership, and-

Alison Dean (15:02):

Authenticity fuels change leadership and things that you talk about in this chapter, there's leadership versus leading, which I want you to talk about and how that ties into developmentally effective experiences. I think that there's a lot to be said for when people are taking stock of their career journey. It's almost interesting to reflect on developmentally effective experiences and those that you've had because how all that feeds into your next hopefully developmentally effective experience. It's a little bit of an ever-evolving wheel I'd say. I'd love for you to break down leadership and leading, and what's the frequency of leaders that you meet that can discern between those two things?

Dr. Glickman (15:48):

You might be talking about the difference between management and leadership. And in that context, Warren Benes was a professor of mine in business school and he was an amazing leadership savant, and he defined the difference as managers doing things right and leaders doing the right things. And what I gleaned from that, and my synthesis was doing the wrong things right is problematic, but you can't do everything all at once. You have to set priorities. And so you might be doing something perfect that isn't adding any value or isn't aligned with a strategy. And so the idea is the leader has to figure out what the right things are to do and then make sure that people are doing things right. I'll give you an example. I was visiting South Africa. I was in that company where we were doing the global consolidation, and I met a guy who was rebooting a server.

Dr. Glickman (16:44):

I was like, "What are you doing?" He's like, "Oh, this is really important. I have to do this three times a day." He's like, "Why's that?" He said, "Well, if I don't do it, the system slows down and then people can't work and they're unhappy." I was like, "Oh, well, tell me a little bit more about that." So turns out that that person thought that was a required activity in order to keep the business running. For me, that was a failure oriented activity because the system wasn't going to work unless he did that. Right? So the right thing to do was to dig into what was causing the system to slow down, fix the hardware, tune up the software, and eliminate the need to do that. So was he doing it correctly? Absolutely. But it was the wrong thing to be doing. So the leadership dynamic there was, let's get underneath the covers, find the root cause of that problem and get it fixed so that we could free up that time to do something more valuable. So that's I think the best way I could describe the difference between managing and leading.

Alison Dean (17:45):

So in the book, the quote I think that I can pull from, it says, "I view leadership as a process for achieving positive outcomes, whereas leading is an activity for helping people identify and realize their human potential along the way."

Dr. Glickman (17:58):

Okay. So leadership is a process that can be taught. And so the premise there is that we all grow up with stereotypes and beliefs that tell us we can't lead. I teach at Hispanic serving institution. I have young Latina students who tell me, my family doesn't want me in college. I should be home having children. And same students tell me, you have to be a white male to be a leader. You have to be born in a certain socioeconomic class to be a leader, you have to be born that way. And the idea about leadership being a process is I believe and my research says, and lots of other people's research says, leadership can be learned. And so the idea is let's get rid of the beliefs that are holding you back and let's not worry about what you look like, where you come from, what your family thinks.

Dr. Glickman (18:45):

Let's worry about teaching you the process of leadership and getting you comfortable that you can be a leader. And then when you find yourself in a situation where you can speak up, you can have a point of view, you can set direction, decide what the right things are to do, that's leading, and getting people to trust you and follow along and be engaged and help you achieve the outcomes that are in front of an individual or a team

Alison Dean (19:10):

And hopefully lead you to developmentally effective experiences.

Dr. Glickman (19:13):

So the developmentally effective experiences comes from research by a woman named Baxter Magolda. She studied people 18 to 30 to figure out how they learned and how they grew. And she said the first phase that she realized is that people learn their beliefs and their values and things that are important to them from external formulas or external resources. And what you meant by that is when you're growing up, your parents, your coaches, your teachers, your mentors impress upon you the things that are important, your values and your beliefs. When you hit about 18 and you get outside of the house, you hit what she calls the crossroads, and you start seeing things that might be a little bit different than the beliefs that you grew up with. And then you have an opportunity to decide to enhance that belief or do something different. And when you do that, you move into the third phase that she talks about, which is self authoring.

Dr. Glickman (20:09):

And now you start to change how you think and believe and start to write your own story. You keep the good, you get rid of the bad, and you start to develop your own story. And then the last phase is internal formulas where you've now expanded your thought process, your experience, your know-how, and you're actually sharing that with the next generation. Along that journey, developmentally effective experiences are the ones that are most difficult and most uncomfortable and make you feel afraid or nervous because you're not sure if you're going to be able to learn what it takes to make that happen. And if we're paying attention and we can understand that signal of discomfort, we can recognize this is an opportunity for me to learn something. What is the lesson I'm supposed to be learning? And if we can focus on that, that is the key to individual development. And I believe leadership development too.

