

Improv Is No Joke - Episode 65 - Debbie Peterson

Debbie: [00:00:00] A large part of our thinking is unconscious. And so when I went to that training and I really figured out how I needed to think differently, it changed not only in my career but it changed my whole belief system about myself and what I was capable of.

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Peter: [00:00:23] 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 Margarita's the self-proclaimed chief edutainment officer of my business the accidental account. 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.

Peter: [00:00:55] Welcome to episode 65 and today my guest is Debbie Petersen, who's a keynote speaker, keynote trainer, and mindset expert who works with companies to create increased bottom line results through greater clarity in communication and in leadership. Debbie's a professional member of the National Speakers Association, a certified trainer of neurolinguistic programming, and brings a diverse corporate background to the table with experience in administration, project management, investor relations, customer service, and entrepreneurship. She has delivered keynote and Keynote trainings to thousands of professionals at various sized companies and organization to help them change their mind so they can change their result. Our discussion focuses around how do we change the story that we're telling ourselves. How do we change that negative self-talk into a positive lean-into thought process? We all suffer from this at times, and she provides proven strategies to help change the dialogue in your head. Before you get to the interview, I'd like to talk about Listen Learn and Earn. If you've been listening lately, you know I have partnered with the Maryland Association of CPAs and the Business Learning Institute to bring [an exciting new learning opportunity for accounting professionals to earn CPE credits](#). You can earn up to one CPE credit for each completed podcast episode purchased for only \$29 through the American Association of CPAs and the Business Learning Institute [self-study website](#). The podcast episodes are mobile friendly. Open your browser on your smartphone, tablet, or computer, Go to the MACPA and BLI self-study account, and listen to an episode. Take the 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 Improv is no Joke podcasts are available on my website, only those purchased through the MACPA and BLI self-study Web site are eligible for CPE credit. You can get detailed instructions by visiting my website at www.PeterMargaritis.com and clicking on the graphic "Improv is no Joke for CPE credit" on my home page. I hope you enjoy this exciting and flexible way of earning CPE credit. Alright now let's get to the interview with Debbi Peterson Debbie.

[music]

Peter: [00:03:29] Thank you so very much for taking time out of your hectic schedule to be on my podcast.

Debbie: [00:03:36] Oh my pleasure. It is so great to be here.

Peter: [00:03:39] Debbie is a member of the National Speakers Association and I have talked one other time before. A good friend of hers and a friend of mine, Lisa Ryan, who I interviewed in one of my earlier podcast, Lisa gave me Debbie's name. Said you got to have her on the show. She is wonderful. I was able to get her schedule and I'm so looking forward to our conversation today. So once again thank you very much.

Debbie: [00:04:02] My pleasure.

Peter: [00:04:04] So Debbie let the audience get to know you just a little bit more. So what can you tell us about yourself?

Debbie: [00:04:10] Let's see. Well one key fact about me would be that I was born and raised in Pennsylvania and on Lake Erie and I no longer do winter anymore. So the flexibility of my business allows me to chase sunshine all year long.

Peter: [00:04:27] OK now we're having a conversation right now because I want to not do winters anymore, and to make matters even more worse from my perspective or the jealousy factor that increases is that she winters in southwest Florida, which is one of my favorite parts of the country.

Debbie: [00:04:48] Yeah absolutely. You know but in all seriousness you know I spent 30 years in corporate and you know just got to that place where I had a feeling there was more potential for me that was not being tapped into. And you know I heard it and I didn't pay attention to it. And then you know that feeling kind of grew a little bit and I decided that you know what I need to figure this out. And so I left corporate and decided to take my training, which is as a certified trainer of NLP, and also a student of Huna. So a couple of different aspects as far as how we think and figure out you know how that plays out, in my own business. And lo and behold I started coaching which I really enjoyed but it didn't make my heart go pitter patter until one day I got on stage and got a hold of the microphone... and well you know the rest.

Peter: [00:05:41] Look out.

Debbie: [00:05:41] Yes.

Peter: [00:05:43] So how long have you been in your business?

Debbie: [00:05:46] I left corporate about let's see oh four years ago.

Peter: [00:05:51] Four years ago.

Debbie: [00:05:51] Yeah. And I took some time to just you know disconnect from that; decompress a little bit. You know it was a very different. My husband was retired at that point but took some time to figure out OK what's meaningful for me.

Peter: [00:06:04] Right.

Debbie: [00:06:05] And you know this next go around if I'm going to build something then you know I want to build something I'm passionate about, and figuring out what that was so.

Peter: [00:06:12] I love the more passion because yes I think anybody who does this business has to have a tremendous amount of passion because it can be very rough at times.

