

**Jay Sukow:** [00:00:00] How are you going to take this back and implement it? Because if you don't and if it's just a fun thing, then we haven't done our job. It has to be something where it's like, "What skill are you going to use moving forward?"

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:00:23] 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 stronger 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 33. And today I'm going to do something that I have not done before, and that is to replay a prior episode. This episode was released on November 27, 2017, and the guest was Jay Sukow. Now, Jay believes that the world will be a better place if everyone took just one improv class. And I agree. Jay is trying to make that world a reality as the founder of Today Improv where he teaches impromptu two actors, businesses, and everyone else around the world.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:01:45] Jay is currently on faculty at The Second City Hollywood and former faculty member at The Second City Chicago. Some of those he has trained with include Stephen Colbert, Stephen Carell, Dave Razowsky, Keith Johnstone, and Del Close. In the '80s and '90s, there wasn't a lot of understanding about what improv was. However, after years of people like Jay working on the public and businesses, people are starting to accept and understand why improv is so beneficial in both businesses and in life. This is recently seen in a Wall Street Journal article titled Oh my God, Where's This Going? When Computer Science Majors Take Improv on May 14th of 2019. Go check out that article.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:02:33] When Jay and his ensemble go to work with businesses, they don't claim to be business experts, but they are experts in communication, working together, being part of an ensemble, focusing on the team first, and using information. His goal is to get others to implement those skills within their businesses or their lives and make it a habit. And one of the most valuable skills and habits that you might learn in one of these improv classes is "yes and." Because in your professional world and your personal world, you will have to say yes, and you will have to say yes to things that you don't want to do, or else you will lose something. So, learning how to say yes in a constructive manner is a very valuable skill. Oftentimes, we are struggling because we aren't accepting something or making excuses. When we use "yes and," we aren't trying to find a quick way out of a problem or an acceptable way to make an excuse. We are saying before I shoot this idea down, how could it work?

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:03:41] Now, before we get to the interview, Change Your Mindset is part of the C-Suite family radio of podcasts. It is an honor and a privilege to be among some of the most popular business podcasts such as The Gero Gactor with Jeffrey Hayzlett, Amazing Business Radio with Shep Hyken, and Keep Leading with 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](http://www.c-suiteradio.com).

**Announcer:** [00:04:08] This podcast is part of the C-Suite Radio Network: turning the volume offline business.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:04:16] And now, a quick word from our sponsor.

**Sponsor:** [00:04:19] 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](mailto:peter@petermargaritis.com) and visit his website at [www.petermargaritis.com](http://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:** [00:05:09] Now, let's get to the interview with Jay Sukow.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:05:14] Jay, I have to admit, I am so very excited to have you on my podcast. And super busy. Thank you go to you for taking time out of your day to be a guest and spend some time with myself and my audience. I greatly appreciate that.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:05:30] Peter, thank you. I'm very excited to be on it. And I think we have to give a shout out to the Conderaccis because I listened to your podcast with Annie, and that's how it got into listening to your episode. And I thought it was just great. I think what you're doing is fantastic. So, thank you for having me on.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:05:52] I greatly appreciate the kudos. And you're right thanks to Greg Conderacci and Annie Conderacci because without either of this, this conversation wouldn't be happening. And I owe a lot to them for supporting the podcast and supporting me, And Annie is such a delight. I mean, I had so much fun. You said you listened to the episode. I had so much fun talking with her. She's just full of wonderful energy.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:06:18] Yeah, she's great. And she is such a student of improv and has such integrity with performing it. And she sees how she benefits in her professional life, personal life, as well as artistic life. So, yes, we have conversations all the time, and it's really great. It's really great. I remember her from -- I taught her in a class at Second City, and I'll never forget this one move she made. The scene was about a class reunion, and she was off stage, and two people were in the scene, and she comes running onstage, and had such an energy about her that I never forgot it, and I'll never forget it.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:06:58] Wow. And when I was talking to her, I mean, all she raved about -- and I know she's giving you a quote on your website about what a wonderful teacher you are and how you gave her a life-changing experience through the

introduction of improv. And that's what we really want to talk about with you about is my big introduction with it was many years ago with George Caleodis when he introduced it to me, but when it got heightened to that next level and really looked at it from a personal and business perspective is when I was at Second City Chicago some years ago, and I had this instructor by the name of Brian Posen. And-

**Jay Sukow:** [00:07:43] Oh. yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:07:44] And, I mean, he just took it to a whole different level and really gave me focus on how to apply it in a daily life and in a business life because I think to many people, when you say, "What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think improv?" I'll hear standup comedy, I'll hear comedy, or I hear Drew Carey.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:08:04] Yeah. And to the benefit of that show, Whose Line Is It Anyway, which drew hosts, the American version, before that, people had no reference really about improv. Like I started in '92, and people, it was very hard for them to understand the concept. And then when Whose Line Is It Anyway came along, it, at least, gave them a reference point. So, whether you did short form, or long form, or whatever kind of improv you did, you, at least, had like a base level. For most of the people you're talking today had a base level of knowledge, and it was all thanks to that show.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:08:44] Yeah. But the one thing that always -- I guess, since I look at it from a little bit different perspective is when Drew would say, "Where everything is made up and the points don't count," it's not made up. And, actually, the points really do count. That's the one thing, when I address that, I go, "It's not so much made up because you've got to have some knowledge in order to--"

**Jay Sukow:** [00:09:10] Right.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:09:10] "... to do a scene." And George Caleodis, when he said, "I want you guys to go study the '70s," so this is about 97-'98, "and come back the next week, and we will apply this to the workshop." And those of us who did the homework, we were funny. Those who didn't get sucked. They really sucked. And that was the big

aha moment. It was like it's not making stuff up. You've got to have the knowledge, experience, and education, or whatever in order to apply to that scene or to that issue at hand.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:09:49] Yeah. And not that they sucked but maybe it was that they didn't quite get the full potential of what that scene could be.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:10:01] Yeah. It was kind of harsh on my part. I apologize, but I think-

**Jay Sukow:** [00:10:04] Well, also, because it's like with each person, it's like another thing. Maybe they did study, but maybe they're just petrified or like, yeah, you're right, like maybe they didn't study. Then, they get up there, and they're lost because you have all this knowledge and information. And then, I think what is the funniest and most effective in improv is when people go, "Oh, I know that. Like, I'm that person. You're that person." I think that's what it boils down to. So, when you have something like a style or genre, and you just play those most obvious tropes of that, then it becomes so much more enjoyable.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:10:42] Got it. Yeah. And maybe it was a little harsh, but I can still hear these guys after class going, "Man, we really sucked." And I think it was for the fact, if my memory serves me correct me, and my wife says I can't remember a thing, I think they said they got so busy during the week that they didn't do the homework.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:11:03] Right.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:11:03] So, they had nothing.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:11:04] And then, yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:11:05] Some type of basis. So, you've got a business. You perform, you teach actors, you do it in business, and you teach everybody. How did you fall into the teaching aspect of this from the performance side of it?