Alison Dean (21:05):

But I also think highly effective leaders should also be pulling those things out of their people.

Dr. Glickman (21:11):

Well, I would say one way that leaders do that is to put people in difficult circumstances where they can learn from doing, but you have to help them understand that is the expectation.

Alison Dean (21:23):

Absolutely.

Dr. Glickman (21:23):

That perfection is not the expectation. That you're going to make mistakes. I will help you when you get stuck. And as long as you're learning and course correcting as you go, then you are going to be good. And so I think calling a developmentally effective experience what it is, and throwing people into the deep end and maybe even saying just jump and the net will appear. It'll all be okay. That turns into a really nice circle, but if one gets uncomfortable and then shies away from the opportunity to learn, then growth is definitely thwarted. And that can be very limiting.

Alison Dean (21:58):

Which is not what we want. What's your thoughts on companies investing in leadership courses for their team versus people needing to lean into it independently?

Dr. Glickman (22:11):

So I'm going to give you my bias. I think that courses are helpful to maybe provide fundamentals, but until you apply those lessons in the real world, you are not going to be able to internalize them and say, I now have experience that indicates to me that what you're asking me to do is going to be successful or not successful. You could read about other people's experience, but until you take that into the field of battle and you actually try to apply it in your own authentic way, you won't get the ultimate learning experience. So my bias is to put people into developmentally effective learning experiences and have them learn as they go. And sometimes it's even better to do the academic work after the fact so you have context to apply and make sense of what you experienced. You could do it the other way around too, but I value job assignments and learning by doing much more than reading it in a book and somehow than being an expert.

Alison Dean (23:10):

Right. We're aligned on that. So the next chapter, Change Requires Change. Love that. So I want to talk about the change curve and how valuable it is to make meaning and synthesize new knowledge to better prep for whatever's coming next.

Dr. Glickman (23:26):

Yeah. So there's research about changes that we go through that was kind of based on grief research that was done. And the idea is that we all go through some phases when we're going into a brand new opportunity, relationship,, project, something new. Our expectations are pretty high because we make up a bunch of stuff about how it's going to be. We have no idea what it's really going to be like. And as we start to move through time and actually gain experience in the arena, our assumptions, some are accurate, some are completely wrong, some were put in front of us to trick us up. And so we start to feel less confident and concerned and maybe even start questioning the situation we got ourselves into. It's at its worst at the bottom of this curve, which is called the valley of despair, and it's like, ooh, this is not what I expected it to be.

Dr. Glickman (24:16):

I am super uncomfortable. And that is when we reach a place that says, what are we going to do about it? Quitting at that stage keeps people from learning the experiences that will inform their next decision down the road, even if it's hard because the hard stuff is where the development takes place. So I argue, don't quit there. Force yourself to go through the learning experience, get to a place where your assumptions are more aligned with reality, have some degree of success, and then make a decision as to whether or not you want to keep going or you want to change. And that process of coming from the valley to despair up to a place where you can make a fully informed decision is a really important part of growth and learning by doing. And so we all go through those change curves, and a lot of times we have multiple change curves going on at once.

Dr. Glickman (25:07):

When I relocated my family to Hong Kong, I was in a brand new job working for a British conglomerate. I didn't understand the culture. My wife was in a foreign place. My kids were

learning new schools. We had all these change curves going out at once. Sometimes we were all in the valley of despair at the same time. Other times somebody was super happy and somebody else was miserable. And so just knowing that we all go through those curves and kind of recognizing where we are at any point in time and knowing that there's hope and we can rely on others to sort of help us through, I think is just an important dynamic, especially if you're going to get into real groundbreaking work where history can't predict what the future looks like.

Alison Dean (25:47):

I also think great leaders hopefully can identify when people on their team are going through stuff on that change curve as well, to bring everyone hopefully to the same ultimate destination.

Dr. Glickman (26:00):

Well, I mean, here's what I think. You have to foster enough trust that people will be comfortable being vulnerable and telling you when they're in trouble or when they're hurting or when you can help them with something. And of course you can pay attention to somebody's energy, but it's just way clearer when they can just share with you what they need in that moment. And then to the extent you can provide that, whether it's time off or assistance or support or a mentor, then you can help somebody through a tough time.

Alison Dean (26:29):

Next chapter, The Power of Purpose and Direction. So this was actually extremely interesting because you talk about a P&Dm a purpose and direction within a company. How popular are P&Ds in different orgs? Because I can't say that I've seen them everywhere. I'm even trying to think of when I was at Disney, did I ever see a P&D at Disney? Not to say that every company shouldn't have one, that's one part of it. How does that also feed into the activity value analysis model? I want you to talk about that too.

