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Peter Margaritis: [00:00:28] 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. 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: [00:01:15] When you hear the words authentic leader, what is your first thought? Who do you picture? What is the definition of an authentic leader? How does one become an authentic leader? And what are some of the characteristics of an authentic leader? Well, my guest, Christopher Jones, will answer those questions and more during our interview. Christopher speaks, coaches and advises leaders to become the leader others want to follow. In short, authentic leaders.

Peter Margaritis: [00:01:49] Over the past 30 years, Christopher has held leadership development positions and consulted leadership teams at world headquarters of Fortune 500 companies and multiple industries including information technology and advanced education, as well as leading nonprofit executive boards through capital fundraising campaigns. He also hosts The Authentic Leader Show podcast, where he interviews CEOs, executive directors and occasional celebrities.

Peter Margaritis: [00:02:19] He goes deep with his guest into their journeys of leadership and personal effectiveness. Christopher has served on the boards of the Richmond Christian Leadership Initiative and the Chesterfield County Chamber of

Commerce. And in 2017, Christopher was named the Chesterfield Chamber of Commerce Member of the Year. I hope you enjoy this episode. But before we get to the interview, let me take care of some housekeeping issues.

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

Peter Margaritis: [00:02:49] And now a 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: [00:03:41] I have put in the show notes the various ways you could connect with Christopher through social media along with the link to his podcast, The Authentic Leader Show. Now, let's get to the interview with Christopher Jones. Hey, welcome back everybody. I'm real excited about my guest today because I mean, we go back, I think now, a very long period of time of probably three, maybe four months now.

Christopher Jones: [00:04:11] Yeah. We go back months. We really do. Months and months.

Peter Margaritis: [00:04:13] Months and months. And that is the voice of Chris Jones who is a man of many talents. I'll just start off with that. A man of many talents. He is, first and foremost, a leadership person. He understands, trains, helps, promotes one's leadership to take that leadership to that next level. He offers a variety of services around. And those services are coaching. He's also a podcast host and a speaker, so

let's put two and two together. Yes, I was on his podcast The Authentic Leader podcast show. Did I pronounce that correctly?

Christopher Jones: [00:04:57] You did, The Authentic Leader Podcast show. And you are a fantastic guest, I must say.

Peter Margaritis: [00:05:01] That's another \$20 I have to give to Chris. Geez.

Christopher Jones: [00:05:04] I'll take it.

Peter Margaritis: [00:05:04] I'll be broke. It was a lot of fun. And we met at my very first NSA chapter event. And I came to the Virginia chapter and did a program on improv to improve your speaking business. We got into a conversation afterwards. So, I had a blast on his, so he set the bar high. Hopefully has a blast on mine. And, Chris, thank you so much for taking time to spend some time with me and my audience on this podcast.

Christopher Jones: [00:05:34] Well, it's an honor to just spend some time with you. Every time I talk with you, I have fun, so I'm expecting to have fun today. And if people can learn something at the same time, even better.

Peter Margaritis: [00:05:43] Even better. Exactly. And for those of you who are listening, if you want to visit my YouTube channel, I'll be posting on social media a raw unedited version of this video out there because you need to take a look at Chris's office. And the most unique thing in his office right now as I'm looking at it, he has one of those very old, very, very old telephones. And I'm not talking like a flip phone. I'm talking his phone that they used back in what, the 1920s?

Christopher Jones: [00:06:16] Yeah, or even earlier. I looked it up one time, it was like 1915 or 1919, something like that. It's a very old phone my grandpa gave me.

Peter Margaritis: [00:06:25] And I can't remember the last time I saw such a cool phone. And that's such a great piece to hang on the wall. That's really cool.

Christopher Jones: [00:06:34] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:06:34] So, Chris, tell us about your business. Tell us about what you do and how you have an impact on other people through your leadership programs.

Christopher Jones: [00:06:44] Yeah. Well, it all goes back to the story I tell when I very first became what I call a titled leader. And a titled leader, I call, a leader who like in your title is an expectation that you're leading a team. So, I think people kind of get what that is. But I had my very first team and I was leading and I failed miserably. I mean, it was very different on the other side of leadership than it was before you get into leadership. I remember thinking before I was formally a title leader, how hard can this leadership thing be?