**Jay Sukow:** [00:11:23] A little background is my parents in 1991 gave me as a Christmas present a Second City improv class. And it wasn't like I had -- I'm from Chicago. I heard of Second City. I had a fleeting understanding, but I had no -- at that point, I didn't really think I wanted to perform at all, but I had been artistic, and I was in plays in high school, and I worked in video department at my school. So, I like being creative, and I said, "Okay, this sounds fun." And so, I was driving up. It was like two or three hours to take a Saturday noon class, and it became the highlight of my week. And this is the last semester of my senior year in college, and this thing was like I couldn't wait for it.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:12:16] And so, I went up. And at that point, part of the attraction of improv was it was a dead-end job. You weren't going anywhere. There was no professional improbable league. I met these people that were smart like me that were kind of -- we called it The Island of Misfit Toys. Like we all kind of didn't fit in at places, but we found our tribe in this. And I still talk to four people from my very first improv level one class, which was started in January of '92. So, we're still friends. And I just performed on one of the guys a couple weeks ago, and it was 25 years had gone by. And we did a show, and it was like we hadn't stopped.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:13:05] So, in October of '93, I auditioned for a group called Comedy Sports. And when I took my first improv class of Second City, you went level one, two, three, four, and five. And there was a Second City in the suburbs of Chicago. That's where I took it. It's no longer there. So, level one, two, three were improv. And I started with Stephen Colbert, Dave Razowsky, and Steve Carell were my first three teachers.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:13:34] I've heard of those guys before.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:13:35] Yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:13:36] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:13:36] Yeah, I mean, they're -- I'm not sure what they're doing now, And Razowsky is like traveling the world teaching. And the other two, I've lost track of. I'm not sure where they are. But in our level four, we started writing sketch and Second City Improvisation used to write sketch comedy. And it's political and satirical in nature because when they would ask for suggestions in the '50s when they were performing for University of Chicago students mainly, they would get political suggestions. And so, that's how it became political and satirical is because of their audience.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:14:14] And so, then, we went from there. Our group from Second City performed two years on that stage, which was great. We did a student show that was extended for a year. Then, we did a best of Second City Northwest for a year, which was like I got to do parts from Stephen Colbert, and Carrel, and Nia Vardalos, and Dan Castellaneta Castle, who's the voice of Homer Simpson. Like we got a really good education.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:14:39] Wow.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:14:40] Then, we went down to Chicago. We enrolled in the conservatory there and had a great time. And then, we heard about this guy, Del Close. And so, we took it. We started taking classes with him. And then, I auditioned for Comedy Sports, which is short-form improv. And it's "competitive" short-form improv. Like there's a referee and there are points given. But, really, you're in this show, and there are two teams, and they're servicing the show. So, it's a really fun time.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:15:12] And I think about -- it's probably like in the following year, I want to say, that I did a workshop at a college, and the guy who was running the workshop was like, "Why don't you teach the warm-ups?" I was like, "No. What? Teach them?" And he goes, "You have more experience than they do." I'm like, "Okay." So, I started teaching then. And then, I would gradually teach like exercises. And then, I would teach full-on workshops. And so, that's kind of how my teaching started. It wasn't necessarily by accident, but it was more like, "Okay, jump in. Jump in 100% and figure it out as you go."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:15:54] Oh, that sounds like improv.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:15:56] Yeah, for sure. And I was like, "Oh, I really love this aspect of it." So, I really like teaching. I probably enjoy teaching more than performing, and I love performing.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:16:07] Wow. Because you know what they say about teachers. Those who teach can't do. But that's not true in improv.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:16:15] Well, it's funny you say that because our faculty show at Second City in Chicago when I was there, I'm in LA now, but the Second City Chicago faculty show was called Those Who Can't. And it's like the most fun show because it was like all the people that played, we were so excited to play with each other, and we would play in front of students, and I would always teach that night because the show would be like a 10:00 or 10:30. And if I didn't teach, I would never stay awake that long. But it is like, "Oh, I have to practice what I preach. I have to do what I talked about." And then, in class, if I was working on space work or object work, I would do that in the show, or if I was focused on relationships, I would focus on that in the show like without even thinking about it. So, that was our faculty jam.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:17:03] Wow.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:17:05] Now, at Second City Hollywood, it's called Hot for A Teacher. This is like, "All right, okay."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:17:18] Whatever.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:17:18] Yeah, right. All right. If you want to call it that. Okay.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:17:21] So, as a teacher of it, I'm curious about morphing in from an actor's perspective into the business world, and what struggles, what challenges do you have when you're with a group of actors, and then you're in a corporate environment working with those within the organization? Yeah, with business.