Dr. Glickman (27:04):

Purpose and direction is just a label for a series of elements. And I think companies do some or more of the elements all the time. Companies have mission statements.

Alison Dean (27:14):

Yes.

Dr. Glickman (27:14):

They have value statements. What we stand for. They have positioning around how they're going to achieve their strategy. They have some metrics that they use to define success. And for me, what the purpose and direction does is bring all of those together in an effort to align them. And so you make sure when you are choosing work to do or comparing priorities, you can ask yourself, is this going to help me achieve my vision? Are the actions aligned with my values? Are the financial results going to move the needle on the thing that is most popular? There's a key part of it that I really like a lot is like, what are they going to say about us when we're successful?

Dr. Glickman (28:02):

And that element for me in my case is CEO's on an airplane and somebody in the seat next to them says, "Man, my IT organization's just making me crazy. Cybersecurity and data privacy. We're spending so much money, blah, blah, blah. How about your IT organization?" I want my boss to say, "They're great, man. I couldn't do business without them."

Dr. Glickman (28:24):

And so the question then is, if I do this project, is that going to help that person say they're great, I couldn't do business without them. If not, maybe it's not the right thing to be doing. So the purpose and direction is a series of elements that when they're defined by the people doing the work and they're aligned with one another, it's a very powerful tool to measure whether you're doing the right things in the right way. If it's just a poster on the wall, it's going to be just as ineffective as any other poster that you could put on a coffee cup or a big laminated sheet of paper.

Alison Dean (28:58):

I think it should be an app.

Dr. Glickman (28:59):

Okay, well, I'll invest.

Alison Dean (29:02):

I love it. Okay.

Dr. Glickman (29:03):

For me, it's about the human interactions and bringing people into a room and saying, "For this project or this team or this company, let's engage and let's really work through what we want to say."

Alison Dean (29:16):

I mean, more of a guiding app that a whole team of people would come together to leverage together. So not to say that it would be in a silo where one person just figures everything out, but like a shared guiding tool. I agree though. Everyone needs to do it. Yeah.

Dr. Glickman (29:32):

I think it's ingredients to form a recipe to really get people aligned and allow them to measure whether they're doing the right things. That's the idea behind that concept.

Alison Dean (29:42):

And make the casserole.

Dr. Glickman (29:43):

Maybe it's a casserole, maybe it's a piece of bread or a pizza, who knows? Dessert, cheesecake.

Alison Dean (29:56):

Speaking of cheesecake, it's time to do our quickfire round, which we like to call break on through. So first thing that comes to mind.

Alison Dean (30:03):

... we like to call Break on Through. So first thing that comes to mind, favorite fast food?

Dr. Glickman (30:06):

Favorite fast food? I don't eat fast food. I eat food fast.

Alison Dean (30:12):

Okay. No fast food for Dr. Ron Glickman. Coffee or tea?

Dr. Glickman (30:16):

Coffee, for sure.

Alison Dean (30:17):

AM or PM?

Dr. Glickman (30:19):

AM. Can't sleep if I have it past 1:00. My favorite coffee was called the Keith Richards at the coffee shop in my neighborhood. It was coffee on top of four shots of espresso. That's my kind of coffee.

Alison Dean (30:31):

Okay. Yeah, right. That's-

Dr. Glickman (30:33):

Go big, or go home.

Alison Dean (30:34):

That's good. Okay. No fast food, but what's your favorite cuisine?

Dr. Glickman (30:37):

I like Asian cuisine a lot. I like Indian cuisine, I like Japanese, I like Chinese. If I had to eat the same thing every day, it'd probably be pizza.

Alison Dean (30:46):

Hmm. Okay. That's helpful. Favorite place to travel?

Dr. Glickman (30:49):

My goodness. I just love traveling, but I'd have to say India. Amazing place.

Alison Dean (30:56):

I want to go. Historical figure you'd like to have dinner with?

Dr. Glickman (30:58):

A famous historical figure, or just somebody who's not here anymore?

Alison Dean (31:02):

Either one.

Dr. Glickman (31:03):

I think Thomas Jefferson would be really interesting to talk to, but I'd like to talk to my grandfather now that I'm sort of his age, you know?

Alison Dean (31:12):

And a grandfather.

Dr. Glickman (31:13):

Came from a different country, really got started as an immigrant, helped to create the American dream for my generation and my children. I'd love to talk to him now about that experience. That would be amazing.

Alison Dean (31:27):

That's awesome. Okay. Favorite book other than yours?