Debbie: [00:06:24] You know it's not an easy business to get into and you know you mentioned Lisa. The conversation at least that I had at the very beginning it was more or less so... You want to be a speaker.

Peter: [00:06:36] Hahaha.

Debbie: [00:06:36] And you know and I did and she gave me some tasks and I completed all of them and I wouldn't choose to do anything else. So I know I'm absolutely in the place that I'm supposed to be going. You know even though you have those days, even when you're passionate about something, that you know they're a little tricky and they're a little defeating. But you know that's the entrepreneurial life.

Peter: [00:06:58] That is the entrepreneurial life when you're kicked in the gut and you go OK I'm really not really employable anywhere else so I better pick myself up and keep moving forward because I don't think they'll let me ever have a W2 job again.

Debbie: [00:07:13] Haha.

Peter: [00:07:13] So what is it that you speak on. What is that passion there?

Debbie: [00:07:17] All right. Well you know first for me and to dip back into my corporate life and explain it is that in my last corporate job I had... I was in a company where there was a reorganization. The corporate office ended up being acquired.

Peter: [00:07:33] OK.

Debbie: [00:07:34] It's moving to Texas. I've got to stay here. What am I going to do? So I end up finding my last corporate position and I was there for about seven years and it was it is the job that I was the most grateful for, for two reasons. And the first reason was because I hated it inside of two weeks. I thought I had lost my mind for having taken the job. I thought what am I doing. You know I was just so unhappy. But here's what came out of that: You know after being trained in the corporate cog for so many years, you kind of fall into that routine of yours your job description and you know here's what you're expected to do and we'll train you and give you performance evaluations. So I had been in that kind of mode of being told what to do. And in this new position because I was so unhappy it was because I was having a hard time figuring out what to do. It was a start up and it was just so loose that it turned me into an advocate or myself it turned me; it allowed me, it taught me to be able to advocate for myself. So that was huge. So that was the number one. The number two was that's when I got sent to the end of the NLP training.

Peter: [00:08:44] NLP is...?

Debbie: [00:08:44] NLP is Neuro-Linguistic Programming, and if I were to give your listeners a quick summary on it, It would be that neuro is the mind, linguistic is language, and programming are habits, strategies, and processes that we use every day, without even thinking about it. So it's the language of the mind that produces results. So literally we create our own reality in this six inches we hold between our two ears, and a large part of our thinking is unconscious. And so when I went to that training and I really figured out how I needed to think differently, it changed not only my career but it changed my whole belief system about myself and what I was capable of. So you know when I got to the other side of that and I had some pretty profound results for me I thought OK, if I can do this then how do I take this forward and pay for it for other people. How do I do that. And so you know after I left corporate that's what I was trying to figure out. And literally one night in the middle of the night I woke up and getting to clarity was on my mind. I ran downstairs, I got to go GoDaddy, the URL was available, and that was kind of how the company was born. So.

Peter: [00:09:55] Wow. Getting to clarity in the middle of the night. Hahaha.

Debbie: [00:10:02] Hahaha.

Peter: [00:10:02] That's a great story, and I've heard this so many times especially on the National Speakers Association conference convention. We are the story that we tell ourselves.

Debbie: [00:10:14] Oh yes. Yes. And you know you're the author – you can pick up the pen and write a different story too. And so that is a large part of what I do.

Peter: [00:10:22] OK so hypothetically let's say I want to tell myself a different story. I'm in my mid 40s mid 50s and I've been telling myself a story for quite a long time, and I want to change that story. How do you make that change? Because I can imagine that's difficult.

Debbie: [00:10:40] You know it is repetition, and behavior rewarded is repeated so you know it's really about rewarding yourself with with the behavior that you choose to believe. And so what I do for businesses, and what I do for employees in those businesses, is you know you say for instance you'll have somebody in a work environment and they'll be telling themselves that story about how they don't like their job, they hate the people that they work with, that they want to move into leadership they don't know how to do that, they don't think they have the potential, or even somebody who tells themselves the story of I'm ok with sales, but I'm not great at sales. You know those limiting beliefs that kind of run full-time in our minds, and being able to first thing, the first key, is being aware of it. So knowing that that is a story that you're telling yourself; knowing that that is a limiting belief that you have about your work performance. You know you can go into organizations and you can teach people how to sell. You know you can teach people how to be more productive. You know you can you can teach people any number of things, but depending on what they hold in their head - their beliefs about how well or not they're able to do that - then that will define the range of success that they have. You know giving them strategies to be able to shift that mindset so that they do have different results. Change your mind you change your results.