**Jay Sukow:** [00:17:47] It's evolved a lot. I remember one of my earliest corporate gigs, one of the people on our class showed up, and she had a jean jacket on that said, "Legalize pot." And it was like our director went ballistic, and rightfully so. And that's the thing. Even slightly through today, not that quote in the jacket, but the fact that I cannot bring improvisers into corporate settings, unless I know them, and I know they speak the language, and I know that they will not do these bits that you're doing a bit in a breakout room before you're going on, and somebody walks by. They don't know what the reference, and they just hear you doing these bits. It's not advantageous for that.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:18:36] So, one of the aspects of doing corporate improv workshops is knowing the people who are going there, they know how to present themselves in that setting. And it's very, very difficult because it's against the nature of improvisers because a lot of them are gregarious and really love doing bits, and callbacks, and things like that. And my wife said it great, and it sounds harsh, but she was really good at translating from business world to improv speak. And this was the way she put it to improvisers, "When you walk into a business to do a gig, you have to walk in like you're miserable." And she said that because, otherwise, there was no reference. She couldn't say to one improviser, "Okay, you have to be quiet," because that was like, "Okay, we'll whisper our bits." But she's like, "For an improviser, put him in that context of walking in that way" made them understand what it was like.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:19:40] Wow.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:19:40] It made them understand this as a professional thing. And so, that's one aspect of doing. That has to do with the facilitators and improvisers. And, also, as you know, a facilitator in a corporate setting, like Greg is a facilitator. An improv facilitator is not that same type of facilitator. It's not the same. It's more like you're running the workshop. You're not necessarily trained in being a facilitator. But that's what we say, improv facilitator, but it's a little bit of a different beast, I think, for the attendants and the participants in the workshop.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:20:21] And it's gotten a lot easier with the age. And Second City offers classes for four-year-olds in improv, all the way up through people who have retired. They offer a workshop for everybody. They have workshops for social anxiety. They have workshops for people on the autism spectrum. They have military veterans. And so, people's reference of improv is so much greater in their experience now. So, I do a lot of facilitation with Second City at Deloitte on their campus down in Dallas, and a lot of the sessions are like, "Hey, you're transferring from intern to employee," or "You've been working a couple of years now. You're going to start transitioning into management."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:21:13] And so, we're using improv to help those transitions, and help with listening, and communication. And a lot of times now, I'll see students I've had in Chicago in those classes or people who have been like, "Yeah, I've been on improv. I understand what improve is." So, that has completely changed as far as going into a place. And before, it'd be like, "All right. Who knows what improv is?" and nobody would raise their hand. People are afraid. And this is not just in the corporate setting but in life. They're afraid of they think they're going to be made fun of, they think they're going to be put on the spot, they think they're going to be out there by themselves. And improv is the opposite of that.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:21:52] And they think it's just like you're going to go out there willy-nilly, and say whatever, and it's whatever you say is right. And it's like no, that's not it. Improv is very hard, which sounds counter, but it is because you have these parameters. And you're out there -- Seinfeld said it, "People would rather be in the casket than give the eulogy." So, you're doing something that is addressing the fear of public speaking, addressing being in your head analyzing things because your brain wants to figure things out. Your brain wants steps. That's why we love steps, and we love acronyms because it's like, "Oh, here's the thing we're doing." With improv, it's, "We're doing this thing together. We have to do it step by step together." And to have that, where most of your life, you're defensive, and you're protecting yourself, and people are like, "Well, how do I get out of my head?" It's like, "Well, sad news is you don't." But improv has skills to help you stay. You're really talking about staying present.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:22:59] Yes, yes.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:23:00] And say yes and staying in the moment to be open for anything that can happen. Now, people, and there are business books like Bob Colhan has a business book, and Second City has a business book, and David [Lazuski] down in San Diego, they all have books that apply to business. So, people now have -- that's giving it a sense of legitimacy. As you know, it's like, "Oh, you've got a book. Well, you must be an expert because you have a book," which is true.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:23:30] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:23:31] So, you go in there now, and it's like that book has allowed people who are making decisions for these meetings to say, "Oh, we're bringing in somebody. There's going to be some takeaways. There are going to be some key takeaways that we can apply." It's not just this thing of like, "Oh, it's going to be fun." And so, you get in these situations, and my wife is a consultant, and the thing you struggle against is (1), people don't want to look foolish; (2), they don't want to participate. Like you know, you go to meetings, people think it's time to -- honestly, it's a time to zone out, or just kind of not pay attention, or you do pay attention, but you don't have to interact as much. My wife says she would rather not give an answer than give the wrong one because of how it's going to reflect on her. And as an improviser, I'm like the opposite. I'm like, "I'm going to answer it. It might be wrong. That will be fun."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:24:28] Also, I think, within that, "I'd rather give the answer. I can just keep it to myself," I think it also goes, "Who's the power figure in the room?"

**Jay Sukow:** [00:24:39] Yes.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:24:39] Who's the most senior in the room?

**Jay Sukow:** [00:24:42] Who's the most senior person? And are they buying in? And if you go into a place, if you go into a session, and that person is like jumping in 100%, and they're enjoying it, that's the most fun easiest session because everyone defers to

that senior person. And if they're there, and they've got their arms crossed, and they are on their phone, or they walk out, or they are not even participating, then it's like, "Okay." It's a little bit of a struggle to get them to buy in. And like a regular class that isn't in the business setting, people are signed up because they're there because they want to do something. They want to be a better person. They want to listen better. Heck, they might want to meet people. They might like improv.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:25:33] When you go in a business setting, sometimes, it's, "Hey, surprise. Guess what you're doing." And they don't want to be there all the time. They might get something out of it to the end, but not everybody is like, "Oh, I want to be here." And so, that's another thing that's a challenge. And if you don't have people who are the improv facilitators with experience in that arena, it's hard to have them. It's hard to set them up for success because you need people who can translate the language. You need people who can look in somebody's eyes and say, "Okay, this person is completely scared and nervous. I'm not going to ask them to answer questions or participate," as far as I look to somebody else, and it's like, "Oh, they're willing to come out and be fearless."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:26:27] Yeah, you can tell by body language. I-

