

Greg: [00:00:00] You're born with two ears, two eyes, and one mouth. That means you should be listening and watching twice as much as you're talking.

[music]

Peter: [00:00:19] Welcome to improv is no joke podcast. It's all about becoming a more effective communicator by embracing the principles of improvisation. I'm your host Peter Margaritis the self-proclaimed chief edutainment officer of my business The Accidental Accountant. My goal is to provide you with thought provoking interviews with business leaders so you can become an effective improviser, which will lead to building stronger relationships with clients, customers, colleagues, and even your family. So let's start to show.

[music]

Peter: [00:00:51] Welcome to episode 52 of Improv is no Joke podcast. And today's guest is Greg Lainas, who is senior vice president and division director of Robert Half Management Resources, a division of Robert Half International. That name may sound familiar because I interviewed Greg back in episode 22 on networking your way to your next job. This interview we focus on the importance of networking and growing your business. Greg has a very impressive background where he's been with Robert half for over 30 years. He has earned the chairman's and President's Club award status during his tenure. In 2014, Greg became the first person in the history of Robert Half to obtain 20 million in gross margin. Now that takes a great networker to achieve that milestone. We start the interview with a discussion on how he networked his way into the book Flashback by Gary Braver and then turn our attention to business development. Greg provides a number of tips and techniques on how to grow your business through networking. My favorite tips were from his analogies, like the doctor of careers. When he meets with someone, he wants to figure out their pain, like a doctor. Understand that pain and how it's affecting their business so he can prescribe the treatment, aka the solution. In other words, he has to park his agenda and listen to the response thoroughly so he can provide the correct solution. The one quote that Greg gave that we all should remember is, "It's not about what you do. It's how well you do it." This episode is full of tips and techniques and become a better networker to help your clients grow their businesses. I have some exciting news to share with my audience. Listen, Learn, and Earn. I've partnered with the American Association of CPAs and the Business Learning Institute to bring an exciting new learning opportunity for accounting professionals to earn CPE credits that starts on May 30th. You can earn up to 1 CPE credit for each completed podcast episode purchased for only \$29 through the MACPA and Business Learning Institute self-study website. The podcast episodes are mobile friendly. Open your browser on your smartphone tablet or computer, go to the CPA business learning institute self-study account, and listen to an episode. Take their review and final exam while you're working out or after listening to an episode on your commute to and from work. It's that easy. While all episodes of improv is no joke podcasts are available on my website, only those purchased through the MACPA BLI Self-study website are eligible for CPE credit. You can get detailed information by visiting my website at www.PeterMargaritis.com and clicking on the graphic "Improv is no Joke for CPE" on my home page. I hope you enjoy his exciting and flexible new way of earning CPE credit. Remember you can subscribe to my podcast on [iTunes](#), [Stitcher](#), and [Google Play](#). If you'd like to purchase an autographed copy of my book *Improv is no Joke: Using Improvisation to Create Positive Results in Leadership and Life*, for \$14.99 with free shipping, please go to my website, PeterMargaritis.com, and you'll see the graphic on the homepage to purchase my book. Please allow 14 days for shipping. You can also follow me on social media. You can find me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Instagram](#). With that said, let's get to the interview with Greg Lainas.

[music]

Peter: [00:04:59] Welcome back to my podcast. It's so good to have the opportunity to have a conversation with you again.

Greg: [00:05:06] Thank you Peter I'm thrilled and honored that you asked me to participate. Thank you.

Peter: [00:05:12] Well the episode 22 that we originally did is one of the top downloaded episodes to date. I think it's like a number third position overall. And it had a lot of good information. Back in that episode we were talking about networking for jobs. But we're going to turn the conversation around a little bit today and talk about networking for business development. But before we get into that, we mentioned in the last episode that you networked your way into a book - a book called Flashback by Gary Braver. I got to know more about that story.

Greg: [00:05:51] OK Peter, whether your listeners will find this as amusing... well that's a separate discussion.

Peter: [00:05:56] [laughs]

Greg: [00:05:56] But I guess it's all part of my makeup in terms of the way I acclimate the way that I go through my day here at Robert Half. But in 1975 I was a sophomore at Northeastern University, and Northeastern is a five year school famous for its co-operative education. And my roommate who also became a CPA says to me we have to take this English Lit course and it's on science fiction. And I said why are we doing this. Companies don't take literary courses as electives. He says we're going to meet lots of women. I said well OK I guess that works. You know we were two accountants. I mean need I say anymore about our social strength?

Peter: [00:06:53] [laughs] You're good.