Dr. Glickman (31:31):

I like Emotional Intelligence 2.0. It's an amazing book. Real short and simple, but it's all about how to improve your ability to manage your emotions and work effectively with other people. And 50% of job performance is measured by emotional intelligence, whether people tell you or not, and it's an absolute essential ingredient for strong leaders, and so that's one of my favorites.

Alison Dean (31:58):

Love it. If you could have one superpower, what would it be?

Dr. Glickman (32:01):

That is a really good question. I would like to have a better memory. Attention to detail, I struggle with, especially when it comes to numbers. So when I look at a spreadsheet, I see noise and get very anxious. I would love to see a story in numbers. And I could surround myself with folks who could do that, which helps me to succeed, but I'd like memory and a mathematical superpower would be great.

Alison Dean (32:24):

I think you need to look up Jim Kwik because he might be able to help with that. Okay. What's your favorite movie?

Dr. Glickman (32:32):

Godfather.

Alison Dean (32:33):

Good. And you're on a podcast, so what's your favorite podcast?

Dr. Glickman (32:37):

I like your podcast.

Alison Dean (32:39):

I love you.

Dr. Glickman (32:40):

Because I'll admit, I don't listen to podcasts. Maybe that's a generational thing. So I've heard yours, and I think you're great, and I like what you're trying to accomplish, and so I'm going to say that.

Alison Dean (32:51):

Thank you, Ron. That was not a setup. I feel like every person now, it's like I'm setting them up. A few people have been like, "Oh, my sister's," or, "Oh, this one over here," and I'm like, "Thank you." All right. Next chapter, Outcomes are Everything. I would agree with that. And this is obviously The Breakthrough Podcast. So you discuss breakthrough outcomes, so I want to know what's most important for a leader embarking on a breakthrough outcome, given the amount of risk and uncertainty?

Dr. Glickman (33:23):

Well, I think the first thing is you have to acknowledge that there's risk and uncertainty, because for me, by definition, a breakthrough means you think it's impossible or you don't have the know-how to do it. It's like taking sales from 100 to 1000 or 10,000, not from 100 to 110. That would not be a breakthrough. So you have to acknowledge, first of all, the lack of certainty, but the potential value that could be added if you are successful.

Dr. Glickman (33:50):

And what goes along right with that for me is if you're going for breakthroughs, you are going to have breakdowns. It is inevitable that things are not going to go right, that you're going to have assumptions that were wrong or ideas that didn't work the way you wanted them to, or not enough funding, or changes in scope, or things take longer than you are supposed to.

Dr. Glickman (34:11):

And when things get serious, I think it's important to say and declare, "I am having a breakdown," and then have a process to work through that without shame and blame. And that kind of gets at, "Okay. What do we know? What are the facts that we understand? What don't we know? What do we think? And what are our options for moving forward? Are there a different path? Is there a different way? Do we need to change our objective?" And so I think acknowledging the uncertainty,

really embracing breakdowns, and collectively working through barriers that show up are two really, really important things when you're operating in that realm.

Dr. Glickman (34:49):

The third is that you can't do 100% breakthrough kind of work because of the lack of certainty. So when you're building a portfolio of projects for a mature organization or a startup, I think it's important to really be selective about the breakthroughs and the value that you could achieve, but then having some projects in your portfolio that allow you to perform while you're transforming.

Alison Dean (35:14):

Right. So basically, multiple things going on at once to assure that there will be some wins along the way?

Dr. Glickman (35:22):

Yeah, forward progress. I mean, if you're running a business, you have to operate that business at the same time you're trying to figure out what's the next big thing and how do we want to go about doing it? I think when leaders have an expectation that the value will be significant and the certainty will be significant too, they set up a very, very difficult paradox for their teams to resolve.

Alison Dean (35:45):

Mm-hmm. It's almost like a sandbox environment for a breakthrough outcome so that you can actually still run the business doing other somewhat transformative projects.

Dr. Glickman (35:59):

I think that's the idea, is to have a portfolio of projects on a continuum from conservative to breakthrough, but I think it's also important to note that one company's breakthrough is another company's everyday performance.

Alison Dean (36:12):

Well, that's true. Right.

Dr. Glickman (36:13):

And so one way to kind of get over the uncertainty is to hire people who may have done something before. It might not be a breakthrough for them, and you can seed them to sort of help your organization get up to speed and make things happen.

Alison Dean (36:26):

Okay. I can appreciate all that. I think I want to know more about the breakdown-to-breakthrough collaborative process that you talk about in Possibilities Spawn Opportunities.