**Jay Sukow:** [00:26:30] You could tell by body language, yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:26:32] I was doing something with a group of 400 accountants, and I asked for a volunteer, and it was quiet. And, finally, after a little bit of silence, this woman raised her hand. And she came up on stage, and she was great. We had a blast. And we're making people laugh, and we get a whole thing about listening to stuff. And then, I asked her, "Was it that difficult?" She goes, "No. It's actually fun. The difficult part was raising my hand and volunteering."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:26:56] Yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:26:59] And I look at that leaning in, that fear, that inner critic that's saying, "Don't, don't, you're going to look stupid up there." But to your point earlier, it's a safe environment.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:27:07] That's a huge part of it. It's like you have to set the tone as a place that's safe and a place that's like you might think we're doing all of this, but we're not. We're not going to pull you up. We're not going to make fun of you. I don't like -- I don't pull people up. I ask for volunteers. And the thing that's scary for me is like asking for a volunteer, nobody raises their hand, and then just shutting myself up. Shut up, dude, and wait that extra second or two till somebody volunteers.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:27:40] And then, what we do is we start off with like doing this exercise of like, "Okay, they're going to answer questions I ask them. You're going to celebrate loudly with thunderous applause." It's like, "What's your name." "My name's Peter." And everyone claps, and they're like, "Yeah." So, then, it gets them in that space of like, "Oh, when I answer, I get applause." And then, at the end, we're like, "Okay, for those of you who are on the outside of the circle, but for anyone here, how excited were you that it wasn't you up there?" And Peter went, and they're like, "Yeah." You're like, "Great." And you set the tone. It's like, "This is going to be a safe. It's going to be interactive. You're going to be out of your comfort zone, but that's where growth happens."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:28:27] And so what we want is we're not experts in your business, but we're experts in what we do, which is communication, and working together, and being a part of an ensemble, and focusing on the team first, and using information. So, then, as we go, it's like, "How are you going to take this back and implement it?" Because if you don't and if it's just a fun thing, then we haven't done our job. It has to be something where it's like, "What skill are you going to use moving forward?"

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:28:57] And creating the habit.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:29:01] And creating the habit, which, to me, the most effective thing is like you have to have us come in at regular times. If it's a one off, you get really excited afterwards, and then things change.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:29:14] Things go back to normal.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:29:15] You go back to old habits, right. And you're not accountable, so you don't have that. I think the best part is having somebody who's like an accountability buddy. I wouldn't call it that, but that idea of like you hold each other accountable because that, also, is improv where you're working together to set people up to succeed rather than cutting them down to save yourself.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:29:38] That's a good point. I haven't -- after I'm done, I say, "Okay, now, how are you going to hold yourself accountable and move forward?" I've never thought about the accountability buddy. I've used the piece of using index card. If yes and is what you want to begin to do more of, the writing on index card, write on post-it notes. Keep it around you. Be cognizant of it and begin that change. But I do like that idea of getting an accountability buddy, somebody within your office that is attending that you can hold each other accountable after the session is over in order to create that habit and to begin that change.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:30:20] Yeah, because I think we all need that. It's very hard. And in your life, you don't work by yourself. You might do parts of your job by yourself, but you need to rely on people. And if you have somebody holding you accountable, and you holding somebody else accountable, you're going to do more.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:30:37] And I like your idea of writing stuff down too because, then, you see it, and you're dealing with it. If you have -- it's like working out. If you work out by yourself, you might be able to do it. But if you have a trainer or a workout buddy, they're going to also push you, and they're going to help you, and it's going to be a thing of like, "I don't want to let them down." I want, "They're going to support me. They're going to help me." Because it's like, oh, you work out by yourself, and you're doing, I don't know, sit-ups, and you're like, "That's good enough," if you're by yourself. But if you're with somebody, they're going to be like, "Come on. One more. One more," and it's going to push you that much farther.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:31:18] Exactly. And I think the writing things down, what I've done is if I were to ask them to write something down, then I have to prove to them that I do the same thing. And a couple of ways I found to do that is I had a little bracelet made from Etsy that says, "Yes and," I wear it all the time. Actually, it broke. I have to get another one. And the other thing that I do to walk that talk is, most of the time, when I'm doing anything in front of corporate America, I'm more in French cuffs shirts, not because I love French cuffs shirts because I love these cufflinks that I had made. One says yes, and the other says and.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:32:00] That's great.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:32:02] And when I show that to them, it helps with that. I say, "I've been doing this for a while." I go and apply it, but I fall off the wagon too. And I need to remember, especially when I'm traveling through the Philadelphia airport or something like that. When I get into those "no because" environments and "yes but," I need to keep that in front of me. And I think that that does help make that connection that, "Well, if he's doing it," and I tell a story about how I've done it that maybe they will apply it the same way or do something along those lines.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:32:39] I have a tattoo on my forearm says, "yes and."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:32:43] Do you really?

**Jay Sukow:** [00:32:44] Yeah. And it came about because I have a son who's 4 and a daughter who's 2 and a half. And when my wife was pregnant, I was pushing nonstop for the name to be Yesandra. I'm not kidding. I'm like middle name, first name. And my wife is like, "That's not my name." And I said, "Laura, at one point in history, Laura was not a name, but somebody had to do it." And she's like, "No." So, I negotiated a tattoo. I'm like, "Well, then, you go let me get a tattoo that says yes, and." And she finally relented, which was a big yes and on her part. And so, what she did is she goes, "Well, if you're going to get it, I want to be a part of it." So, she wrote in sharpie yes and. And then, I went in to get it tattooed, and they just tattooed where the letters were. So, it's my wife's handwriting.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:33:42] Oh cool.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:33:44] And it says yes and. And I say, yeah, it's a philosophy for me. It's not necessarily the words yes and, but it's the philosophy of-

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:33:54] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:33:54] And my wife said this best. She goes - and this has a big impact when I do these corporate sessions. She goes, "Yes and isn't like, 'All right. Yes, and your way out of problems. Yes, and your way to freedom.'" She goes, "Yes and is before I shoot it down, how could it work?"

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:34:11] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:34:12] I mean, just take a moment, and if you look in your corporate world, or your professional world, or your personal world, you have to say yes. You have to. And you have to see us the things you don't want to do, or you get fired. And so, a lot of times, when we're struggling, it's because we're not accepting, and we're not going with it. And we can make -- humans make beautiful excuses. And that no because, wonderful. It gives my ego a sense of power because no is a power word. And so, it also makes me think because they say no to your idea, my suggestion is going to hold so much more weight or like, "I'm going to say no. I have no idea. I have no other options. I'm just going to shoot it down."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:35:05] Oh, man. I am speaking to the choir here. Yeah, I see a lot. 100% agree, everything that you said. I love how you laid this out, and the influence that your wife has had on you when it comes to corporate America. So, I'm going to take a real sidestep here for a moment because it begs me to ask this question, did you really kick her out of an improv workshop?

