

Brian Wagner: [00:00:00] And you really don't know what you're passionate about. You don't know what you're good at. And nobody else does either. So, how do you get to a point where you actually do know? For that, it's going to be a lot of trial and error.

Peter Margaritis: [00:00:22] Welcome to Change Your Mindset Podcast, formerly known as Improv is No Joke, where it's all about believing that strong communication skills are the best way in delivering your technical accounting knowledge and growing your business. An effective way of building strong communication skills is by embracing the principles of applied improvisation.

Peter Margaritis: [00:00:43] Your host is Peter Margaritis, CPA, a.k.a. The Accidental Accountant. And he will interview financial professionals and business leaders to find their secret in building stronger relationships with their clients, customers, associates, and peers, all the while growing their businesses. So, let's start the show.

Peter Margaritis: [00:01:10] Welcome to Episode 31. And my guest today is Brian Wagner, who's the Founder and CEO of A Radical Vision. A Radical Vision's mission statement is, "It took a crippling disease for us to understand that we have no vision. Losing our sight allowed us to gain vision. That was the greatest gift that's ever been given. We can't hide from our adversity. Our goal is to help others recognize their adversity, go blind, and gain vision. This happened to us. And now, we want to help others have that same focus.

Peter Margaritis: [00:01:45] In this episode, you'll learn how Brian overcame the adversity of losing his sight in his right eye, how he embraces his uniqueness, and how he is helping business professionals to become aware of their blind spots so they can become more effective leaders. This is a very inspirational interview, and I hope you begin to think about your blind spots and how you can eliminate them in order to gain clarity.

Peter Margaritis: [00:02:12] Before we get to the interview. Change Your Mindset is part of the C-Suite Radio family of podcasts. It is an honor and a privilege to be amongst some of the more popular business podcasts, such as the Hero Factor with Jeffrey Hazlitt, Amazing Business Radio was Shep Hyken, and Keep Leading with my good friend, Eddie Turner. You can find Change Your Mindset and many other

outstanding business podcasts on C-Suite Radio by going to www.c-suiteradio.com.

Announcer: [00:02:42] This podcast is part of the C-Suite Radio Network. Turning the volume up on business.

Peter Margaritis: [00:02:47] And now, a quick word from our sponsor.

Sponsor: [00:02:52] This episode is sponsored by Peter A. Margaritis LLC a.k.a. The Accidental Accountant. Are you looking for a high content and engaging speaker for your next conference? Do you want to deliver a story to stakeholders that will transform data dumping to engaging business conversations? Do you want to feel that the value a speaker provides your audience far exceeds the dollar value on their invoice? Then, book Peter for your next conference, management retreat, or workshop. Contact Peter at peter@petermargaritis.com and visit his website at www.petermargaritis.com. By the way, one of his Fortune 50 clients actually made the comment about the value he brings to your audience.

Peter Margaritis: [00:03:39] Now, let's get to the interview with Brian Wagner.

Peter Margaritis: [00:03:49] Hey, everybody. Welcome back. I'm excited today to have my guest, fellow NSA Ohio member, and that's the NSA that speaks, not the ones that listen, Brian Wagner. And Brian has such a unique story. And I've heard it, but I don't know it all, and I'm looking forward to learning more. But first and foremost, Brian, thank you for taking your time out of your busy schedule on this Friday afternoon at 11:00 a.m. Welcome, my friend.

Brian Wagner: [00:04:16] Absolutely. Thank you for having me, Peter.

Peter Margaritis: [00:04:19] Brian, I can't do justice on giving your background. Some folks I've had on the podcast, I've known that I could probably give a decent job on describing or telling us a little about the background, but I think you can only give your background the best. So, could you give the audience a little bit about yourself and your uniqueness?

Brian Wagner: [00:04:39] My uniqueness. So, 10 years ago -- well, actually, when I was 10 years old, and I'm 51, almost 52 now, I started to have some problems with my brain, and my drainage of fluid from my brain. And, really, there was a long history of different issues that went on over the course of my life. And at the age of 43, which would have been about eight years ago, I had a problem with my brain, and it's a cavernous malformation. So, a cavernous malformation is a malformed blood vessel that can form anywhere in your body. Mine just happened to have formed in my brain stem.