Peter: [00:12:02] Exactly. And that makes me reflect back on a story I told in my book. I wanted... I was at the Ohio Society's annual meeting and I saw the chair of the board delivering a message to all the membership that was there, and I went I want to do that. I want to be the

chair of the board. But at the time I was a partner a firm. I didn't I didn't have that resume that the past chairs have had. But through the improv technique of Yes and and getting rid of those limiting beliefs and turning that negative talk into positive talk, I was actually installed as chair in 2010. Now that was an eight-year process, And I find myself when I get I start having those limiting beliefs - because I don't think we can ever fully get rid of them - I have to revert back to that yes and or what if or I know I can; that can do attitude.

Debbie: [00:12:56] And I love what if. I love that you said what if, because what if is about curiosity. And that's one of the things that I encourage people to have especially when they're in a stuck sort of situation or confused sort of situation, and they want to get clarity, is to... you know a lot of times they'll think well I have to do this. And that puts pressure on themselves. But if they can think about well what if I do this, What might the result be... You know what could that mean to me? It's almost like it's an experiment. It's a it's a different sort of feeling. And so therefore it's a safer space to be you know... to be in, mentally.

Peter: [00:13:33] But I can see some who want to have that attitude and they come to your session and you're doing a keynote and they're all jazzed up... But once they get back to work they go right back into that rut. What do you what do you tell these people to so they don't go back into that rut?

Debbie: [00:13:50] Well you know one of the things that I do... the sessions that I do are very interactive and I get people thinking about their very first step. So you know it's not about theory and it's really about practice, and I have them outlining their practice before they leave the room because otherwise you know why bother. I set them up with the strategies of OK you know this is not a one and done. My magic wand is broken. I can't you know distill upon you everything that I'VE learned. This is the beginning of your process. You know so you talked about in the beginning you know shifting that mindset. What do you do? With my program there are four pieces of it.

Peter: [00:14:26] OK.

Debbie: [00:14:27] And the first part of that piece is actually what I call a race, and the race is our responsibility. There are certain things that you have responsibility for in getting more clarity in your career, or in sales or you know leadership. Whatever it is that you're trying to achieve, and it is knowing exactly what you want. I mean specifically what you want, and a lot of times people can't tell you that. So I'll ask audiences you know how many have goals? How many know exactly what their next step is in their career? How many know the target that they're that they're aiming for? You know it's about maybe a quarter or a third of the room will raise their hands. And that's one of the biggest things that holds people back. How can you hit a bull's eye without a target?

Peter: [00:15:17] True.

Debbie: [00:15:18] You know so understanding what exactly it is that you want and why you want it. You know so, for instance, accounting. You know accounting a lot of accounting there are smaller firms and their family firms, and so grandpa was a CPA and then dad came into the firm and now all of a sudden you know junior is going to college and well you've got to go for accounting because you need to come into the firm. But that may not be really what he wants to

do and he may not have passion around that. That's somebody else's why. It's a hand me down why.

Peter: [00:15:48] Right.

Debbie: [00:15:49] And that doesn't work so well. So you know knowing your why is part of your responsibility too. You know then when it comes to, in race, it's about accountability. Do you have a plan or goal or strategy? Do you have some sort of system that is going to incrementally move you towards what it is that you want? And this sounds simplistic you know. I tell it to you and you're nodding your head like yeah, but giving people specific strategies around these elements so that they can do something different with their careers. And then you know see is community. Who are the people that you surround yourself with? You are the average of the top five people you spend the most time with. So who is it that you're spending the most time with, and are they people who support you in your goals and your aspirations? or are they people who you know what do you want to do that for? You know that that's silly. And then the last part of it is engage. There's a lot of people out there, and I was one of them, that OK I'll sit and I'll figure out what I want and why I want it, and you know I'm I'm good at connecting with people, but when it comes to taking that first step... you know you kind of want to backpedal and say well I need to do some more research. This is not the right time to do this. You know I need to wait a little longer. I need to connect with another person. I need to... you know and we've all done it.

Peter: [00:17:12] Hah. Yeah.

Debbie: [00:17:12] But then you have all this great wisdom about yourself and you never do anything with it.

Peter: [00:17:16] So I love those four pillars of responsibility, accountability, community, and engage. When you're talking about community, the people you surround yourself with, does that go to all the all their alter egos I have in my head? Do they qualify?

Debbie: [00:17:30] Yes they do. That would be your virtual community.

Peter: [00:17:32] Oh my gosh. I'm in big trouble. Haha! No, but I love that strategy. And so you get them thinking in this way, and I like how the responsibility and the engage are kind of the opposite ends here because I think those are probably maybe the two hardest pieces of this: taking that ownership, taking that responsibility, knowing what you want, and then leaning in.

Debbie: [00:18:00] Yes and doing something with it. So it's not just about thinking differently - it is doing differently as well.