Greg: [00:06:55] Now the course was taught by a gentleman by name of Professor Gary Ghoshgarian, and I stress the last name because that is our Armenian descent. And Peter as you know you and I are both Greeks so the the alliance between Greeks and Armenians is very strong. A natural bond. So we take the course. And it was in the auditorium at Northeastern, which is one of the larger rooms available. You can ask if we met any girls, and the answer is no.

Peter: [00:07:24] [laughs]

Greg: [00:07:25] Did I actually get to meet the Professor? The answer was No. But I did enjoy the course.

Peter: [00:07:31] OK.

Greg: [00:07:31] So that was the last of any interaction whatsoever I had with Professor Gary Goshgarian. Now I met my wife at Northeastern. One of my other roommates met his wife at Northeastern. But there were a group of us that basically have become friends since the early 70s and our friendship still maintains. One of that of course is the roommate that made me take the course. He also became a CPA. At our 25th college reunion, Northeastern is a five year school so in 1970 when I graduated so 25th year would have been 2003. I did that without a calculator by the way.

Peter: [00:08:12] [laughs] You're good.

Greg: [00:08:13] So a group of us went including my fellow roommate - the one that made me take the course, although he could not bring his wife. But my two other roommates brought their wives

and one of them is the spouse also as a northeastern grad. Anyway, my wife and I go. We arrive at Northeastern and we expected to have a little more notoriety. We couldn't find the building. We found the building finally and it was a very small room, and I stress that because in the 70s North-Eastern was actually the largest private university in the country. An unknown fact, but that is accurate. We get into the room and very poor attendance. And I said to my wife - because I'm an accountant - Listen we paid for the meal. We're not with our children because we stayed over with our buds. And I said as soon as the meal is over we're out of here.

Peter: [00:09:12] Yeah.

Greg: [00:09:12] And I look at the program and the program guide - the MC was Gary Goshgarian.

Peter: [00:09:22] Hmm.

Greg: [00:09:22] Hmm is correct, sir. Well I see him right away when he came in the room, and I described to Gary later "you were like a fish out of water" in that nobody came over to talk to you. You were just standing in the corner chewing gum, basically saying when is this thing going to end? I said to my wife "Here's Gary. I got to talk to him." She says Don't embarrass me. I said don't worry I will.

Peter: [00:09:50] [laughs]

Greg: [00:09:51] So I strike up a conversation with them. And that stems from my ability to talk to people, from my previous episode of networking, and I stress that point for your listeners - not so much at all whatsoever to boast or brag because that's not what I wanted to do - because the worst that can happen is Gary is just like get away from me groupie, or whatever. Or he's receptive to having me come up and talk to him. Well, that's what happened. We had a great conversation. He ends up having dinner -He sat at our table for dinner! And then of course my other roommate couldn't resist the reminder that it was he who talked me into taking the course.

Peter: [00:10:39] [laughs]

Greg: [00:10:39] Gary ad-libbed the entire presentation on what motivated him to write the books. Now there is a subscript to this: my freshman lit professor was a gentleman named Robert Parker. Now your listeners may not recognize that name, but he wrote the Jesse Stone series that stars Tom Selleck, and he also wrote the books that starred in a TV show Spenser for Hire. He wrote a home a ton of books. Robert Parker subsequently died. Gary wrote the obituary, or excuse me the Tribute, in the Boston Globe. So I think I may have been the only student that had both of them as professors. The same roommate also talked me into taking a Jack Levin course, and we took a statistics course in sociology. Jack Levin was always a guest on Larry King every time there was murderers in our country. So I think I'm the only one that had all three of the professors. Ask me my accounting professors and I can't remember, but I remember those three gentlemen.

Peter: [00:11:52] [laughs]

Greg: [00:11:52] All right. So, post the the 25th reunion, I start to call Gary or e-mail him. And I threw through the development, or the culture as we developed our friendship. I asked him if he could put me in a book.

Peter: [00:12:12] So wait wait. What was the professor's name?

Greg: [00:12:16] Gary Goshgarian.

Peter: [00:12:18] So Gary Braver is-

Greg: [00:12:20] Gary Braver is his pen name, correct. So your listeners could go to GaryBraver.com. He tells the story that no one's going to buy a book with the name Goshgarian, but they'll buy a book with Gary Braver.

Peter: [00:12:33] Huh. Interesting.

Greg: [00:12:34] He's quite the comic. He's really a remarkable human being. So I get in his book and it's called Flashback and we're on page 115 in the hard copy.