Brian Wagner: [00:05:23] And I've known about it for a while, but it did, and it bled. And when it bled, it put pressure on the nerves that control my vision. And as a result of that, I had to have surgery - a brain surgery - in order to remove the cavernous malformation from my brain stem. So, they actually went in in the back of my neck, and with an MRI-guided tool, and they actually picked that out of my brain stem. So, this is something that they told me for a long time, "Don't ever let someone operate on your brain stem," but it got to a point where the problems were only going to become worse and more frequent. So, that was what happened.

Brian Wagner: [00:06:07] And before that, I had gone blind. That was why the problem's growing, and it had become worse and more frequent. Well, that was one of the resulting factors is that I'd become blind. Both of my eyelids would not open unless I lift them with a finger. Both of my eyeballs don't go together, and they still don't go together to this day. So, my one eyelid is still down. And, actually, it's not a bad thing because it helped me from seeing too much double. I still see a little double out of my right eye, but my left eye is open for the most part, not as open as most people's, but it's good enough for me to be able to drive.

Brian Wagner: [00:06:48] So, that was eight years ago. I had that surgery. I've had multiple other eye surgeries since then. And have just come to a point where about 2-1/2 - 3 three years ago, I knew that -- well, I knew this six years ago that my reason for going through this was not that I should just have this condition and deal with it, but if I could get through this eight years ago when I had surgery, if I can get through this, I want to be able to have the ability to help other people that are going through their struggles as well. So, that's what I'm doing. That's why I'm doing what I'm doing.

Peter Margaritis: [00:07:30] So, let's back up just a little bit more. I know that before you got into the speaking business, and I assume that these issues you were having because you were an IT salesman for a while, weren't you, my friend?

Brian Wagner: [00:07:44] I worked for IBM for about 10 years. And then, for a number of other years, selling IBM products. So, that was what I did. And, yeah, I loved doing it. I felt very good about it. And that was who I was. I mean, that was my identity.

Peter Margaritis: [00:08:00] So, what was the point that you said -- well, was it at the surgery or after the surgeries that you said, "That was my identity before, but I need to transform into this new identity, or embrace this new, or I want to go out, and that passion was so great that I want to go out and share this story to help other people"?

Brian Wagner: [00:08:22] Yeah. So, that took a long time. I mean, really, when I was going through the blindness, first six months, that's when I knew that if I could get through this, I wanted to be able to help other people, but I really continued to drive because I wanted to have a source of income, which is important, I think.

Peter Margaritis: [00:08:44] Or you'll lose your wife.

Brian Wagner: [00:08:46] Yeah. So, going through that, I wanted to be able to provide the income, and I really was passionate about that, but it just didn't seem to work out as well. So, I went from job, to job, job. And I had some other people that I was relying on for coaching, and they told me never to quit my day jobs. So, I didn't quit my day job until that last one where my day job quit me. And then, I knew that it was my time just to be able to do this speaking business. So, that's where I've been ever since is all about building my speaking business. Now, there have been some other people that have come into my life that have helped me to give me a day job. So, I have a little -- I have some good income from that, but that's not in IT sales.

Peter Margaritis: [00:09:44] No, that's not. But it's an interesting path. And it's funny that you said that you had this, but it took your company to quit you before you make

that move versus when you would quit a company, which I had a media flashback to when I was downsized, right-sized, re-engineered, laid off, or fired - I'm not quite sure which one it was - with Victoria's Secret catalog.

Peter Margaritis: [00:10:07] I remember that feeling that I had. And I said, "You know what, someday, I'm not going let anybody have that opportunity to do that again," because I'd never been fired before, but it left such a scar that it took a few years, maybe five years, after that until I went forth. It was actually 10 years after before I took the business full time, but that just resonated at the back of my head about that. And it's like, "No, they don't quit me. I'm not going to put myself in that risk position again for a longer period time." And that's how I took my part-time job took over my full-time job.

Brian Wagner: [00:10:45] Yes. Well, that's awesome.

Peter Margaritis: [00:10:45] So, you talk about we all have blind spots, those things that deal -- little things that we can't see that or were unaware of. And what's -- when you're out to talk to the audience, I would assume they all recognize that they have these blind spots, or is it just an aha moment for them?

Brian Wagner: [00:11:09] Not all of it. Most people identify, and they agree. They shake their heads and say, "Yeah, we all have blindness. We all have blind spots." But when you ask them to identify their own or to talk about their own, then it's a different story. They're more apt to understand and be able to relate to you when they talk about other people's blind spots. So, that's easier for them to have a conversation.