**Jay Sukow:** [00:35:34] Oh, it was a class, my friend.



**Peter Margaritis:** [00:35:37] It was a class.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:35:38] And she was the only one that I've ever kicked out of class.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:35:43] Now, was this-

**Jay Sukow:** [00:35:44] The only one.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:35:45] Was this prior to being married or was this-

**Jay Sukow:** [00:35:48] Oh no. Oh no.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:35:50] Oh no?

**Jay Sukow:** [00:35:50] We were married. We were married. What had happened, the backstory is it was the first class I thought at lo in Chicago. Like I had done some workshops and things with them, but I hadn't taught a session. I had gone to lo Chicago or Improv Olympic in the mid -- like '93-'94. I was there for a couple of years not teaching but just performing. And then, I came back, and this was like early 2000. And I said, "Come to my class, tell me if I'm talking too much. Give me some notes and some feedback," because teachers, and like I'm doing on this podcast episode, love to talk. And I had a guy who was a coach of a team, and a show would be 22 minutes, he would talk for 45 after the show. Like come on, man.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:36:46] So, she was in the class. And I knew that people after that class would be like, "We're all moving on, right?" And you move on together. But I knew she wasn't going to because she didn't want to. But the whole time in class, every class of the eight weeks, she would be on her phone, and I'd be like, "Can you put that away?" And so, because she has a short attention span and, sometimes, she gets bored, rightfully so watching improv, so, finally, the last week, I'm like, "Everybody's moving on except Laura. You've been on your phone this whole time. You're on your phone right now." And a part of me was like, "Yeah," but part of me was upset. I was like, "You can't

get off the phone?" like "Don't you see the example it's setting?" Like, "I'm glad you're here, but get off the phone."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:37:46] And now, when I teach, I direct a group here in Santa Monica, they're called Air Force Fun, and they're amazing. They're really good. But I have them -- at the start of rehearsal, I have them put their phones down on a ledge where we rehearse, so that they just don't look at their phones because it becomes such a thing that we don't even think about it. We go right to the phones, which goes to like that's going against your active listening.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:38:13] Bingo.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:38:14] People think like -- and they're like, "Oh, I can multitask." It's like, "No."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:38:17] No.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:38:18] And I've worked with people that are high powered and think they can. It's like, "No, you can't." Your focus is split. I mean, just based on the term "multitasking," your focus is split. And improv is such an immediate -- you have to be here now. It's a shared experience. There are a lot of those moments that come up when you're invested, but if you're not invested, and if you're a senior person, if you're the most senior person in the room, and you're on your phone, other people are going to think it's okay.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:38:48] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:38:49] So, it's like -- and we say like, "Hey, if you've got to take a phone call," that happens because everybody's got 16 things happening at that time, "then, just step out in the hallway, and then come back."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:38:59] And come back in.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:39:00] Yeah, but don't leave. It'll hurt our feelings.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:39:00] But the whole go. Thank you for the story about why you kicked her out. But as you came back into the corporate world, it really goes down to the culture that is set. And I've said that if the most senior person in the room, if they would just give the craziest answer, that would free everybody else up. You'll love this story. I was doing a workshop for a company in Maryland, and they had a week-long leadership program, and they brought their emerging leaders from the US and Latin America in. And I got to teach a creativity piece. And it was half a day, and off the premise of yes and, and along those lines. And one of the things we were discussing is, how do we increase profitability in the company? "Raise, raise, cut costs." "Okay, that's easy. Come on, get out of your head. Give me some crazy ideas." And this one gentleman from Latin America was, "I tell you what, my friends, here's how we want to increase profitability in our company, we are going to kill all of our competition's salespeople."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:40:12] Yeah. Right.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:40:13] Right? Everybody broke up with laughter, and I panicked because I wasn't (1), expecting it. The voice in my head said, "If you believe this, run with this. If not, this is going to fall right apart." And I paused for a moment and said, "You know, let's take murder off the table for now, because I don't look good in orange. However, instead-"

**Jay Sukow:** [00:40:38] I like how you said for now.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:40:39] For now.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:40:39] For now.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:40:40] Yeah. However, instead of killing them, why do we identify the top salespeople in our competition and poach them? Let's give them a \$30,000 increase over salary and maybe \$10,000 bonus. And I can turn that -- and I got a lot. As I reflected back over that, I went, "Okay, (1), would we have gotten there had that

gentleman not had the -- who took me literally when I said, "You can say anything and you're not going to be judged. It is not going to come back to bite you," and he said that. But then, it also took me someplace else in thinking about corporate America, and thinking about I was looking for ideas, and kind of knew that people are safe, they're not going to throw away, or they're not going to say anything, or if they give an idea, and it's not going to be too far off of being safe, but we can't find good ideas with that.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:41:33] When this guy gave us the crazy idea, it took us from safe to absolutely bizarre, that's when we find the magic is when we can pull it back and find that middle. We've got more room to work with. And I think that's what improv helps us do is find that additional space to work by saying yes and, agreement, pushing it out there, having that lack of fear, per se, knowing that you've got support from everybody, and then we can take crazy, and come up with creative and applicable.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:42:07] When you say like lack of fear and a way to put that also with improv is follow the fear. And that's what you did, like follow the fear, and we want to shy away from it. It's like no, you accept it, and you follow it because you go through it. And I think what you said is like, "Oh, it was said, and then I panicked," which goes back to like my first instinct because I don't know what it is because humans don't like -- your brain wants to know everything. So, your brain wants to know the steps before they go in. But because we don't know, we're going to immediately shut it down.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:42:41] But what I think is a lost point in improv is your idea is not the end idea. Your idea, your job is to put information out there as an idea, not expecting it to be the punchline to a joke, right, the closer. It's the setup to get us somewhere. My information. the thing about the murder, if we don't judge it, and especially if you've sold them, you could say anything, then to be like murder, and somebody goes, "No," it's like, "No, you've told them. You've set it up to like there are no wrong answers." And if that's the case, then you go, "Okay, murder. Well, what was he really trying to say?" Okay. And your idea came out of that. So, instead of saying no, which is a judgment, and we say like defer judgment. "Yes and" is deferred judgment, right?