Peter: [00:12:47] And I went out and actually had this conversation way before even episode 22. I went out and bought the book and, yes, gosh darn you are there. And as I listen to this story these words come into my head, and I do this all the time especially when I'm talking about networking. You just never know. If you had not walked up to your former professor at that reunion, you wouldn't have gotten into the book. You had no idea that that's what was going to take. You had no idea but you took that chance. I like to say that you leaned into the opportunity instead of leaned away from it, and a lot of us in networking we tend to lean away. There's some fear, there's some angst about leaning in. And as you said he could have said kid get out of here.

Greg: [00:13:40] Get lost.

Peter: [00:13:41] Or, you can strike up a conversation, he's at dinner, you guys become friends, and next thing you know you're in a book. I mean that's that's ideal networking.

Greg: [00:13:55] I even got him to do a book signing in Connecticut.

Peter: [00:13:58] Oh really?

Greg: [00:14:00] I have an equity interest in a golf course and we have a pretty large ballroom and we do weddings and anything else like that. So I called them. I actually contacted the local librarian to ask her in our town, and she said you know Greg this we do this stuff all the time. And next thing you know we did it at our golf course. Gary came, the librarian came, she really was the sponsor, if you will, of the program. And he actually had former students come and it was so well received. He loved it and he ad libbed the whole speech. And people weren't all of his accomplishments. Just a remarkable human being.

Peter: [00:14:42] Let's substitute a word, because would you say he ad libbed or he improvised his whole speech?

Greg: [00:14:50] Oh... wonderful word.

Peter: [00:14:56] [laughs] When I hear ad-lib, my mind goes they improvise it, but in a sense of improvised because he has all the knowledge - he has it all in his head. He's formulating it right there on the spot. It's thinking on your feet and reading the audience, and probably pulling in stories based on how the audience is reacting versus some other stories that he might not use at that point in time, to save that for for a different type of audience. So I assume that's what he was doing. He was just building this great speech around all these stories he had, which is a remarkable accomplishment for anybody to be able to do something quite like that. So let's turn this conversation and go down the path of business development because what I do know about you... you've been a Robert Half for a long time, and as I said in the intro, you're one of the first people to hit the big gross margin number out there. You can't do that without having a strong network - without having strong networking skills. So what would you say would be the number one

thing - and let's say the audience is thinking networking, don't talk to strangers, people are just trying to sell me something, I hate these kind of things. How do you get them past that?

Greg: [00:16:30] Peter, social media has changed everything. Whether it's Facebook, whether it's LinkedIn, whatever vehicle people utilize. So the trepidation is significantly reduced, but the fact is there's still trepidation. The easiest thing that I stress upon people: same thing as looking for a job. It's just ask.

Peter: [00:16:57] But why is the ask so hard?

Greg: [00:17:01] Well, we all have, I believe, our comfort zone, and we are afraid to come out of our comfort zone. I just think, in my experiences at Robert Half, where I have to do business development every day, I always look at it: What is the worst thing that happens? I may make a friend for life, which is tremendous, or I may meet somebody who it takes a heck of a lot longer to cultivate a relationship. But if I don't try, I'll never know. I think if you look at human beings, a child is more apt to be more open minded than an adult. A child is born with innate abilities of creativity, and adults I think they wane. It's easier to teach a child music, art than it is an adult. It's easy to teach a child to learn a foreign language than it is an adult. So why is that? Well I think we get so set in our ways and we get so structured that we're afraid to do something different.

Peter: [00:18:04] It's that risk. There's a risk of failure by doing this, and you're right. I think that you can teach a child almost anything, but once we get them into the school system and then do the things that you can't do and the structural stuff tends to kind of kill a lot of that creativity - tends to stop us down the road. Plus that inner critic who's there to protect us at times. And I tell people, you know, if you are in a business environment, if you have an opportunity and it's business oriented, don't look at people as strangers. Don't listen to your mother, because your mother always told you don't talk to strangers. Those folks aren't strangers. Those folks there are opportunities, and lean into that opportunity.

Greg: [00:18:55] When I look at what I've accomplished here at Robert Half... now Peter, I've always considered myself an average person. Average. Average athlete, average student, average average average. When I was growing up, I used to tell people that I was the person whose every grandmother wanted their granddaughter to date, but I was the guy who every granddaughter did not want to date. I was that guy.

Peter: [00:19:21] [laughs]

Greg: [00:19:21] You know the pants came down to the shin, mix the styles, didn't know what he was doing. I was that guy. When I tried to grow long hair in high school, my hair my hair went up it didn't go down.