Brian Wagner: [00:11:36] So, we have that conversation. Talk about one of the -- a simple blind spot be somebody that's just come from the bathroom, and they've got toilet paper on their heel, and they're walking down the hallway. It's not a big deal. Well, that's a blind spot. I mean, that's a different kind of blind. That's a physical one, but that shows them. And so, there are things that other people see that they don't. And that's essentially your blind spot. Your blind spot is anything that's preventing you from doing something better, different, or worse, preventing you from moving ahead.

Brian Wagner: [00:12:16] And in a physical sense, it could be your blind spot on your

car is where you're over your back right shoulder. You don't see through those blind spots through your mirrors. You have to actually physically look back there. So, with your blind spot, from a mental perspective, you have to physically have someone else look at your blind spots and have someone else tell you what your blind spot are because you're not going to be able to -- most likely, you're not going to be able to identify your own blind spot on your own, or they won't be considered blind spots.

Peter Margaritis: [00:12:49] Okay. So, remind me, we had this conversation a few months ago. And what was the principle? The Kobayashi? I know I'm butchering it but, hopefully, that juggles your memory.

Brian Wagner: [00:13:03] Oh, the Johari window.

Peter Margaritis: [00:13:04] Yeah, yeah. Kobayashi, Johari, yeah.

Brian Wagner: [00:13:06] Yeah, [crosstalk].

Peter Margaritis: [00:13:06] Yeah.

Brian Wagner: [00:13:06] Yeah, I knew it. It took me a little while, but yeah. So, the Johari window. If you think of a window with four separate panes, four different quadrants, in the upper right-hand corner of that window -- and so, if you were to think of it in this way, along the bottom of the window, you can write the words, "Things I don't see," and "Things I do see." And then, along the right-hand part of the window, write, "Things that other people see," and "Things that other people don't see."

Brian Wagner: [00:13:46] So, the corresponding quadrants to those will be in your upper right-hand quadrant, it's going to be things that you see and that other people see. So, when I say things, you could think of characteristics, you could think of incentives, you could think of emotions, you could think of other areas of your life where you are setting off, you're creating this energy in the world. It's this work force. It's whatever energy is out there. So, that is what that upper right-hand quadrant is. And

all the quadrants will have in them are these different characteristics. So, upper right-hand quadrant is things that you see and things that other people see as well. So, that's upper right.

Brian Wagner: [00:14:36] If you go to the upper-left quadrant, you're going to have things that you don't see but other people do see. That's your blind spot. So, again, same characteristics could apply to that from an energy perspective, emotions, what you're what you're putting out in the world.

Brian Wagner: [00:15:01] Then, in your lower right-hand quadrant, you're going to have things that you see but other people don't, or things that you know that other people don't. So, for example, you may know that you have a degree in accounting, but no one else knows that, or you may know that you have certain things going on in your life with a parent that's sick, and they're not doing well. But from a team perspective, if other people on your team were to know that this was going on in your life, it would make that team be more cohesive. It would make that team have more empathy for what it is you're going through. It just would make your life much easier as a leader and as a team member. So, that's really the hidden area is that lower right-hand quadrant.

Brian Wagner: [00:15:51] And then, in the lower left-hand quadrant, it is the unknown area. It's where you have things and -- things. You could take different items that you know that -- I'm sorry, that you don't know and that other people don't know. Things that you don't know and other people don't know. So, that could be something like you're coming out of college or high school, and you really don't know what you're passionate about. You don't know what you're good at. And nobody else does either. So, how you get to a point where you actually do know? For that, there's going to be a lot of trial and error. You've got to be able to set yourself up in a position where you can do different things in the world, and see how they go, and then pivot when they do or don't work. So, that's an important part to be able to make.

Brian Wagner: [00:16:45] The whole idea of the window, it's to build self-awareness. And when you build self-awareness, you are going to make your open area bigger. That's that upper right-hand quadrant that we talked about earlier where you have what you know and what other people know about you. So, the more they know and the more you know about you, the bigger your upper right-hand quadrant is going to be. That's

the open area. And you want to make your blind spot area, off to the left, you want to make that as small as possible. And then, of course, the same thing with the hidden area, down here on the bottom right.

Brian Wagner: [00:17:22] Once you do that, once you make your open area as large as possible, then you're going to have a much more cohesive team, you're going to have a much more productive team, and you're going to have a much more efficient team. All those things are really going to add up to something that's much more than what you have today.

Peter Margaritis: [00:17:42] To me, when I hear what you just described, and then you said self-awareness, which makes me think of emotional intelligence, in order to get to that nirvana, we have to be vulnerable.