Dr. Glickman (36:38):

Here's the best example that I can give you. My daughter has a learning disability, diagnosed. She has her own kids now, her own family, but going to school was really difficult. She struggled with certain concepts. As an example, time was a concept she struggled with. She could tell you it was

10 to 5:00, but she struggled with how long it was until 5:00, so as a result, when she was planning projects, things didn't always get started in the timeframe that they needed to, to finish on time. So school was difficult.

Dr. Glickman (37:06):

When she went to college, she went to a school designed for kids with learning disabilities in Vermont. It's a two-year school. She did really, really well. After a year and a half, she came to my wife and I and said, "Hey, I'm doing great. I'm ready to go to a four-year school, and I found this school that has a great program for kids like me and I want to transfer." So we said, "Great." She was committed, she was excited, she had a good rationale for doing it.

Dr. Glickman (37:31):

About two weeks into her first semester, she had a breakdown, so she declared, "This is not working for me," so the collaborative process between her and my wife and I was, "Okay, what is going on? Let's talk about your assumptions." "Well, my school in Vermont had PhDs in learning issues, and they all understood how to teach people the way that they learn. My teachers here are just experts in their subject. They teach things the same way to the audience. I had 15 kids in my class in Vermont. I have 400 kids in my class. My tutors understood how I learned. In this school, I have peer tutors." And the last, most important thing was the resource department wasn't open at the beginning of school, so she struggled to get help making her plan.

Dr. Glickman (38:19):

I was like, "Okay. Understanding all of those facts, now what are the options and implications?" My parents would've said, "Well, just go tough it up. Don't embarrass us and try harder." But for us, it was like, "What do you want to do?" And Rachel said, "I want to go back to my old school and finish," which she did, and she successfully moved to a different four-year school and finished.

Dr. Glickman (38:39):

And so the process is, one, recognizing when you're in trouble; two, thinking through what were my assumptions that might have gone wrong, and based on my current reality, what can and will I do? And the going-in assumption is good people make bad decisions, so you have to get at how did we get to this place, without blaming and shaming the individual, and then figuring out, okay, what are we going to do to move forward, and what can we learn from this experience?

Dr. Glickman (39:09):

And so that's the best example I can give you sort of outside the everyday work stuff around breakdown to breakthrough, but I'm sure you can imagine projects where shit hits the fan and people are afraid. And the idea is to say, "Don't be afraid. Come and let's acknowledge we have a problem, and let's talk about how we got here and what we're going to do about it."

Alison Dean (39:30):

I think in those moments, the best leaders are also highlighted, because how a leader handles a specific situation to create a certain vibe with their team, those are some of those make-or-break-it moments, so I certainly can appreciate that.

Dr. Glickman (39:45):

I think accountability is the most important thing, and owning it and being vulnerable about the situation that you're in as a leader. Brené Brown talks about the opposite of accountability is blame, and blame is the expulsion of frustration and anger.

Dr. Glickman (40:01):

So if you're the leader and you feel triggered because you're in trouble and you start looking to people to blame, you have a very low probability of getting yourself out of that situation. If you can own it and be vulnerable and say, "I will work with the group to sort of figure out how we can get through this and what we can learn," that's a leader that I think I would want to help me drive for breakthroughs, because these kinds of things happen all the time.

Alison Dean (40:26):

Amen to that. Next chapter, Talent Turns Opportunities into Realities. So I'm curious, why do you think certain companies or certain leaders don't recognize that people are a company's most important resource for achieving strategic outcomes?

Dr. Glickman (40:44):

That's a really difficult question to answer. I can't speak about how other people view their talent, but what I will say from my experience is companies who do view talent as the most important thing to getting things done and differentiate that talent into sort of groups so that you can get people in the right seats on the bus will be successful over and over and over again.

Dr. Glickman (41:10):

Everybody is not the same. They don't all get motivated by the same thing. They're not all comfortable with ambiguity and lack of structure. And so one has to figure out which people are the right skillsets and know-how for a particular activity and not put people in the wrong situation.

Alison Dean (41:30):

There's a lot about IT departments that, I think, don't often get the level of admiration and applause that they deserve for the work that they do. Obviously, it depends on the company and all these other different criteria, but as a generally internally supportive function, they're not the people that are getting all the gold stars and admonishment of success, or what have you.

Alison Dean (41:56):

So I think you're an exemplary person with how you've done things at various other companies, so you are able to articulate things in a way that proves the value of all the people on your team. I'm curious, for other leaders that might be struggling with that, what advice do you give to help make those departments shine?