Peter: [00:18:06] Yeah I can see that... OK. I need to research it tomorrow. I need to think about it some more. You know I'm not sure about this. And the next thing you know, if it's a job that you were going after, whoops. Looks like the deadline is close then they're not taking any additional applications for it. Or some offices are open for a certain amount of time and you've got to wait. And I think the longer you wait, the more you procrastinate.

Debbie: [00:18:35] Oh absolutely. You know and that is you know your comfort zone and that's why that procrastination kicks in.

Peter: [00:18:43] Yeah you know what the P in CPA stands for?

Debbie: [00:18:45] No, what?

Peter: [00:18:46] Procrastination.

Debbie: [00:18:50] Oh, does it? Hahah.

Peter: [00:18:51] But I see myself when I procrastinate versus leaning in, doing it, and accepting the consequences or taking the risk. I think that's another thing: the fear of failure, the risk of failing, and then what will people think?

Debbie: [00:19:09] Oh yeah absolutely yeah. And that what if. So you know what if kind of works both ways. So you know what if will allow you to have curiosity, but in certain instances what if is going to slow you down because you're thinking about making a decision and it's you know what... What if this doesn't sound right? What if I sound stupid? What if this is not a good decision? And you know your what ifing yourself to death, and you never take any action at all.

Peter: [00:19:32] And I think that's one thing I love about being an entrepreneur because I think that I was doing that early on, and I've learned how to hear those voices. I'll let the voice talk for a little bit, but that's about it. I'll let that voice give me their opinion and then I'll stop the voice because I just want to keep saying over and over and over again, and then try to collectively come up with a decision to move forward without doing analysis, and ultimately having paralysis.

Debbie: [00:20:06] Right. The paralysis of analysis.

Peter: [00:20:08] Exactly. I'm dyslexic too. There's nothing worse than a dyslexic, ADHD accountant because somebody is going to jail, and it is not me. So when you do these sessions as keynotes, because you said you found the microphone and you love the stage. Do you hear back from any of the attendees about a year later and say you know I came to your session and I really took it to heart and I know how to race now. Oh I just go tell you what I've done!

Debbie: [00:20:39] You know what I do get a lot of is that I will find... there will be people who come up to me after I give keynote or do a keynote training, and they will tell me it's like I crawled inside their head. And that's one of the highest compliments because you know when when we start thinking about things in a way that isn't productive for us, and it has a place in a place where we're confused or we're stuck or you know whatever it is that we may be feeling, but we're certainly not making progress towards our goals, we tend to internalize that. So we think that we've got to get this figured out before anybody else figures out what's going on.

Peter: [00:21:15] Right.

Debbie: [00:21:16] And you know the thing is when you communicate with people and you share your stories and you share examples and you give them strategies, one, they know

they're not alone. Two, they know there's a way forward. And that's that's the beautiful thing. So when people come up and say Oh my goodness you were talking just to me or you crawl inside my head. That's a very high compliment because then I know I have reached them, and you know also I'll get it when I'm out and about, locally, if I've given a presentation. People will tell me that you know that was just the best thing. That you know it really caused them to shift in thinking in a different way. And that's you know that's huge. You know when I go out and I travel not as much. I'll get it on the feedback forms but you know a year later I haven't gotten that yet. Yet!

Peter: [00:22:03] Yeah, I have a feeling that you will be getting that soon. And do you think part of it is people's hesitation or procrastination is because they don't want to be vulnerable?

Debbie: [00:22:18] Yes. You know and as a speaker that was a huge huge step for me: becoming vulnerable. You know because you kind of... you think that you need to have all of your research down and you know you just need to be perfect at everything before you get up on the stage, and actually you know I would encourage anybody who's thinking about speaking that is not the case. I would encourage anybody who is a leader or manager, that is certainly not the case. You know the more realistic you can be with your audiences, the more realistic you can be with your people your employees, you know the more they can connect with you, and when you connect with people is when you really start to build those relationships. So my biggest topic is communication. So communication and leadership. Communication isn't just external communication. It's not about delivering a message and having someone receive it the way that you intended it, but it's about internal communication too in that what you think -- you know what you hold in your head -- will affect what your results are.

Peter: [00:23:15] Exactly. So I apologize. I was intently listening to that and when you ended I kind of went uh oh. I gotta get back in the game here. But I thoroughly agree with with what you what you say, and you've got such a great message. So talk about the communication side just just a little bit more, and how how all this being vulnerable or what was what did somebody say... oh yeah cause when we're on Facebook, we're on the ultimate, longstanding, never ending first date.