Brian Wagner: [00:17:56] Right. And that really, mostly, I mean, can apply to the other areas as well. But it mostly applies to how you can make your open area larger and make your hidden area smaller. So, that's the one directly below it where you have things that you know but other people don't know. So, how do you -- and being vulnerable is one of those ways that you will be able to do that. You'll be able to make that hidden area smaller. So, as you're vulnerable, you're going to be able to help them, share with them what's going on. And it's going to make that team work so much better, and the leaders are going to be much more a part of the team as opposed to the person that's dragging the team.

Peter Margaritis: [00:18:42] But it's still hard for people to do that. It's so hard for them to say -- one, some people just don't like to share because the philosophy, leave your work life at home. This is business, business, business. But that's kind of an old school mentality anymore. And it is different personalities that come into play. And that's hard to get somebody just to be more open and more vulnerable when they're not accustomed to it because, now, you get the whole risk factor and fear factor there.

Brian Wagner: [00:19:09] Yeah, yeah. And, really, from the perspective of the Johari window, it is exactly to do just that. It's to create that self-awareness. So, it's something that the person or the team can have and show them, "Okay, So, I'm looking at my vulnerability factor or my hidden area, and seeing how large it is, and I can compare that to Peter's hidden area, and I see all Peter's hidden area is so much smaller because his open area is so much larger than mine." And I think of what that

means to me. And in my head, that means that I need to do a better job. And it's going to stick with me for the next six months to a year. And I'm going to be able to be more intentional about making that hidden area smaller.

Peter Margaritis: [00:20:01] Yes. And when I think within a team, if the leader of the team doesn't do it, and you try to share and become more vulnerable, they might shoot you down for that because that's not in the wheelhouse, per se. And I think, the number of times that I've done the creativity workshop at a CPA firm, and I've asked the partner to say something, give an idea that's just off the wall crazy, just bizarre, and they won't do it because they don't want to have that appearance of that. So, they don't want to even show any vulnerability. And then, I usually ask them to leave because nobody else is going to do it if he won't do it or she won't do it. If the leader will do it, then I look for everybody else to follow them. So, I usually ask them to leave, and make sure the check still clears please.

Peter Margaritis: [00:20:59] I mean, that is -- so, the blind spot. So, how do you -- it sounds like if you want have a great team, we need to tell the other teammates where their blind spot or the blind spot that they don't know, or they don't see. That's a tough conversation.

Brian Wagner: [00:21:18] That's a tough conversation. It is. And so, when you do that, you need to solicit feedback, and you need to make sure that when you solicit feedback that you pick the appropriate person for the feedback. It's probably not going to be your wife. It's probably not going to be your son. It's probably not going to be even your teammates. It's going to be somebody outside of that but still someone that you would put in your trusted circle. And you want to make sure that you're reaching out to those people for that feedback, and you're pinpointing, "Here's the kind of feedback that I'm looking for. Here's the area that I want you to concentrate on. Here is what I want you to listen in for as you hear me speak and as you hear me work with other people in my team."

Brian Wagner: [00:22:05] But what's important about feedback is not only who you ask and how you ask, but it's how you receive it. So, when you receive feedback, you need to make sure that you receive it as a gift. And every time you receive a gift, what do you say?

Peter Margaritis: [00:22:22] Thank

you.

Brian Wagner: [00:22:23] Exactly. So, that's how you need to receive feedback. That's going to determine how you receive the feedback in the future and if you receive any.

Peter Margaritis: [00:22:32] So, as I said thank you, I've thought of some people who receive a gift, who'd also want to see, "Do you have the receipt because I want to take this back?"

Brian Wagner: [00:22:39] There is another option.

Peter Margaritis: [00:22:46] But when you say it's a gift, and accept these gifts, I will bring it into the improv world, that's a lot what the improv is about. What's given to you, accept it as a gift, and you move forward with it. And a lot of people, when they ask for feedback, and when you give it to them, they can become defensive. Especially when you're doing it right. Like you said, you make sure that you put parameters around that, but as you provide that feedback, they get extremely defensive. It's like, "Wait. No, you've asked for this feedback. This is time for you to not be defensive and just, 'Okay, let me listen. Let me accept that. I don't have to take it or not, but I've asked for it. So, just shut up and listen.'"

Brian Wagner: [00:23:28] Yeah, you're right.

Peter Margaritis: [00:23:33] Don't get in defensive.