Peter: [00:19:32] [laughs]

Greg: [00:19:32] So I found this was my calling, and this is my stage. When I look back to when I first got involved with the Institute of Management Accountants, it was at Robert Half. The leaders had an alliance with the IMA and they suggested we get involved. Well, if I have the support of my employer I'm going to do it because I'd like to give back to the accounting profession. And I started going to the meetings and I asked if you need any help in volunteering. Well, if you add value then I didn't do this for my business I did this for the accounting profession, and that's something I tell people all the time: if you're going to get involved with a not-for-profit, it's got to be something you're passionate about - not something to just drum up business, because people will judge you professionally by how you do something as a volunteer. I always tell people it's not what you do - it's how well you do it. Let your work speak for you. They'll speak for your work. So I did a couple of

things and next thing I know they asked me if I would consider becoming president of the chapter. I did, and that only prospered, and it led to speaking engagements. Regionally, in the New England region, and all the chapters in Connecticut, just by going to one meeting. With the connected society of CPA, I started playing in the golf tournament and one of my contemporaries - a pillar in the Connecticut society, clearly. What this gentleman has accomplished and done is remarkable. He was on the golf Committee and he asked me one day, Greg, would you like to get on the committee? And my hesitancy, Peter, was okay, great, what do I have to do? I don't think so I don't think so. He said, "Greg, we have fun, we raise money, and it's for a good cause," because we give scholarships. And I said to the gentleman you've been so good to me - His name is Charlie - I said Charlie you've been so good to me. I'll be happy to. So I did. And it's not what you do, it's how well you do it. Well they found out I worked previously at ESPN and what came up was it's very common to have emcee, sports dignitaries, whatever to oversee the banquets at the golf tournaments. There's a value to the participants. Well I did. I was able to obtain ESPN talent over the years to be the emcee. I also raised money. I called my clients. Would you like to give to the profession? I got offers. So it's not what you do, it's how well you do it. Next thing I know I got a phone call to ask if I would like to serve on the board of the Connecticut Society of CPAs. I'm not in public practice. I don't practice accounting in industry. And when you look at all the people on the boards and there have been presidents before, they all excelled in industry or public, and ultimately I became president of the society and the main cog, the main proponent of my obtaining this, was the same guy Charlie.

Peter: [00:22:54] Yeah. I love that story. And let me just kind of weave a couple of things here: One, if you've listened episode 22, Greg talks about this story but it's a powerful story. I love what he says: It's not what you do, it's how well you do it. And that's that's one of the big keys in networking because you may meet people, but how do you create that bond after the fact? And what you've created just blossomed into this opportunity. Like you said, your background doesn't marry up to the backgrounds of all those other presidents for the Connecticut Society of CPAs, but it was your ability to network your way, walk the talk. It's not what you do it's how well you do it that took you to that level. And if we think about that from a business development standpoint, I mean that's the key! Part of networking, as I look at it, is also referring, and if you refer someone to a client or whomever and that person is not a good match, you lose credibility. So that also comes into play, and from Charlie's perspective, as he helped you along, he was referring you on up the ladder, eventually to the president of the Connecticut society. That's all about the power of networking.

Greg: [00:24:32] Yes it is, Peter. And what I realized is I needed to prove to the conventional wisdom that I was worthy to be the president because I was so far removed. So I considered myself Avis, in that I had to work harder.

Peter: [00:24:51] Ah, yes. And so let me ask you this question: In working harder and networking, do you find that you are listening more and talking less or vice versa?

Greg: [00:25:07] Well I think if you ask the people I work with they would say I talk too much.

Peter: [00:25:13] [laughs]

Greg: [00:25:13] But I do try very hard to be attentive and listen to people.

Peter: [00:25:19] Because that's where you gain - you gain a better understanding of where they're coming from. And so what happened? Are there any tips or techniques that you can share on how you practice the art of listening?

Greg: [00:25:38] Well I'm sure that everybody's heard this but I think they need to be reminded.

You're born with two ears, two eyes, and one mouth. That means you should be listening and watching twice as much as you're talking.

Peter: [00:25:55] I have never heard it put that way. I've always heard the two ears and one mouth, but I have never heard the two eyes and I love that.

Greg: [00:26:03] I didn't make it up so I can't take credit for it, but I abide by that.

Peter: [00:26:07] And I love it because when I'm talking about networking, I'm talking about it's listening, and also listening with your eyes. And a lot of times we don't listen with our eyes - we're overlooking somebody or looking around and it appears that we're distracted, which doesn't go to a whole lot of the credibility of having that conversation.