Debbie: [00:23:52] Yes. Absolutely. I like that. I hadn't heard that before but it's absolutely accurate. I mean you know you can put your best side forward every single day of the week. It's like you never have a bad day you never do anything wrong because you just don't post about it. And that can be hard to keep up with. You know so so when it comes to communication and like you said the voice in your head, one of my favorite phrases is what do you want instead? And so you said that you know you let the voice go and you let him have his face time. And at some point you're going to stop the voice, which is great because you know you realize this is not productive. You realize that it's a story that you know you're just going to stop the voice, and then the next part of it... What I would encourage you is you know what do you want instead. If this is what he's saying, then what is it that you want to produce in the other direction? And so then it goes back to R.A.C.E. You know what is it that you want? So it's constantly redirecting yourself through those four pillars to make sure that you're taking and gaining consistent action on your goals, and you're continually improving not only as an employee but as a person because you know I have the sense that anything you do to develop yourself professionally affects you personally, and everything anything you do to develop yourself personally affects you professionally. So it goes both ways.

Peter: [00:25:17] Exactly. Growing up, I really didn't go outside my comfort zone. I was really kind of fearful of making mistakes, fearful of doing something wrong, fearful of what other people say. And I think you get to some point in life.... Well to heck with them. I think those... when we do become vulnerable, when we do share our failures, we are perceived in such a better light than those who appear to have never failed. Ultimately that house of cards will fall.

Debbie: [00:25:51] It will. It will. Yeah absolutely.

Peter: [00:25:53] And I think that's a worst case scenario because, when a house of cards falls, you're really the emperor with no clothes and you are you're not seen in the same light. It's almost like a disappointed light versus when you're truthful and you share with your team as a leader that you screwed. You made a mistake and we're going to move forward from this Versus like this wasn't my mistake, this was your mistake.

Debbie: [00:26:17] Right.

Peter: [00:26:18] So I yeah I think the best leaders are the best communicators, and they are vulnerable themselves.

Debbie: [00:26:28] They are because perfection doesn't exist. You know that. But besides that, perfection is not approachable. So if you have a manager or you have someone in leadership who has this just sort of facade of I've got everything together and I always do everything right. And they kind of take a hard stance with things, then it really doesn't allow their employees or their managers to approach them with issues they may have because they're not approachable. So that's where that vulnerability comes in. You know it's not like you you have to tell your employees or your managers all your dirty little secrets, but you know you you have to be in a place where they feel comfortable that they can come to you for guidance.

Peter: [00:27:09] And I think it's also a cultural thing. I think some organizational cultures do not allow that. I've worked in a few that failure is not an option, and it's you know you get that... Why am I even here? Or you think I don't want to come to work. There's no creativity, there's no risk taking, because everybody is fearful that if they screw up they're going to lose their job.

Debbie: [00:27:36] Right. So how much productivity are you actually getting out of those employees?

Peter: [00:27:40] None. Very little.

Debbie: [00:27:41] Exactly. You know you think that you're holding it all together. But you know absenteeism is up and intention, you know retention and engagement of your employees... I mean, their health. Everything just falls to the floor when you are in an environment like that. You know that somebody has a death grip on it and it's literally causing the death of the organization.

Peter: [00:28:02] And I think in those organizations, that death grip is called money and we're paying you maybe 20 percent more than the market will bear. So to some degree I have an indentured servant so I have that control factor. And because if you leave you know that you're

taking a pay cut. So there's that... like that psychological aspect of of the job is kind of being stuck in it and that's all that negative communication that's happening.

Debbie: [00:28:29] Well and you know the job market is changing because of the influx of the millennials. And I think it remains to be seen as to actually how that's going to impact things. But you know the trends and the indications are now that the millennials are really out for something that's meaningful to them. So you know I was almost 50 when I started my company. But in seeking another position, just trying to figure out what was going to make me happy, and right out of the gate they're trying to figure out what's meaningful to them. So you know research and a lot of the articles that are out there you know they're only there for one to three years and they decide within six months you know if they're going to make a move, and they need to be engaged because the baby boomers are retiring in droves and the Millennials are the ones that are coming in, and we got to be able to backfill that talent. So it's got to shift that mentality of... Well here's your job, I'm paying you a good wage, just do it.

Peter: [00:29:24] Yeah.

Debbie: [00:29:24] That's going... that's going to get some people in trouble.

Peter: [00:29:27] Yeah. And a lack of succession planning because it's walking out the door. And if I hear another baby boomer say well they're just going to leave anyhow. They're just gonna leave anyhow... so why should I train them? Why should I invest in them? Well that's why they're leaving. Because you're not.

Debbie: [00:29:42] Yeah. And they're not leaving in every organization. You know there are organizations out there that are having great success with the millennials. And I hate to stereotype anybody but you know that's just... that's kind of how everything is talked about. So for your listeners, there are definite organizations out there that are being very successful with their millennials. You know money is not always a motivator.

Peter: [00:30:06] That's true.