Brian Wagner: [00:23:36] Yeah. And that's, again, indicative of the leader you're going to have. If they're going to be defensive, well when they get feedback that they've specifically asked for, that's unfortunate. And so, there's other issues there at play that you need to work through or that leader needs to work through.

Peter Margaritis: [00:23:56] So, how do you convince a leader that they need to embrace this type of leadership style? Somebody who's been out, who's been a leader, or I'll just say an assumed leader because they have the title, and title doesn't always mean leadership, that they need to change or begin to mold their leadership style in a different way? And there's a half dozen people that I know that their boss were sent to coaching in order to do this, but they didn't have the DNA to change.

Brian Wagner: [00:24:29] Well, I mean, I would go to one area in particular, and I would just say, "Are you getting what you want from your team? Are you getting what you want from the company? Are you ecstatic? Are you happy? Are you delighted with everything?" And if they are, that's one thing. I mean, if you're satisfied as a leader, I don't know many of the leaders that are ever satisfied. They're not ever at a point where they can sit back, and sit on their laurels, and think that they've got everything taken care. This is as good as it gets. They're always looking for ways to improve. So, that is the sign to me. One of the signs of a great leader is somebody that's always looking to improve.

Peter Margaritis: [00:25:21] Yeah. It made me think of a few leaders who they want to still do it the way that it's always been, and there's no room for improvement because this worked in the past. Well, this isn't the past. This is the present and the future. And the world has changed. And it's that inability to recognize it and move forward. So, when I think of those folks, I think they've got one huge blind spot that I'm not sure they will ever get past.

Brian Wagner: [00:25:50] Right, right. And there are lots of other tools that are available, I mean, beyond the Johari window. I mean, that's just one tool that I use. And it's easier to talk about. There's other tools out there that can help leaders to identify that there is something missing, that there's something that they're not seeing. So, I go back to the vision perspective all the time, perspective, vision, sight. I think of all those things that if they're not seeing, then they need to be able to see them. And if they can't see them, think about what that would mean. Think about what that would mean to where they are. Think about what that would mean to their future.

Brian Wagner: [00:26:38] So, some of the tools are from a doctor named Tasha Eurich. She has a book called Insight. And that book has helped me to be able to

understand that there are a lot of other tools out there that can help a leader identify what may be holding them back or maybe, at least, identify that something is holding them back, that there is more to life, and that there is more to their job. All those things that can help them go beyond where they've gone today.

Peter Margaritis: [00:27:10] What was the name of the book again?

Brian Wagner: [00:27:13] The name of the book is Insight by Dr. Tasha Eurich.

Peter Margaritis: [00:27:17] We'll make sure we put that in our show notes. So, if anybody wants to go out and pick up that book on Amazon because, I think, when we're done here, I will be picking up that book on Amazon because I love reading stuff. Like I look at leaders, and I look at the process, and that's what's missing a lot of times because just because you go to a leadership seminar doesn't make you a leader, if they forget the process that they need to go through. And to your point, leadership needs to be worked on every single day. It's not something that's -- it could be ingrained in most of us or some of us, but it always still takes work to maintain that.

Brian Wagner: [00:27:53] No, it's not like a screwdriver that can use it once, and then put it in the drawer, and then it gets good until you pull it out again. And the screw, you're screwed. I don't know if I get to say it that way.

Peter Margaritis: [00:28:07] Well, you can because I'm-

Brian Wagner: [00:28:08] This is a good show.

Peter Margaritis: [00:28:08] I am going to make sure they don't cut that out because you are. If you take this screwdriver as your leadership, and you can pull it out whenever that you need it versus you need it all the time because there's so much involved in being that leader. I don't know. And I've got a couple of friends who are deep in corporate America, and they are just absolutely frustrated. I guess, we are -- I'm getting to that age, and a lot of my friends are talking about retirement, and they're going, "I can't leave. I hate it here. It's a miserable environment. However, I have to put up with it because I want my retirement, and I get so many years to go." And I've got a couple of friends who I worry about their health. I mean, they're so twisted inside and

outside, upside and downside. Is that really worth it? Apparently, it's okay to have that leadership style within the organization, and it's really just killing their people.

Brian Wagner: [00:29:20] Yeah, yeah. Oh, that's awful. I mean, if they have that screwdriver-first perspective, and they put that screwdriver their back way, I mean they are screwed. So, they need to -- I don't know.