Greg: [00:26:30] That is correct. Peter, in my role, for the most part, I deal with leadership within companies. Controller, CFOs, VP of finance, head of internal audit, etc. And I have minutes to get their attention. Minutes. And either I add value or I just sound like another person trying to get in to earn their business, whether it be an insurance person, furniture person, internet service, whatever. Only I'm selling services that we represent at Robert Half. And then when I get an appointment with the respective person, it's not about me. I often tell people I'm the Doctor of careers, and the doctor will first ask about the ailment and ask what else is going on before he or she will prescribe the medicine. So I have to delve and ask questions, listen, and observe before I prescribe to the client, or the prospective consultant, candidate, employee, what I think is the right course of action for that person.

Peter: [00:27:44] I love that. I love that whole style. One, you said I have to earn their business and, two, it's not about you - it's about them. But I absolutely love you are the doctor of careers, and I love that analogy. I've never heard anybody put it quite like that, but that's exactly what we do. We're trying to do a diagnosis, and we can't do the diagnosis if we're constantly talking. We have to listen, process, adapt, then prescribe.

Greg: [00:28:16] That's correct. Because I could, if I take the initiative - Now the initiative is to try to get the person to talk first - But if I start talking first, I'm probably going to entertain superfluous information that will bore or be rejected by the client, and then I'm no different than anybody else. But if I have the ability to get him or her talk first and listen, then I could become an extension of them and help them get their job done.

Peter: [00:28:49] And that's the goal. So let me let me ask this question: As a CPA - and let's talk about the CPAs who are in practice and who are in business in industry, are very detail oriented, and love that that data - I find some times that their listening skills are not as honed, like yours are, because they're coming there with something to sell, provide, or whatever, and I don't think they're taking time to listen to their client, whoever that internal or external client is, in order, as you said, figure out where the ailment is. And I think they tend to fall short on that because it sounds like it becomes more about them than it is about the client. So what tip can you give the audience to say, if you're coming in with an agenda - a service, a product, something - how do you help them part that agenda and focus on them, not focusing on yourself?

Greg: [00:29:56] Well I'm trying to make this universal, as opposed to specific, because each person has to determine what is it that makes them different from their nearest competitor. What is the value proposition that you're able to give to the company, or to the client or customer? You can't do that until you're able to determine, from that customer or client, what their pain is. So how do you overcome that? Well most times I think you can get the appointment or the meeting with the prospective customer. But here's what I'll say, and I'm proposing this to your listeners: Do you ever start off with, "Rather than me pontificate about all the services I represent, I'd like to learn more

about your business. What keeps you up at night? What's preventing you from getting from point A to Point B?"

Peter: [00:30:59] I love that. I use that all the time. What keeps you up at night?

Greg: [00:31:04] So all of a sudden... you're a service industry - We're in the service industry. If I'm not servicing, I'm not going to be in business. I'm the vendor. I tell all my clients "I work for you. It's not vice versa. How can I help you attain your goals?" So whoever your listeners are, whatever their place of business is, whatever they sell, whatever they deliver, are they servicing? Do they work for their customer, or they make the customer work for them?

Peter: [00:31:36] That's great. Once again, Greg, you're blowing my mind here, as you did in the previous episode, with are you working for your customers or are your customers working for you. That's another great networking quote that I'm going to start using in my lexicon, and I will give you full 100 percent credit for that.

Greg: [00:32:02] [laughs] You make me laugh. Great. Thank you.

Peter: [00:32:05] And I'm going to try to spread the name Greg Lainas around the country any time I am doing some networking. I will say this is from him and I think the title "King of All networking" could apply to you right now.

Greg: [00:32:21] Well, listen, that's very kind of you. But no. I can't take that. As I said, I found this is my calling. Because of the way I was brought up. You know all these things come into play and it all comes... what is the worst thing that happens?

Peter: [00:32:40] Yeah. So let's talk about the way you were brought up. I always say... people ask me, "You're a CPA. Where did you get your communication skills?" I say I was raised in a Greek-American household.

Greg: [00:32:54] Yes sir.

Peter: [00:32:54] I say I was I was a busboy at the age of 12 (because that's rite of passage of all Greek men - you got to be a busboy at least one part of your early teenager years). Would you agree that that's how you get this gift of networking, of communication?