Debbie: [00:30:06] It really comes down to leadership. You know the values of the company and if they are hiring right. On boarding employees is huge because I read an article just yesterday that those decisions that new employees make about whether they're going to stay or not... A lot of it has to do with how much they've been trained, and that starts not only hiring but also on boarding. You know did they get any training at all or were they kind of thrown into the water to tread, you know like you and I were?

Peter: [00:30:34] Yeah yeah. And just two episodes prior to this, I interviewed a gentleman by the name of Bob Dean and we were talking about virtual collaboration. But this was one of the things that we were talking about is companies are terrible on boarding. And if they don't get the on boarding right in the first 90 days, the probably of that person leaving increases dramatically.

Debbie: [00:30:54] Yes it does.

Peter: [00:30:55] Here's here's your stack of stuff. I want you to read everything and sign everything and then there's your computer and we'll be back.

Debbie: [00:31:03] Here's your coffee mug.

Peter: [00:31:05] But we're not going to give you the code to the bathroom until after the first couple hours and... Yeah I remember those days. Those first three-six months were just... you were walking on eggshells it seems because you weren't comfortable yet.

Debbie: [00:31:21] Yeah. And there are easy ways to make people feel welcome. There are easy ways to motivate your employees, engage your employees, and therefore retain your employees... If you can communicate your message. You know if you can communicate the values, and you know and that's why communication is so much more than just here's my message.

Peter: [00:31:41] Yeah.

Debbie: [00:31:41] And is it staying the way that I want it to.

Peter: [00:31:43] That's interesting you should say that because one of my earlier episodes was with a woman named Karen Young. She wrote the book Stop Knocking at my Door: Drama Free H.R. And she shared a story that she changed her hiring practice around where, if there was a posting, the first thing that you would do is you wouldn't get an application. The first thing that will happen is you would get sent to their Web site and they spend a lot of time working on the mission statement, the core competencies, the vision, and then that first phone interview was articulating how you fit into that culture that we've created. And if you could articulate it, then you got the application. If you couldn't, there's no application, and she said her attrition rate almost went to zero.

Debbie: [00:32:29] Oh that's terrific. That's terrific because so much you know the normal process is that you put a job description out there. Ok going back to the job descriptions and and here are the tasks that you're doing. And you know people will look at the task and their responsibilities and say OK I can do that. But you know if an employee is going to be engaged with their employer, then they have to have a solid understanding of their own values and that is something that I work with, not only in communication but definitely in leadership: is helping people to get a solid understanding of that because how can you know it's going to be a good fit? You know you're after a certain experience at work. Not necessarily OK You know yes I can do this and this is my skill set, but you know the culture and how you interact with lawyers and the company values and if it's a good fit for you, and you can't know that unless you understand what your own are. So that is that is a big part of it.

Peter: [00:33:25] So as you're saying that I'm looking down at my notes on R.A.C.E. and I'm thinking maybe another one of the A's... I've got two new ones for you. So you have accountability, well another is attitude.

Debbie: [00:33:40] Oh yes.

Peter: [00:33:41] Attitude is everything. And the other one is adaptability.

Debbie: [00:33:45] Yep.

Peter: [00:33:46] They all work in unison within an organization. It's you know I know you've seen enough job descriptions. You've applied for jobs over the years in these task and stuff, and you sit there and you go I wish I had gone and not done the linear type of... I wish I'd gone in with the world's greatest attitude. Sure I could do that just give me a chance and stuff, and I think you know but we get so-- early on in our careers we're so guided in how we want to be perceived that if we just came up with I went to X Y Z school, I got this I got this I got this. But if you came in with that attitude, I bet you get the job ten fold over people who may have more experience than you do.

Debbie: [00:34:34] Yes. You know and it's been said that you know before ,and I've heard it multiple times, that you know you can teach people the skills but you can't teach them the attitude. You know you can't teach them what they hold in their head and their hearts.

Peter: [00:34:46] Except you can because that's part of what you do.

Debbie: [00:34:49] It is.

Peter: [00:34:50] Deprogramming them or getting them to think differently is to turn off the negative self-talk, and put that what if for I can, and changing and that ultimate conversation in there, which changes the ultimate attitude that they possess.

Debbie: [00:35:07] Yes. You know I mean it really is about... self-awareness is the first key, but then being able to identify these patterns that you run. When you know what the pattern is that you're running, then you can do something about it. And so you can interrupt that pattern and create a new strategy. You know that will help. So you talked about attitude and you talked about adaptability. You know one of the things that I talked to under engagement that relates to both of those is... you know your reality. We all we all live in the same world, but we create that reality inside our own heads.

Peter: [00:35:36] Right.