Peter Margaritis: [00:29:35] If you think about leadership, and I don't remember, I did see this stat, and it was in a reputable periodical. I just don't remember which one. But there was a stat that said 59% of employees trust a stranger more than their own boss or manager. That's scary.

Brian Wagner: [00:29:59] Yeah. Oh, yeah because they're worried about them trying to influence them or trying to persuade them in another way. Just they think they have bad intentions.

Peter Margaritis: [00:30:14] Because from that perspective, it's not about the people that are working with me. It's about me and about my agenda versus about the audience's agenda. And I think that's something that that I have learned in my time at National Speakers Association. It really shouldn't be about me. It should be about my audience, and where do they need to go, and I need to know them, and try to take them down this path versus, "No, it's about me. And I think these people need what I have. I think they need -- I'm not going to ask because I'm sure this is exactly what they need." And it's not a two-way street.

Brian Wagner: [00:30:56] Right, right.

Peter Margaritis: [00:30:58] So, tell us more about this whole blind spot. When you're out talking to organizations, what else do you discuss with them?

Brian Wagner: [00:31:08] Well, one of the other areas we discuss is their uniqueness. So, uniqueness is one of those things where you can identify it, and then you'll be able to utilize it in a way that's going to be different than what you've done, ever done before. But that uniqueness in the blind spot really doesn't -- and blind spot isn't always a bad thing. So, there's lots of blind spots where I've seen people that have helped students

that they don't even realize what they're doing for those students, but they're helping them. They're doing a great service by spending time with them, by encouraging them, by just being their friend. All of those things are helping that student an awful lot. So, the blind spot is one of those things that can be a positive. And that's one of the areas that we talk about is the blind spots and how they can be something other than just a negative, but-

Peter Margaritis: [00:32:14] Does it -- well, you said the word uniqueness. This is another way of saying our quirkiness?

Brian Wagner: [00:32:20] Yeah, I actually call it weird, but I don't think that comes off as well. I don't think people appreciate me saying weird. So, I say uniqueness or quirkiness. Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:32:33] I prefer a weird, by the way, but we all have our own weirdness, our own quirkiness. And I guess, your point was the more that we can embrace that, instead of kind of repel it.

Brian Wagner: [00:32:49] Yeah, absolutely. So, I do different things with audiences where I have pictures that I may have taken with them. I do selfies. So, it's me and the other person. And I encourage them to wink. Actually, I make them wink. And so, they're winking with me. And I tell them that it's a lot easier for me to wink than it is for them just because of my quirkiness and my, I call it, weirdness, but what makes me unique is my face, for one, but really beyond that, it's how I handle my face, and how I'm embracing what makes me different, and how I embrace what makes me different makes me different more, if that makes sense.

Peter Margaritis: [00:33:34] You've really embraced the winking with Wagner mantra. And I don't remember when -- this started within this past 12 months, I believe, or it exploded within this past 12 months because, I think, everywhere you go, it doesn't matter, you'll grab somebody, you'll talk to them, and you'll take a selfie, and you'll post it. And I'm going, "He's talking there. It is so cool, winking with Wagner." And I will be -- full disclosure, one NSA chapter members, board members, she kind of have dubbed you the nickname "Brian, the Wink."

Brian Wagner: [00:34:09] And I'm okay with that.

Peter Margaritis: [00:34:14] And when you first joined the chapter, I mean, you really caught everybody off guard because you introduce yourself like you did the very first time at our chapter meeting.

Brian Wagner: [00:34:23] Well, maybe one of the first. I'm not sure what I exactly said, but, I mean, there's lots of different ways to spell your name. I mean, there's Peter and there's Pete. But there's no really mistaking how to spell my name. My name is Brian, and that's with one I.

Peter Margaritis: [00:34:44] I still laugh.

Brian Wagner: [00:34:44] Now, if people don't have a picture of me, and they can't see me, they don't appreciate that. But if they do, then they will.

Peter Margaritis: [00:34:52] Well, when we post this on social media, I'll make sure that you send me your headshot, so they can see that, but yeah. But the funny thing was we had another guy in the class, and I guess he said, "My name was Brian with two Is."

Brian Wagner: [00:35:08] Exactly.

Peter Margaritis: [00:35:10] But it was that that, I think, you told everybody in that room, "I'm okay with it. This is who I am." And what a great sense humor with it that, "Which Brian are we talking about?" And the head would tilt, or the guy with one eye. And it's such a refreshing way to go about things. It's been so cool out to watch you do this, and how you've captured people's imaginations in so many different ways just by -- and the time that Kay Francis, and Dave Caperton, and you, me, and a few of the people were having dynamic dialogue. And I think you asked something about the link. And that just exploded into something even more. And in the coming weeks, I mean, I'm sorry, I think about you, which I see people winking at me.