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:43:34] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:43:34] So, instead of saying no, how could this work? You go, "Hmm, I'm not going to yes and the murder part," and be like, "Yeah, and we can kidnap them. Yeah, and we can take them from their family," right. That's not the yes and we're talking about.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:43:48] Right, right, right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:43:49] But the yes and is like, "Let me look at that idea without judging it because, obviously, that's not going to happen." But that makes me think of what is really the need or what is really what they're talking about? Because, also, with improv in business and in life, it's like breaking it down to like, what's the human need. Like when I go into a workshop, and there's a guy who's too cool for school, right. I'm like, "What's his need?" His need is to feel safe. And it's almost always his. Not to be sexist, but it's a lot of like too cool for school dudes because men are scared boys who want to win. That's who we are.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:44:26] So, I go, "Okay, his human need is to feel safe or validated," right? That's it. And he needs to feel okay. Like that's his defense. So, then, you go back to what we're talking about of like that step was part of the journey to get us to the final result. And it's amazing. And you've done these brainstorming sessions where it's like, right away, you start off by knocking ideas and saying no; where, it's just you're generating ideas through brainstorming, but people will say no to them. They won't even take a second to be like, "Wait a minute, before you shoot it down, before you even talk about something else, let's focus on this one thing," because, now, people are feeling heard, and that's the big thing. They want to feel heard. They want to have people who understand them and value them.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:45:14] So, if you give a suggestion, that guy gives the suggestion of, "Let's murder him," and we don't even hear him out, and we right away go, "No," do you think he's going to offer more suggestions as we go?

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:45:26] Not a chance.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:45:26] He's going to shut down.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:45:28] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:45:28] Not a chance. Now, if he keeps talking about murdering, and it's like, "All right, dude." I would be like, "Great. We talked all about that. You don't have to do it anymore. That's retired. That's such a great suggestion. We're going to retire that. We're going to move on past that." Like it's in our hall of fame, but let's put it in a graveyard. It's in our improv graveyard where that's been -- that's retired. Now, let's move on to something else."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:45:53] But if that kicks you off of your session, that's the first thing said, and if you go no, then that's setting the tone. And side note, I'm going to get on my soapbox for a second about improvisers and shows, I've seen far too many, and it makes me sad, somebody asks for a suggestion from the audience, they give a suggestion, and then the improviser goes, "No," or they go, "We took that suggestion last week." And I'm like, "Oh, she's done everything about that suggestion," or you're upset that an audience member says pineapple again.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:46:26] They've never come to a show, and they want to see you take their suggestion, and turn it into something magical. And what you're doing is you're telling them, "No, we're not going to do that." So, you've already discounted their experience and their suggestion. You've already discounted it. So, now, not only do, I think, lost that person, you've lost other people in the audience because they'll be like, "I'm not going to give you a suggestion."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:46:46] And the same with the corporate setting. You have to make it safe. And sometimes, it's like scared dogs. You have to slowly pull them out of that state where it's like they're very scared, they're defensive. So, if you lay a little bit of food out, they'll come out a little bit. If you lay a little more, they come out a little more. If you make it a safe place, then you have that person who's bought into it. And so, kudos to you for doing that.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:47:15] Thank you. Looking back and listening to you, I just reacted in what I have learned through improv is not to shoot it down, not to shoot any idea down. Let's play with it, but let's qualify it by saying, "Okay, we'll take murder off the table." But it also goes back in the book from Second City Works, Yes And, bad ideas are just bridges to good ideas. No ideas lead us to nothing. And I believe that mantra. And I think in a lot of the workshops, we are brainstorming and getting ideas.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:47:50] I look at the word innovation, and I think when we talk about innovation, there's two points to it. An innovation is creativity and the application of it. And in a brainstorming, I want quantity not quality. And I work on the quality after the fact. So, when you come up with ideas, you can't say, "Do we have the resources for that idea?" No, no. That's later.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:48:15] And I think that's the hardest part in teaching that aspect of it because we all want to maybe shoot an idea down, or we will have the people, we'll have the money, or there's always some excuse. But if we take that excuse off the table and just run with the ideas, we're going to make something magical out of it. To your point, the idea is not the be all and end all, but it's the start of a process.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:48:40] Right.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:48:42] Start of an exploratory process to solve the problem that we have at hand. And if we're muting ideas from our people, then it's just going to be a lot harder to solve those problems.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:48:56] For sure. And again, you're setting the tone. And the tone is this not a place to give suggestions. And the same thing with when you talk to people at work, you know those people that are like they have the yes and philosophy. They might be like, "Yeah, that's a great idea, Peter, but -- I mean, we love it. Running out into traffic is not going to help us. But I hear your idea. I'm going to validate that."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:49:20] You also know the people who come in, and they're like, "No." Like before you even open your mouth, you know it's going to be a no, and you dread going to those people, or you know the people that are always going to counter with, "Yeah, but."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:49:32] Sadly.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:49:35] You know those people. And so, think about how you feel going to those people. And think about what kind of person -- in improv, we say be the improviser you want to play with. So, it's like be that person in your business that you want to work with. And who is that person? Be them.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:49:55] Wow. I don't think I've heard that before, but I love that. Be the improviser you want to be.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:50:00] Yeah, that you want to play with.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:50:03] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:50:04] What improvisers do you want to play with? Do you want to play with somebody who yells at you? Okay, then yell. If you do want to be the person that places some of your goals before you can finish, they go, "Yeah, absolutely." And they have this aggressive yes and where it's like, "I'm agreed to before I even know what it is, but I value your information, and I value your moves." And like that, to me, is the improviser's job is like make them look good. And you do that by like if you're ever stuck in an improv scene, shake your head yes. It's hard to say no when you shake your head, when you're like yes, it's hard to say no to that.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:50:39] And with improv and business, it's all in the eyes. Eye contact, you'll be able to see in their eyes where they are and body language. We also we also say improvise the scene you're in, not the one you want to be in. So, improvise that. Be in that meeting that you're in, not the one that you wanted to be. And that goes for presenters as well. It's like improv helps you read a room, and you go, "Well, this plan is



not going to work. I have to adjust. I have to be agile and pivot in this moment." And how many times has it been like, "That plan went off to a tee," versus how many times have you heard, "Well, that plan didn't work"?