Dr. Glickman (42:20):

I think there's two broad categories. The first is in a technology-oriented function that is serving a business, one has to understand what the business is trying to accomplish and support those people with technology that will allow them to do their best job, and that might mean that certain activities are the wrong things to do.

Dr. Glickman (42:43):

So doing the wrong thing right, some person doing that might feel like people aren't recognizing them and giving them their due, but at the same time, the business is saying, "Why are you even doing that? I don't need that. It's a waste of money. That's not something that is really going to get me to where I want to go." So I think the first thing is really connecting what you're doing with the overall strategy and doing the most important things and letting things go that are less important. And that will go a long way to changing the perception of how a business might feel about an individual technology organization.

Dr. Glickman (43:21):

Example I can tell you, when I got to TJ's, I was told nobody appreciated the technology folks. We wanted to upgrade the network, we wanted switches to be put in all the stores and change the routers, and we know this, and nobody's letting us do it, and therefore, they don't get us. And I was like, "Okay." So when I started to look into what was happening and I got out to the stores, I realized that when our network wasn't highly available, our customers were incapable of using their debit and credit cards because they couldn't be processed, right?

Dr. Glickman (43:55):

So when I went and had a conversation with my boss about whether or not we wanted our customers to be able to pay with their cards 100% of the time, he of course said, "What do you need to do to fix that?" "Well, I need to put some switches and routers and upgrade our network," right? And so people knew what was important, but they didn't understand how to tell the story and put it in a context that would get people to appreciate the value that could be added. So I think that's one thing that people in tech don't do particularly well is put together a narrative that is aligned with the values that their customers are trying to get at.

Dr. Glickman (44:31):

I think the second thing that's important about individuals is recognizing the skill they have to do the job and the will they have to tolerate change in ambiguity. And so if somebody has really high skill and high will, I call them, in the model that I described in the book, change agents. They need to be empowered, they need to have opportunity to learn by doing, they want to put structure around things, and they're very important when you're going for breakthroughs and trying to invent stuff. If you have the skill to do the job, but you don't like to be in ambiguous, unknown, uncertain situations, and you want really well-defined swim lanes within which you can operate, I call those people highly valued. They're really important and really do a lion share of the day-to-day operations.

Dr. Glickman (45:22):

If you put a highly valued person in a change agent's role, they're going to be very uncomfortable, and probably won't be successful in the long haul. If you put a change agent in a highly valued person's role, they're going to feel constrained, and bored, and like you don't get them. So understanding where people come from and having conversations with them about these different roles is really important to figure out how to get someone in a role where they can be successful and realize the praise that they might be seeking. And if you don't have the skill or the will to do the job, then you're a blocked learner and that requires very, very specific direction and some choices. You either want to be here or maybe I can help you find a place where you thrive and be more comfortable.

Dr. Glickman (46:07):

So I think aligning whatever you're doing with the ultimate strategy and making sure you're focused on the right things, to Warren Bennis's point about leadership. And you're getting your people in the right positions where they can thrive and grow at a pace that makes sense for them, will really get a team in a situation where they can build momentum.

Alison Dean (46:27):

I like that. There's a couple chapters left of Lead for a Change.

Dr. Glickman (46:31):

So the whole idea behind the title was, you have to lead for a change, but-

Alison Dean (46:36):

We do.

Dr. Glickman (46:36):

... many of us at times in our careers, wishes our bosses would lead for a change.

Alison Dean (46:42):

That true! Yeah, that's so true.

Dr. Glickman (46:42):

To me, that was kind of the fun, snarky idea behind the title.

Alison Dean (46:46):

It's witty. Okay, we is better than me. Love that. I want to know if you can kind of share more about allies, opponents, bedfellows, adversaries, and how those different archetypes come together to achieve breakthroughs.

Dr. Glickman (47:06):

So we're talking about two dimensions in this context, talking about agreement and we're talking about trust. So the first assertion is, they're not synonymous. Many people believe that they are. I've had people who only trust me when I agree with them, and that could be very limiting. So you are allies when you have trust and you have agreement. And that means you can move quickly and deal with issues as they come up. And that's the ideal situation to go for breakthroughs, because the trust is so fundamental.

Dr. Glickman (47:39):

If you have trust and you have low agreement, then your opponents. And in an opponent situation, that's a positive thing because you're debating options and implications for how to solve a problem. But you trust one another, so you're willing to be transparent, compromise, disagree, and commit. And that too is a place where you can get breakthroughs achieved.

Alison Dean (48:02):

Cool.