Greg: [00:33:15] I attribute my parents. I lost my dad almost seven years ago, and to this day everything that he taught me resonates in me. And when people ask me who is my hero, I've always said my dad. My dad was a World War II vet. My father-in-law was World War II vet also, but my wife and I have the same work ethic, and you know I remember when I was I worked in an amusement park. I used to hitchhike to go to work. I wasn't a busboy at a restaurant, but there was a restaurant business in our family because because my parents are born in Brooklyn and my my grandfather had a diner long before I can remember. But anyway, I just hustled. And I tell people, you know in baseball, when the pitcher walks the batter, what do most batters do? They drop the bat, they drop their glove, and they just walk to first base.

Peter: [00:34:11] Right.

Greg: [00:34:12] I run to first base in everything I do. It's a metaphor, but I go after everything. And I think some of that stems, because I made reference earlier, that I'm just an average guy. I'm just an average person who found his niche, and I think the values and the business morals that you are ingrained with as a child last a lifetime.

Peter: [00:34:39] I wholeheartedly agree. And I love that analogy. Run to first base. My baseball hero was Pete Rose. I've kind of lost a lot of respect for him, but when he when he was on that ball field he ran-

Greg: [00:34:58] He ran to first base.

Peter: [00:34:59] Ran to first base, ran to second, and you remember the All-Star Game - the All-Star Game! - He mowed over the catcher.

Greg: [00:35:05] And that was the end of Ray Fosse's career.

Peter: [00:35:11] Right.

Greg: [00:35:11] You know ,now here's another baseball analogy, and this was taught to me: What is the only thing you cannot teach a baseball player to do?

Peter: [00:35:21] I don't know, what's that?

Greg: [00:35:23] Well you can teach them to hit, you can teach them to throw, you can teach them to field. You cannot teach them to run. You cannot teach hustle.

Peter: [00:35:35] You cannot teach passion.

Greg: [00:35:38] Correct.

Peter: [00:35:39] Good point. And in the essence of of this conversation of networking, if you don't have the passion then don't fake it. You're not authentic.

Greg: [00:35:52] Correct.

Peter: [00:35:53] You're not credible. And, really, in anything you do.

Greg: [00:35:57] There are people who go after the world and there are people who wait for the world to come to them. I think, if you have ever observed whether you go to see a concert, an entertainer, a movie, an artist's showing. Whatever it is, somebody who's achieved stature in your mind, not just wealth stature. And if you ever pull them to the side and ask "What did you have to do to get where you are?" I think you'd be shocked at all the failures that they had in their life to get where they are. But when you pay to go see an entertainer or play or a musical, whatever, you're paying your money and you want to see that performer at his or her best. But you have no idea how hard they work behind the scenes. But yet all that was part of their development to get to the stature that they obtained. And when you look at other people there are some who, as I say, get to the cliff - they get they work hard to get to the cliff - but they don't want to work harder to get to the next cliff. We are in a world where people want stuff but they don't do what it takes to get what they want. Well I've always said I'm the Avis: I got to work harder. And that hasn't waned for me.

Peter: [00:37:27] You know that's dead on point. It goes to passion, it goes to drive, and it goes to accepting failure. I've been reading a variety of books on public speaking, and I don't remember which one this came out of, but I remember reading where someone was laying out the failures of Steve Jobs. I mean he had a public failure. I mean he he was voted off of Apple, his company that he started, and ultimately came back and took it where it is today. I've seen a number of courts where they take Michael Jordan and if you know how many shots that he missed, but he keeps taking the shot, taking the shot. We only remember the ones that he hits. It's the ability to accept the failure, understand it, and get better. Another question that pops into my mind that I hear from

from people all the time is "What if I say something stupid when I'm networking?" And it goes along this idea of failure. How do you respond to that?

Greg: [00:38:35] Ask me how many times that's happened to be. I don't even - I can't even measure how many times. Oh, it's happened a great deal... where, when the evening is over, the function's over, the meaning's over, and you're in your car going oh Greg, you moron, what were you thinking saying that? Well, the first thing that I do say: if you're at an event that is this is business and social, food and alcohol are served, stay away from the alcohol.

Peter: [00:39:08] Yeah.

Greg: [00:39:08] And I know we say this, but just stay away it. And don't have an excuse so that you're not on your A-game that you could have avoided. All right. So when you say something that you regret later... well you have two options. Hope the person forgets what you said or you reach out and you apologize.

Peter: [00:39:37] That's very well said and that's exactly. Yeah. If you said something really stupid, okay, own up to it. Apologize. Whether it's at the event or... don't beat yourself up in the car as you go home. I would say is go old school: pick up the phone, call the person.

Greg: [00:39:59] I agree.