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:51:21] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:51:22] That went off the rails.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:51:23] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:51:23] So, improv helps you to adjust to be like, "Okay. Now, what do I do?" Like you did in that session where it's like, "Okay, how do I adjust right now because that was not part of the plan?" And your brain is like freaking out. Your brain is like, "Plan awry, plan awry. Just go back and push it again. You go back and try to get through this presentation again." Maybe just be louder. Maybe just reinforce it. It's like, well, you're not improvising the scene you're in. You're doing it into one you wanted to be.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:51:53] So, you accept the moment, accept what this is, and then trust that you've got the answers. Nobody wants to sit through a bad session. Nobody goes to a show, an improv show, or a learning session, and goes, "I hope this is terrible. I really hope it's bad. I hope the presenter struggles. I hope I don't get anything out of it." They don't go to it like that. They might go to a session like, "I'm not going to get anything out of this," and their mind's made up, but they really don't go to a session, nobody goes in and thinks, "I want my time wasted." And we forget that as presenters too, as facilitators.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:52:30] I do that where I go into a setting, a business setting, I'm like, "I'm nervous. They're not going to like it." And I'm like, "Wait a minute. I've gotten through these sessions before. When some problem comes up, I'm able to address it in the moment, and I'm never going to have to do that session again. Good or bad, I never get to do it again. So, go into it." I have a friend who says before a show, he's like, "I

can't wait to see where we go and who we meet." And I'm like, "That's a really good attitude." I can't wait.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:52:59] That is.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:52:59] I can't wait.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:53:01] I can't wait.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:53:01] I can't wait to see where we're going and who we're going to meet.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:53:05] So, as you're talking about presenters, when I do teach public speaking and presentation skills, I set the scene that you're getting ready to deliver an hour conference session. You get there early enough, everything's working fine, but just as you begin, your computer freezes up.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:53:21] Yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:53:21] What do you do? And most people begin to, "I'm going to fix the computer." Well, no, no, you're supposed to be here to give this information whether your computer's working or not. And they look at me, and I go, "Seriously." This has happened to me two or three times. And the computer froze up or we don't have the AV facility that we're going to get, but we're going to use this room that has no technology. "Okay, do we have that? Does that whiteboard have wheels on it? Sure, bring it over." I'm going old school PowerPoint right now.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:53:55] And then, if you see that the audience laugh because they're like, "Ah, that's me. I'm that guy," and they laugh at you acknowledging the obvious.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:54:05] Exactly.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:54:06] There's an exercise I've done where it's you're outside to get people, you tell them they're going to present this PowerPoint deck. They don't know what it is, but you give them maybe a little overview. They come in. and you have a PowerPoint deck that doesn't go well. Sometimes, it's like, "Let's go to the next slide," and it's a picture of a cat. It's like, "Okay." Or we've done it before where it's like, "Let's take a look at them first slide," and it just comes up, and it , "Any questions?" So, then, you're like, "How do you adjust in that moment?"

**Jay Sukow:** [00:54:44] And especially, you forget that if you're co-facilitating or you're with a group, you forget to rely on those people. So, you immediately go into the, "Oh, what am I going to do?" because we think about ourselves more than anybody. It's a natural human thing. That's why we're in our head is we're thinking about ourselves all the time. And that's not a bad thing, but you go, "Okay, now, what do I do? How do I improvise? How do I work the scene I'm in right now versus the one I want to?" Are you just going to shut down, or are you going to use those skills to be like, "How can this work? And how can I look at mistakes as gifts? I might not know it at the time, but it's like this PowerPoint going out, it's happening for a reason, and it's a gift," instead of like looking at a mistake like failure. It's like, "No, no, no, no."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:55:30] And I say -- my wife still doesn't agree with this, I say, "Aim to fail." Like give yourself that freedom to be like, "Okay, I'm not going to try and get this perfect," because once you do that, all the chains of being perfect are lifted. All the chains of getting it right are lifted. And you forget like you're all experts in this thing. That's when your brain comes in handy is when it's scrambling to survive. And if you add that element of yes and to it, then you're very powerful and dynamic as a speaker, as a leader, as a team member, whatever it is. And then, you'll see it trickle into your life.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:56:13] I believe as you were talking about failure and stuff, I had a visual in my head of Annie saying the same thing and giving you -- that was the thing that she got for me more than, I think, anything she said was accepting failure. And it's hard for people to do. It's hard for people to say it's okay to make a mistake because we don't want to make mistakes.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:56:36] And you're penalized. You're constantly penalized for mistakes. But if you look at companies like Google where they go, "You're going to have a day to work on your project, and you're a failure." You look in history too. It's like the guy who does Dyson vacuums. It's like he went through how many designs. Hundreds and hundreds of failed designs till he got that right. The same with like cars. And yeah, it's like you got to accept failure. And penicillin is a failure that became a gift. So, if you start looking into it like that, and you go, "Okay, let's accept these failures," but it's accepted as collateral damage, but also let's accept that like, "Peter, your failure is going to help us succeed in the long run." But we are so focused on immediate results that we don't allow ourselves that space.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:57:28] I couldn't have said that any better. Wow, actually, I love that, the way you put that.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:57:37] Thank you. None of this is my original thought. None of these thoughts are like, "Jay came up with this." It's like, no, no, no, none of it, not a single one. They're just things I've heard that resonate with me.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:57:49] Right. That you've heard through your journey through the improv world.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:57:54] And life, for sure. And like I stopped drinking in 2008, and there are things that I've heard in recovery rooms, or with my friends who don't drink, or a friend struggling, whatever, that I use as well. I'm like, "That's really good information." Like things will change. Accept the fact, things will change. I'm like, "Oh, that's a really good philosophy." So, you gather all this information from your life, and you look at things like inspiration. You, then, incorporate it into your lifestyle. And it's very scary to make changes in that business world. Like we've been doing PowerPoint for how long?