Dr. Glickman (48:03):

If you don't have trust, I strongly recommend not going for breakthroughs. Because you have to have trust to be in that place. If you don't have trust and you have agreement, then you're bedfellows. But it's like, "Okay, I have agreement, but it's really tenuous. And when I don't, I'm down in an adversarial situation, no agreement, and no trust."

Dr. Glickman (48:24):

And that is the political discourse in this country. All you can do is state your point of view. You can't ask for anything, you can't persuade anyone, there's no compromise. And so it is impossible to go quickly or get really big accomplishments done in the breakthrough context, if you have no trust and no agreement. So, that's what those archetypes help me understand. And I like to use that diagram to have a conversation with someone around, "Where do you see our relationship?"

Alison Dean (48:52):

Yes.

Dr. Glickman (48:52):

It's not good or bad. If we're adversaries, we're adversaries. If we don't have trust, I get that. I will maybe try to build trust, but with the lack of it, I'm going to define a project portfolio that I could achieve. And it's going to be pretty narrow because we're going to agree on very few things. It's going to go pretty slow because every time there's an impasse, we're going to get into the blame game or get into politics. And that's just not a recipe for thriving for developing people or helping businesses to achieve breakthroughs. So, that's sort of the underlying thought process behind that.

Alison Dean (49:26):

So for someone that wants to start out with this level of analysis of the people that they're working with, how do you recommend someone navigate this assessment before they're embarking on a new project?

Dr. Glickman (49:39):

I mean, in a perfect world, you sit down with somebody and you walk through those archetypes and say, "Where do you think we are?"

Alison Dean (49:45):

Okay. I'm just like breast hacks, like, "Hey-"

Dr. Glickman (49:47):

I think bring it out. It's like, "Hey, if we don't have trust, we don't have trust. But let's at least acknowledge that so we could figure out together what's possible-"

Alison Dean (49:56):

How we're going to [inaudible 00:49:56].

Dr. Glickman (49:56):

"... and not constantly be fighting." If we don't have trust, can we get to trust? Maybe, maybe not.

Alison Dean (50:01):

Right.

Dr. Glickman (50:02):

But if you can't even have that conversation, I would define you in that adversarial quadrant to begin with.

Alison Dean (50:08):

Anyway.

Dr. Glickman (50:08):

Then once you know if you both feel like the relationship is in that same box, then you know how to set expectations that can be met or exceeded. And they're not going to be huge, if you don't have trust.

Alison Dean (50:19):

I like the full transparency laid out.

Dr. Glickman (50:21):

You have to be vulnerable to go there.

Alison Dean (50:23):

That's true too. Yeah.

Dr. Glickman (50:24):

But it's rewarding when you can work with people who get used to that.

Alison Dean (50:27):

And also just going back to expectation setting, you know what page you're on. Okay, so you conclude the book with Start Slow, Finish Strong. And I like that you injected that last chapter with a Lao Tzu quote. The Lao Tzu quote was, "New beginnings are often disguised as painful endings." So curious, Ron, what's your biggest tip for someone who has maybe reached the end of one job, and maybe has not yet embarked on what their next one is?

Dr. Glickman (50:58):

So, we're back to jump and the net will appear. Is that where we are?

Alison Dean (51:00):

I guess so.

Dr. Glickman (51:02):

I would really try to do some introspective work around what is causing that discord. And you think about trust and agreement. Are you at a different place with your supervisor? Or you think about change agent versus highly valued. Do you feel like you're in the wrong box? And if those are the things that are driving your discomfort, you can have conversations about how to maybe be repositioned and given a chance. And if those don't come to fruition, then you can acknowledge that there's another place out there where you can find a boss who will support you and a brand that you can feel good about.

Dr. Glickman (51:41):

And obviously this is not a conversation when you have to work at a job to pay your bills. I mean, this is a little bit more fortunate and a career-progressive sort of conversation where you have choice. And I would say first, most of us always have choice. And secondarily, get at what's really the underlying root cause of the discomfort. And if that can't be negotiated or fixed through constructive conversations, then I would get excited about the opportunity to look for something new. But understand the target that you're looking for, and go find what is missing in your current situation. And start a new change curve in your life. And I think that can be super motivating.

Alison Dean (52:24):

Absolutely. What didn't I ask you about the book that you want to share?

Dr. Glickman (52:28):

I think you were really thorough. I'm sort of honored that you read it. One person read the book, that's awesome.

Alison Dean (52:34):

More than one person read the book. The amount of people that submitted recommendations for the book, I was like, "Wow, look at that. They all read the book."