Peter: [00:39:59] See if you can connect with them that way. If not, if you get screened out or you leave a voicemail message and you don't hear back, then I would follow up with an email apologizing, and then just let it go and just move on from there.

Greg: [00:40:19] Peter I'll even go one step further. I agree with you picking up the phone. That's the first - that's paramount. If you can't get the person, don't wait a week. Do it immediately. In the world of handwritten notes.

Peter: [00:40:35] Yeah.

Greg: [00:40:35] That used to be common behavior, then of course e-mail came and all of a sudden people looked at e-mail, and now nobody prepares or nobody writes a handwritten note. So what is more compelling now: an e-mail or a handwritten note?

Peter: [00:40:54] I believe it's a handwritten note, but I have been told, and actually I was doing a networking course for the Ohio Society of CPAs a number of years ago, and I was talking about this same topic. If you've met somebody, sit down and write them a quick Nice To Meet You note and send it to him. And this woman in the audience goes, if you send me if you would ever send me one of those, I would probably throw it in the trash. And I went, okay, this sounds like a good conversation. Let's talk about it. And basically she came to say it's now a generational thing because that card that I have sent to that millennial, per se, is cluttering up their desk, where if I sent an e-mail then I can put it in my e-mail folder and read it when I get to it. So I acquiesce. OK I understand that, but what I did after that, because I got the person's name and contact information, is I sent her an e-mail thanking her for participating in my class and for her insight. But I also followed up with a handwritten note too, and she she didn't throw it away.

Greg: [00:42:08] Well I get so little mail - I mean traditional mail, not e-mail, traditional mail - that when someone sends me a thank you note... first of all, it's going to be in a smaller envelope, as opposed to an appearance of a business envelope, and the appearance clearly is not going to be of a marketing nature but going to be something maybe more sincere. I read it right away.

Peter: [00:42:36] Yeah.

Greg: [00:42:36] I get so many emails a day, no different than anybody else. You'd be surprised how many times I nuked something after reading the first sentence and I should have read the whole thing.

Peter: [00:42:46] Oh yeah. I think we all do that a lot.

Greg: [00:42:49] Well, yeah, but if I'm guilty of it then I have to pay the penalty for that. So I think the handwritten note has more power than an email.

Peter: [00:43:01] Yeah. I agree with that.

Greg: [00:43:03] Now, hand writing... That's whole other story.

Peter: [00:43:06] Yeah. It's interesting that, speaking of handwriting, just a quick tidbit: my son is now 16 going on 17 and he had to sign something. And he as he's doing it goes, "I wish they would have taught me better how to use cursive because it's really hard for me to remember," and they've gotten away from teaching that in school because, when you sign something, you actually write in cursive.

Greg: [00:43:37] That's correct.

Peter: [00:43:38] But my handwriting is so bad I could have been a doctor. My handwriting is so bad that I print.

Greg: [00:43:43] There you go. You should be honored by that one. But regarding the thank you notes, switching it around to your networking in terms of business development, let's pretend that you are one of several vendors that your particular customer is using, or client.

Peter: [00:44:02] Yeah.

Greg: [00:44:02] Let's say you're one of seven. All seven come in and make a presentation. Well chances are all seven are going to send a letter or a follow up. But their normal course of the year, where you may have communication with this client, whether it's a breakfast, lunch, or just going out meet with him or her... Do you ever send them a thank you note after each meeting? Handwritten note?

Peter: [00:44:27] Right.

Greg: [00:44:28] And then how many thank you notes the client or customer received as a matter of course the business via e-mail? And I'm willing to bet the one that sends a thank you note - it may take longer to do because it's got to be neat and you've got to compose it and you can't race or cross-out in a thank you note - but which one will the customer or the client remember?

Peter: [00:44:56] And it goes back to what you said earlier. How are you different from your competition? And in a lot of times it's just the little things that make us different from our competition. If we think about what probably everybody else is doing, then do something different to stand out.

Greg: [00:45:15] Now I'm going to make a reference to a movie which we all remember: Wall Street.

Peter: [00:45:20] Yes.

Greg: [00:45:21] With Michael Douglas and... forgive me.

Peter: [00:45:24] Charlie Sheen.

Greg: [00:45:25] Charlie Sheen, OK. Charlie Sheen. Now we all know about the ruthlessness that Gordon Gekko displayed in the movie. So let's talk about the beginning. Charlie Sheen... what did he do to get the meeting with Michael Douglas?

Peter: [00:45:43] Oh you're killing me here. I don't remember but I love the movie.

Greg: [00:45:47] He knew what his birthday was and he knew that he liked cigars.