Brian Wagner: [00:36:09] Well, that's kind of scary.

Peter Margaritis: [00:36:11] Well, "How are you doing?" "I'm good."

Brian Wagner: [00:36:13] I'm sorry, yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:36:13] Yeah, that's it. Wow, but that goes to that uniqueness about you, but that uniqueness is contagious.

Brian Wagner: [00:36:22] Yeah. Yeah, I hope so.

Peter Margaritis: [00:36:25] Well, I believe it that people -- well, if you can get strangers to take a selfie with you, it's contagious and smile at the same time.

Brian Wagner: [00:36:38] They smile big, usually.

Peter Margaritis: [00:36:39] Yeah, they do.

Brian Wagner: [00:36:41] I've been to some campuses where I've had them taken and the people are just having a great time with it. So, it's worked out well.

Peter Margaritis: [00:36:50] But you're also planting that seed because you're not doing the Winking with Wagner before the conference. You're doing the Winking with Wagner after you've given them your message. So, I think, by taking that selfie, you're also planting seed ahead, or you're reminding them about the uniqueness, reminding them about the blind spot.

Brian Wagner: [00:37:09] Yeah. So, the conferences, actually, where I go beforehand, and I'll go to a pre-conference dinner or something like that with the board. And I will do

some Winking with Wagner photos there. And then, I'll upload those photos into the presentation. And then, when I give the presentation as part of the program, then I'll pull those photos out, and I'll show them the entire crowd. So, the entire crowd can see what the board is up to, and how they're having fun. And maybe it encourages them to get on the board or do other things on the board or with the board. But then, I encourage them to come and wink with me. I wink with them, they're in the audience, or I wink with them outside of the room after the program is over.

Peter Margaritis: [00:37:53] That's great. And now that you going to be in this new leadership position at our chapter as Vice president, on your way to be President, I'd be interested in how you going to get our audience more engaged and get them with the Winking with Wagner. I look forward to watching you do that, especially with the new people coming to the chapter.

Brian Wagner: [00:38:13] Yeah. Oh, yeah. It'll be a lot of fun. I'm hoping to continue to do what I've done in the past with the membership role, and in trying to increase our membership, and to make it more beneficial to all of the people that are there. So, to have them embrace their own uniqueness, that's what we want to do here. It doesn't matter if you have a permanent wink or if you have one leg shorter than the other. It doesn't matter to me.

Peter Margaritis: [00:38:40] Yeah, it doesn't, but it's amazing that in some places, it's frowned upon, or you're not supposed to be unique. You're supposed to wear the khaki pants, the blue polo, and everybody look alike. And I've never subscribed to that. I remember the first time, I was working at Pricewaterhouse, I walked in one day. It wasn't a blue suit. It wasn't a red tie. I wore black suit, white shirt, with a tie. And everybody asked me, "Are you going to a funeral today?" And I went, "No." And they go, "Well, why are you wearing black?" "Because it's the fashionable color I like to wear." And they looked at me like, "You're nuts."

Brian Wagner: [00:39:20] That's something.

Peter Margaritis: [00:39:24] It is something. It, really, is something. So, as a parting remark, what advice would you give those who are listening about (1), embracing their uniqueness; and (2), receiving feedback?

Brian Wagner: [00:39:42] Embracing. From embracing their uniqueness, one piece of advice that I would give is to smile even when they don't feel like it. That may sound like a strange recommendation for people there that are trying to embrace their own uniqueness, but if they can smile, and think about them, and their lives, and what makes them up, what makes them who they are, they're going to smile. And they're going to think about that. Whether they smile physically on their face or in their mind, that's going to allow them to be able to embrace their uniqueness. And it's going to help them anyway to embrace their uniqueness. So, that's one thing.

Brian Wagner: [00:40:25] The next thing you mentioned was in terms of in terms of feedback, and soliciting feedback, or getting feedback. That's a really difficult question to answer because it is certainly depends on the person that's going through that, but I would suggest, and I'm not asking for you to pay me by any means, but I'm suggesting that if you go to someone for feedback that it'd may be someone really outside of your friend circle, outside of your family circle. So, it may be someone within your circle, but they know you well enough to give you good feedback. If you can't do that, you need to pay someone. You need to pay someone to give you feedback. And that is really what's going to set you apart because the feedback you get from that person that you pay, it's going to be honest and, hopefully, not brutally honest. Hopefully, they don't knock you down, but, hopefully, they give you feedback that can be constructive.