Debbie: [00:35:37] OK. And we have filters that can skew what comes out of our brains. And those are things like negative emotions. So you know things that you get angry about and frustrated about and sad about and irritated about... you know people that you work with. You know wouldn't the workplace be such a lovely place if it wasn't for the other people sometimes?

Peter: [00:36:00] Hahahah.

Debbie: [00:36:00] And the thing is that you give your brain instructions all day long on what to focus on, and you know your mind just loves to serve. And so it will go out and find what you're looking for. So you know when you label people as difficult, then every single experience you have with that person is probably going to be difficult because that's what you're you're focusing your mind on. And so much of what we focus on doesn't serve us and it creates these filters that dirty the lens. We're not seeing our reality correctly.

Peter: [00:36:36] And I think about the profession I'm in, the accounting profession, even though I'm the Accidental Accountant, but I do love this profession. But I also see that we tend to be

very linear in thought and you said emotions, and a lot of times we don't want to deal with those emotions. But having that emotional intelligence will help us in guiding conversation; will help us in knowing when to lean in and when this might not be the right time to lean in, and having that understanding because I believe emotional intelligence along with our own intelligence equals success.

Debbie: [00:37:12] It does. And you know the emotional intelligence is part of what I teach in my communications programs. It is a lot about the attitude. You know how how do you get triggered? You know what are the things that set you off? How do you deal with them? You know what is it that other people do? What is it that you do to other people? So you know it's it's the whole sphere of emotions, and that intelligence as it relates to everybody not just yourself.

Peter: [00:37:37] Right. I call it... if somebody wants to know what the opposite of emotional intelligence is, I say watch the big bang theory and Sheldon.

Debbie: [00:37:46] Hahaha.

Peter: [00:37:46] He is kind of the opposite of that because he doesn't have that, possess that. His character doesn't possess those skills and it becomes very apparent in that character that you know he is like Mr. Spock. He has no emotion.

Debbie: [00:38:02] Mhm. Yeah. Absolutely.

Peter: [00:38:04] It's a slippery slope and you know I know it's easy for us to to look from the outside in, even though we've been inside there. I've always wondered what it would be like if I did go back into an organization for a period of time. The thing that always has shocked me is I can go with the best attitude, but Oh my God if Somebody is just Debbie Downer, Dan Downer, and just everything is just dark and miserable... How that sucks all that positivity right out of the room!

Debbie: [00:38:37] It does. It does. And so you got to have strategies to be able to deal with that, and that's why community is part of it. And by the way we say negative nelly, we don't say Debbie Downer.

Peter: [00:38:48] OK. Haha.

Debbie: [00:38:51] You absorb what other people want out, So you know... if you have a bunch of sour people in the office and it is that gloom and doom and you can feel the tension, I mean it does permeate, and you got to find ways to build that back up. And that is why the people that you choose to surround yourself with... you know sometimes you don't have choices when it comes to family.

Peter: [00:39:19] Hahaha.

Debbie: [00:39:19] But you have choices who you get to spend the most time with, and really are they supporting you? Are they lifting you up? Are they encouraging you? Do they have your back? You know are they telling you what you need to hear instead of what you want to hear?

Peter: [00:39:33] Right.

Debbie: [00:39:34] You know how do they show up in your life? And that's a choice. The people who play those role. So I say strive to thrive with five.

Peter: [00:39:42] ... say that again?

Debbie: [00:39:42] Try to thrive with five. And so making sure that those are people that support you.

Peter: [00:39:57] So you are an influence, correct?

Debbie: [00:40:00] Yeah.

Peter: [00:40:00] Did you go to the the banquet?

Debbie: [00:40:06] Which one? The CPAE banquet? Yes.

Peter: [00:40:07] Do you remember Bruce Turkel? I think that's his name.

Debbie: [00:40:11] Yes.

Peter: [00:40:11] His acceptance for being a CSP or a... I don't know. For being part of the the in the Hall of Fame.

Debbie: [00:40:20] Right. The CPAE.

Peter: [00:40:21] Yes. It wasn't about him. I mean the whole... his whole speech wasn't about him. It was about how us, sitting out in that audience, and that was one of the things he talked about. Who's your five? Who do you surround yourself with? Those of you who are sitting in the back of the back, if you see yourself being up here, and he challenged us the next day is to go sit up in the front row.

Debbie: [00:40:44] Yeah. Show up.

Peter: [00:40:44] Show up and introduce yourself, and who is in your five? And I think we may have a grounded one or two, but the other three I think they come and go.

Debbie: [00:40:59] Well, and here's the other thing though, they can also be virtual. So what is it that you feed your mind? So what is it that you listen to? What is it that you watch? What is it that you read? You know it can be coaches. It can be YouTube videos you watch. You know it can be books that you're reading. It can be the podcasts that you listen to. You know what do you have going on in the car? So even all those virtual resources. They're part of your you know your tribe, as well. So it doesn't always have to be... you know because some people aren't in a place or don't have the kind of life where they can get out make those connections.