Peter: [00:45:53] Ah. Yeah. Yeah. He did his homework.

Greg: [00:45:57] He did his homework and went the extra mile.

Peter: [00:45:59] Right. Right, Exactly.

Greg: [00:46:02] Now do I suggest people do business with a Gordon Gekko? No, not at all.

Peter: [00:46:09] [laughs]

Greg: [00:46:09] But what I'm saying is look how driven the character Charlie Sheen portrayed was to earn the meeting.

Peter: [00:46:22] Right.

Greg: [00:46:22] Granted, it's a movie. It's not real, but the principle is real.

Peter: [00:46:29] Exactly. It is. How are you different, be driven, be passionate, accept no...

Greg: [00:46:41] Be sincere. Because if you're are what I call plastic, and camouflage what your true interest is, that will be short lived. I look at every client relationship as a war and every transaction is a battle. I'm greedy. I'm a capitalist. I want to make as much money as I can. I want to complain about paying AMT.

Peter: [00:47:03] [laughs]

Greg: [00:47:03] I want to complain about that. But the point is here's what I tell everybody I work with: If you put the client - your candidate, consultant, employee, whatever you want to refer to him or her - and Robert Half first, and your wallet last, you may lose the transaction, or the battle, but you will win the war. If you put your wallet first, where that guides you through your decision process, it's going to skew it negatively. You may win the battle, but you're going to lose the war.

Peter: [00:47:38] Right.

Greg: [00:47:39] So when you your when you are out there asking or developing... We keep using the word passion in this conversation.

Peter: [00:47:50] Mhm.

Greg: [00:47:50] But you've got to be genuine and sincere, and the client will pick up if you're phony.

Peter: [00:47:55] Yeah.

Greg: [00:47:55] So service the client. Earn their right to do business with them.

Peter: [00:48:01] You know Greg I learned a lot from our first conversation that we had a while ago. I've learned even more today. You just have so many great pieces of advice, and some of it might be old school, which is fine, but it still works

Greg: [00:48:18] Hey, I'm old.

Peter: [00:48:19] [laughs]

Greg: [00:48:19] I'm an old guy too.

Peter: [00:48:20] And you went to school.

Greg: [00:48:22] That's right.

Peter: [00:48:23] But you know they're still relevant today, and I know my audience will take this knowledge that you have given them and run with it, in order to make their businesses grow. Because that's the key. And if you're new to business development, take these tips and use the knowledge that Greg has shared with us because it works. It absolutely works. And Greg I can't thank you enough for taking time out of your day because I know it's a very busy day, because I can hear the office in the background buzzing and humming and going. To take the time to share your knowledge with my audience, I greatly appreciate that.

Greg: [00:49:07] Peter, I was thrilled when you asked me the first time and, if you remember that beer commercial, it was I believe a light beer of some nature. They are all athletes in the picture and they had this non-athlete in the picture, and then non-athlete said I don't know what they want me doing here but I'm happy to be in the picture.

Peter: [00:49:27] [laughs]

Greg: [00:49:27] And when you asked me to do this, I said I'd be thrilled but I don't know if I'm going to... you know if you want me to I'd be happy to. But I loved doing it the first time and I thoroughly enjoyed doing it again, and hopefully it's not the movie where the sequel is worse.

Peter: [00:49:46] [laughs]

Greg: [00:49:50] But I'm flattered, and I mean that with the most sincerity, that you asked me to do this.

Peter: [00:49:55] Well, Greg, you're more than just an average guy by far. And the sequel, I think, will outperform the original one. I enjoy our conversation and I look forward to our next one because I will have you back on it again in the future. The topic: it's what you know, and maybe take it from a different perspective, but I can't thank you enough. I've enjoyed our conversation. I know my audience will enjoy it as well, and I look forward to our next.

Greg: [00:50:31] Well thank you. And Peter, I'm going to give you a plug because what you're doing is remarkable and I hope that your audience only expands. But I will tell you every week I

read for your Tip of the week. And I hope that others read it as well.

Peter: [00:50:49] Thank you very much Greg. I greatly appreciate that.

[music]

Peter: [00:50:56] I would like to thank Greg again for taking time out of his schedule to give us his thoughts on how important networking is in growing your business. Remember, are you working for your clients or are they working for you? It makes a big difference. In episode 53, I interview Cathy Paessun, who's the executive director for the Central Ohio Diabetes Association. This is a very insightful interview that discusses the warning signs of type 1 diabetes and the latest research on finding a cure. Thank you again for listening and remember to use the principles of improvisation to help you grow your business through networking.

[music]