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:58:36] Oh, yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:58:36] And it's like -- my wife and I, we originally had a company back in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 that was called The Riot Act, and we used improv to drive

behavior change. And so, we would go into because she had experience with meetings, and there were a lot of just live meetings, and it's like, "You go into the meeting. And then, after the meeting, you have these discussions." So, we tried to bring the discussions into the meeting to be like, "Let's have them out here. Let's make these discussions now. Let's make it a safe place where you can be validated by that. And let's try to bring that conversation in here that we're all going to say," which is like, "Well, I'm not engaged," or "That was not good." Like, "Let's take that in here." And that's a way to drive the change is to acknowledge what it is.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:59:22] And so, we were really successful at what we did. And in 2008, it was like all of our clients said, "We're not having any meetings." And it was like, "Oh." Like our first client was Indra Nooyi, who is the president and CEO of PepsiCo. And then, we worked with McDonald's and Yahoo!. And like we had really great clients, and we worked in the C Suite arena. And then, what happened is, okay, we had to accept that, now, we are changing. Our business is -- we are not able to sustain it. And that failure led us to realize, "Oh, I can still do this with the clients." We were thinking about having kids now that will help us. My wife got a job at Ernst & Young or EY, which allowed us to have insurance, which allowed us to have kids. And so, that failure turned into something magical. Now, at the time, it didn't feel good, but it turned into a wonderful gift for us. And I'm still able to work with a lot of those clients now. It's just I had to wait for that bounce back.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:00:29] Right, right, right. Wow. That's a great story. And yeah, 2008, set a lot of people back in the-

**Jay Sukow:** [01:00:35] Right.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:00:35] Yeah, I had to go back teaching hardcore technical accounting because nobody was paying for a communication type of courses, especially when there are equated to improv, and being silly, and funny.

**Jay Sukow:** [01:00:47] And you know it's like, "Well, that's the first thing that's going to be cut." Improv is seen as extra.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:00:55] Exactly.

**Jay Sukow:** [01:00:55] And so, when you're crunched, to me, when you need it the most, you cut it out because that's seen as an extra expense. And it's not that. It is such a necessary expense that you're driving behavior change, and you're changing cultures, and you're retaining your employees because they feel validated, and they feel like this is a place I'm safe to make mistakes, and this is a place I'm going to grow, and this is a place that values my time in my opinion. And, now, especially with younger generations, they don't sit at a company for a career and go, "Well, I'm going to work 30 years for IBM, and that's it." They will harp around because the money is not important.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:01:38] Let me change one word, which you said, that I've used to help frame it in a different way. I learned this from somebody else. I don't use the word cost anymore or expense. I look at it as an investment. You're investing in your people. It's not an expense in your people. You're investing in your people because with an investment, you'll say, "Where will this take me?" When somebody comes to me with an idea, where would this investment take us?" And I think when we look at from that perspective that maybe we'll frame it in a different way that people might not, knee-jerk reaction, start cutting these "expenses" that ultimately are really just investments into the company's future.

**Jay Sukow:** [01:02:26] Yeah, I love that. I love that positive spin on it. Like it's the same idea, but you're making it that positive spin. And that's what, to me, the improviser is. And so, yeah, I love that change to be like it's an investment. You are going to get something out of it rather than take something away from it.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:02:48] Bingo. Bingo. And I've used that a ton of times. And most of my audience are CPAs and accountants, and they love the word cost. But when I frame it in that way, that's Scooby Doo, "Awoo," comes on their face, and the light bulb goes off and allow, "Yeah, that's a better way of framing that comment or that sentence."

**Jay Sukow:** [01:03:17] And it's such a slight change, it's such a huge change.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:03:20] Exactly. Jay, we could talk probably for five hours.

**Jay Sukow:** [01:03:26] Well, then, let's say this is the first part of a five-part series.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:03:31] Five-part series. I want to respect your time. I-

**Jay Sukow:** [01:03:38] You did respect my time by having me on. It's very respectful that we talk about improv. For sure.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:03:44] And the one thing I know about that, I've interviewed two other people about improv, we already talked about Annie and another woman named Allison Estep.

**Jay Sukow:** [01:03:55] Yes.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:03:56] You know Allison?

**Jay Sukow:** [01:03:58] She was a student of mine.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:04:00] Her too?

**Jay Sukow:** [01:04:00] I talked to her about this. Yeah, I talked to her. She's living in London now. And I said, "Allison, are you the same Allison Estep that was on Peter's podcast?" And she goes, "Yes." You interviewed her a couple of years ago.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:04:16] It wasn't that far back. It was maybe six months ago actually.

**Jay Sukow:** [01:04:21] Okay, a couple months ago. But, yeah, for sure, we talked about it.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:04:24] Yeah. And one thing that -- and Allison used to work for the Indiana Society of CPAs as a marketing person.

**Jay Sukow:** [01:04:30] Yes, yes.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:04:32] She found out that I do Improv Second City, and we just merely -- I don't literally mean this, but we literally fell in love with each other just having that conversation, just having that energy. And I interviewed her. She'd left the United States and went to Dubai. She's in Dubai for long. I guess, now, she's in London or whatever, and-

**Jay Sukow:** [01:04:53] Yeah, yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:04:54] ... yes-anding her way around the world.

**Jay Sukow:** [01:04:56] And so much happier now.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:04:58] And so much happier. But I love talking about improv, and I love talking to people who understand it because you hear the passion, you hear the energy, you get the knowledge. And like I said, I could have -- with you, with Annie, with Allison, love the conversations. We will have more. And I appreciate your time. I appreciate you sharing this with myself. I'm going to be selfish right now. Thank you for sharing this with me, my audience will get it as well, but I've learned a lot. I've learned some new things. I've learned some different approaches just within this hour conversation. And I look forward to having a conversation with you again in the very, very near future.

**Jay Sukow:** [01:05:48] You're welcome. And I've learned a lot as well. And I appreciate you. And, yeah, let's talk more.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:05:54] Perfect. And give your lovely wife my best. She doesn't know me, but I figure she's going to hear about me, and-



**Jay Sukow:** [01:06:03] She's going to. I'm going to make her listen to this one, for sure.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:06:10] Now that you've listened to this episode, what will you do to make better connections with those around you? How will you become better at accepting and learning from your failure? Will you adopt a yes and mentality and bring it with you every single day? Remember, to enact change, you have to practice it every single day by taking baby steps.

**Peter Margaritis:** [01:06:37] Thank you for listening. And if you're enjoying this podcast, please subscribe and share this episode with a friend. Also, please visit [www.c-suiteradio.com](http://www.c-suiteradio.com) to listen to many of the excellent podcasts that they have in their network.

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