Peter: [00:41:32] Right.

Debbie: [00:41:32] It can be virtual too. You know there are plenty of people out there who are serving that can be part of that community for you.

Peter: [00:41:40] That's a very good point. I never thought about that, but it's about what we read or who or what we listen to. I just started the book *The Trust Edge* by David Horsager.

Debbie: [00:41:53] Oh yes.

Peter: [00:41:54] I mean he had me at hello. I probably have quoted him a number of times where the value of everything is built on trust.

Debbie: [00:42:03] Yes. And he talked about clarity, related to trust. I'm like woo!

Peter: [00:42:06] Yes he did. And that was his first pillar!

Debbie: [00:42:12] I know!

Peter: [00:42:13] Ah. I just put two and two together. I should have thought about that before. Haha! But yeah I can see that. And it's just you know getting people challenging people... Let me rephrase that. It is challenging ourselves.

Debbie: [00:42:27] Yes.

Peter: [00:42:27] To what are we reading, what are we listening to, what are we surfing. I mean I love watching Ted talks. Some day I will eventually will do a TED talk. But you know and also you know if you want to be the best presenter, you watch the best and you kind of pick up little tips and tricks from them.

Debbie: [00:42:48] Absolutely.

Peter: [00:42:49] But you stay authentic in what you do . Anything else you'd like to share? I mean I'm sure we can go on for an hour and a half, two hours.

Debbie: [00:43:00] Probably could. You know I just... I encourage people to spend that time identifying what their patterns are. You know in NLP, and in my world of communication, if you look out and you're getting the results that you want... So in your career, if you're progressing through promotions and you're getting to where it is you want to go in your career, then great. Keep doing what you're doing because obviously it's working. But my message is for the people where it's not working. They're trying things and it's not working, and to encourage them. They have it inside, but they have beliefs and attitudes that are covering it up. And so they've got to work on the mindset and uncover what it is that's holding them back so that they can do something about it. And that's what R.A.C.E. is. You know focusing on what it is that you want instead, you know having a plan or a goal or strategy to get it, making sure that you have the people who are going to help you get there. You know if you are looking for a promotion, if you're looking to become a better leader, if you're looking to become better at anything in your career, there is somebody who is doing it right now. Call them, connect with them, model them. You know again it's not about mimicking them that you're not authentic. It's still being authentic. But you know you don't have to reinvent the wheel, but find the people that are going to help

you get there - and then engage! You know when you hear that story in your head, when you hear that's self-talk and it's not what you want... Interrupting that pattern. What do you want instead? So you know continually running yourself through that race acronym will consistently move you in the direction that you want to go. And there are other facets to it. You know I can chop down on each of those pillars but you know that's the overarching theme that really has allowed me to have success in my own life.

Peter: [00:44:49] R.A.C.E. is responsibility, accountability, community, and engage.

Debbie: [00:44:55] Yes. Yes.

Peter: [00:44:56] And you could probably talk an hour on each, if not more.

Debbie: [00:44:59] Yes. Haha.

Peter: [00:45:02] Haha. Well thank you so very much for spending time with me. I thoroughly enjoyed this conversation. I love what you do. You've got a lot of passion for what you do and I hope that within the very near future our paths to cross, and it may actually be in southwest Florida because I'd love to just take you out to lunch and just talk with you some more because--

Debbie: [00:45:22] That would be terrific. And thank you for having me on. This was so much fun. I always enjoy you know getting to talk about it, having a chance to get in front of different audiences so that they hear the message, and you know if one person listening to this embraces what they've heard, and they think differently as a result, than that's a win.

Peter: [00:45:40] How can people find you?

Debbie: [00:45:42] They can find me at www.gettingtoclarity.com. If anybody wanted to email me, it would be debbie@gettingtoclarity.com. And I'm on all the social media channels, so LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter.

Peter: [00:45:58] Instagram?

Debbie: [00:45:59] I do have a personal Instagram account, but I would say that the the primary three that I'm on the most are Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Peter: [00:46:07] Great. So we'll get all those addresses the stuff. I'll put them in the show notes so if people want to find you on social media they can. Once again, thank you so very much for spending time with us. And I look forward to seeing you in the near future.

Debbie: [00:46:24] And I do as well. Thank you!

[music]

Peter: [00:46:29] I would like to thank Debbie again for being a guest today and sharing her techniques on how to change the story we're telling ourselves. If you've been listening lately, you know that I have partnered with the Maryland Association of CPAs and the Business Learning Institute to bring [an exciting new learning opportunity for accounting professionals to](#)

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