Peter Margaritis: [00:41:31] So, two thoughts here. And I like the smile. And I love it. When we smile, that's more openness, more embracing, but there's times that we don't think we can smile. I was in New York working with a company, they put us through this training program and had this actor come in. And it was working with breathing exercises and stuff. And then, we were supposed to do a three-minute presentation on the first person we ever kissed.

Peter Margaritis: [00:42:00] And this one woman comes out, and she's telling the story, but she got this scowl on our face. And he stopped the class. He said, "Remember, Janet, you need to smile." She goes, "I am." "Okay, start over, come back in." She comes back in, and start, and she still has a scowl on her face. And he said, "Followed me." And he takes her out of the conference room. We can all see. He whispers something in her ear. She comes back, and starts the story, and she had this humongous smile on her face.

Peter Margaritis: [00:42:29] It blew us all away. We went, "What the heck did you say to her?" And the actor, his name was Craig Rowe, and he'd done some Law & Order stuff, and he said, "All I told her is to say these words in her head - I love you. But in a Southern accent. I love you. I love you." But when you say those words inside your head in the southern accent, you will smile. And that was the best piece of advice because when I know that I need a smile, I know I'm feel like "I love you." It sounds more like Bill Clinton going, "I love you," but it's not that southern accent.

Peter Margaritis: [00:43:13] And soliciting feedback, I think you have to understand who the person is and their ability to receive feedback. Judy Carter was one of my coaches for a while. And she said, "How would you like feedback?" And I said, "Right between the eyes." I said, "Don't sugarcoat. I don't like it when people sugarcoat. Just tell me the truth." She goes, "Are you sure?" I said, "Yeah." And first time she gave me feedback after she was done, and she gave it to me between the eyes. I mean my hair is blowing back and everything. She goes, "Are you okay?" I said, "That's what I wanted to hear. Thank you very much." She goes, "You're weird." I said, "Thank you." Even to a point because most people, even when they ask for it, they take it personal. If you ask for it, then let them tell you. And then, you can decide, but don't get defensive.

Brian Wagner: [00:44:02] Right, exactly. That's what it's all about.

Peter Margaritis: [00:44:05] To me, people get defensive. Well, Brian, with one I, I think about it, I think about you when I say that, and it just makes me laugh, but not at you, but kind of with you in this whole uniqueness aspect of it. And I'm so glad that you're able to spend some time on the podcast. I'm looking forward to knowing you even more so these next two or three years as you begin to lead the chapter. It's been great getting to know you, and I love the attitude, I love the perspective, and keep putting up the good fight, my friend. You're doing one hell of a job.

Brian Wagner: [00:44:46] Thanks, man. I appreciate it. And if I'd leave you with one comment, I'm not sure if we're doing the one comment yet or not.

Peter Margaritis: [00:44:53]

Sure.

Brian Wagner: [00:44:54] My one comment is to just keep one eye on the road.

Peter Margaritis: [00:45:02] Oh. You did say earlier in the presentation, you said something about one eye. And then, I'm going, "What?" But, yeah, keep one eye on the road, everybody. Just, at least, one eye. Two if you can, but-

Brian Wagner: [00:45:16] Right, yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:45:17] You got another one?

Brian Wagner: [00:45:19] Well, there's lots of them, but that's good for now.

Peter Margaritis: [00:45:21] That's good for now.

Brian Wagner: [00:45:23] I don't want to inundate you.

Peter Margaritis: [00:45:27] All right, man. I greatly appreciate it. I'll see you tomorrow at tomorrow's meeting.

Brian Wagner: [00:45:31] Right. Sounds good. Thanks.

Peter Margaritis: [00:45:31] Bye bud.

Peter Margaritis: [00:45:38] Now that you've listened to this episode, what will you do to discover your blind spots? What steps will you take to change your mindset and eliminate your blind spots to gain clarity? What risks are you willing to accept in order to

be prepared for tomorrow, all the while knowing that, in order to enact change, it takes baby steps?

Peter Margaritis: [00:46:04] Thank you for listening. And if you're enjoying this podcast, please subscribe and share this episode with a friend. And also, remember, please visit c-suiteradio.com to listen to many of the excellent business podcast that they have in their network. Have a great week.

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