Dr. Glickman (52:42):

Here's what I'll say about it. It's designed to be used over a period of time. I really wanted it to be a guide with ingredients that help leaders to grow personally and professionally. And all of the visuals are kind of stacked together in an appendix. There's a lot of pictures in the book that describes these models that for me, make it not about a personal thing or an identity, but give leaders a vocabulary to have a conversation without it devolving into personal stuff. That's a great way to begin your change journey or your career progression.

Dr. Glickman (53:15):

So my hope is people will remember, "Oh, I got to go have a conversation with this person I work with. Let me go get that Trust and Agreement Matrix out." Or, "I'm going to talk to my boss, let me get that Skill Will Matrix out and see if my boss appreciates what I'm capable of doing." And so, my hope is that people will go back to it from time to time. It's not really designed to be devoured and memorized like a textbook. It's more a tool set that I'm hoping people will find these ingredients to create their own recipes, as they go through their leadership journey.

Alison Dean (53:46):

Yeah. I have a digital copy and I need to now have the actual book. Because I'm someone where I need to fold the corners and highlight and do things. So I'm going to do that today, Ron, because it's going to drive me nuts. I don't want to have to open my computer every time I want to look up something. [inaudible 00:54:03].

Dr. Glickman (54:03):

That's the hard part about the e-book with this particular kind of idea. And we're doing an audiobook right now that'll be out in a couple months. And we're going to have a PDF that can be downloaded-

Alison Dean (54:12):

Oh, that's good.

Dr. Glickman (54:12):

... with the visuals so that when somebody's listening, they can at least see-

Alison Dean (54:16):

Perfect.

Dr. Glickman (54:17):

... the models that are being referred to.

Alison Dean (54:20):

Smart. I agree that it's a phenomenal referenceable guide. I think it can help sort of anybody in whatever sort of stage of life that they're in. It just offers some perspective that I think is helpful.

Alison Dean (54:44):

Okay. That segues us, Ron, not really well, but that is a segue into us continuing our tradition of past guest questions. So this week's Breakthrough Club question is from Carol Fawcett, who I think you know. She is Chief Information Officer at Golden State Foods. And she set this up with a very long, "Ron does this and this and this and this." And she's like listing 25,000 things that you're a part of. So she says, "How do you do it all? What is your time management secret to success?"

Dr. Glickman (55:19):

I love her, by the way. We work together at a Women's for Leadership group, helping to educate women who are trying to aspire to be the top leader of their technology organizations, which is where we met you. And she's amazing. So, I appreciate the question. I would say time is fixed, but it's not a variable resource. And I don't do everything, but I really try to pick the things that are important to me and put time into them.

Dr. Glickman (55:42):

And so I do a lot of charity work, as you know, and most of it is around teaching this curriculum to diverse groups of people. I work with incarcerated folks, trying to help them. I work with an organization that teaches them to code. I teach some of this leadership curriculum to help people have a jumpstart when they get out of prison. And our recidivism rate we're real proud of, is only

1%, where the rest of the country is 70%. The organization's called, Persevere. I work with the Women in Leadership group where I met you. And I spend my time doing those things. But I'm not out on the golf course four hours a day on the weekends, so these are my hobbies.

Dr. Glickman (56:20):

And so I think that's really the most important thing, is picking the things that bring you value and that allow you to make a difference in your community and do the best you can with the time that you have available. And I also have a tremendous team that I work with at TJ's, so they afford me some bandwidth to think about things outside the day-to-day tasks. And so, that makes a big difference too.

Alison Dean (56:43):

Absolutely. Okay. We talked about an early breakthrough, we've talked about many other kinds of breakthroughs. Have you had a recent breakthrough that you want to share?

Dr. Glickman (56:56):

A recent breakthrough that I want to share? Look, getting this book finished was a big breakthrough for me. It was a two-year journey. I definitely thought it was impossible when I started. And my first version when I thought I was finished was really the end of the beginning. And it took a long time to figure out how to get the book written for consumption by a broad range of people, how to get it published, how to get resources to support me. And so, I feel like launching the book was a really big breakthrough for me, so I'm pretty excited about that. I think that's probably the best one that I could share with you at the moment.

Alison Dean (57:30):

Oh, that's a big one. Congratulations on the book. It's so lovely to have you back on the podcast. And I thank you so much, Ron.

Dr. Glickman (57:39):

Thank you. I really appreciate it. It's been a pleasure and I hope that what we did today makes a difference and helps folks. Please let me know.

Alison Dean (57:46):

The community will let us know. Thank you for tuning into this episode of The Breakthrough. Be sure to subscribe on your favorite platform and follow us on Twitter and Instagram @BreakthroughPod. I'm your host, Alison Dean. Until next time.