Christopher Jones: [00:07:15] And I've worked for some great leaders, I've worked for some really terrible leaders. And I just didn't get it. And those who were great leaders, they made it look really easy. And those who were terrible is almost like they were trying to be a bad leader, right? I think if people can appreciate that, probably, maybe they work for the same boss as me. And it frustrated me because then, once I became this titled leader, I started to realize, actually, leadership is much more difficult than what it looks like on the surface.

Christopher Jones: [00:07:46] And those leaders who were really good and look natural, they had to become that leader. Leadership is rarely just natural. You have to become a natural leader. And those leaders who are terrible leaders, I find and I certainly have learned that most of the time, they're not trying to be a terrible leader, they just don't know any other way, which is why I was failing as a leader, I didn't know any other way. So, it comes down to the very best leaders I ever worked with, are those leaders who I would do anything for, right?

Christopher Jones: [00:08:18] And I think we probably have all had leaders like that. The first leader I ever worked for was a pool manager where I used to lifeguard. And he was just one of those where you would just do anything for him because he was doing

all the crappy work, too. And when he'd ask you to go clean some toilets, well, yeah, we all just jumped on it because he wasn't asking us to do something he wasn't willing to do himself.

Christopher Jones: [00:08:40] And it took me about a year once I started this business to come up with this concept. It's like, gosh, you're just leading so authentically. Wait a second. He's being an authentic leader. And ever since then, it just has stuck. And I'm so proud, I guess, of coming up with that concept and then, for people to really kind of get what that means. So, I'm not sure if I totally answered your question but it's how like the early days, how it came about.

Peter Margaritis: [00:09:09] Right. And you did and you said something very key right at the beginning of that, you failed as a leader.

Christopher Jones: [00:09:16] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:09:16] And then, you went on to say—basically, listening to your story, you were promoted without having any leadership training or any leadership—anybody teaching you. You've got the technical stuff. You've got this other stuff that you'll be fine, you'll learned that on the job, but that doesn't fly anymore.

Christopher Jones: [00:09:34] No. I see so many people promoted to a leadership role because they were fantastic contributors, right? They created great results and then, all of a sudden, oh, well, if they're great, you know, producing results, they're going to be great as a leader, too. No, no, not necessarily. The biggest thing with my leadership clients is if they're getting ready to promote someone, like, "Please just talk to me first", right? So that we can make sure that we set up this person you're getting ready to promote up for success. We want them to be successful in this new role. And many times, they are not set up for success.

Peter Margaritis: [00:10:07] Right. The old Peter Drucker, the Peter Principle, we're going to promote you to your level of incompetence.

Christopher Jones: [00:10:11] Yeah. Right. We've seen it too often, it's a shame. That's where my passion is, is I want to help others to avoid what I had to go through.

Peter Margaritis: [00:10:22] So, thinking about that, can you give me an example of kind of wish I had known this before I got it, I was promoted into this role, what skill set that was lacking at the time that you got, God, I wish somebody would just take me aside and said this?

Christopher Jones: [00:10:37] Sure. Well, you know, what I did realize, I talk about this thing called the seven disciplines of authentic leaders. The very first of those seven disciplines, it's self-leadership. And I think this is something you can do whether you're in a formal leadership or titled leader role or not. I wish I would have been better at leading myself well before I became a leader. And what that means is just getting really clear about my aspirations.

Christopher Jones: [00:11:06] Where is it that I see myself going and how might I get there? Being clear with identifying goals or writing them down and then, actually achieving those goals. But also, just having discipline in my day, having discipline about how I conduct myself. One of the most powerful things, I think, that leaders and really non-titled leaders alike, anyone can do, is to not only follow through on commitments that you make to other people consistently, be known for that. But additionally, do the things—follow through with commitments that you make to yourself, especially when no one knows.

Christopher Jones: [00:11:44] Because I'm sure as you're thinking of leaders who you admire and you think that they are just fantastic leaders, you're probably also thinking, there's something about them that just makes them so attractive. And what it typically is, what I found is that they're making commitments to themselves and they're following through on those commitments. And then, again, especially when no one knows they're doing it because you can just tell there's an aura around those kinds of people. So, I think that's a secret weapon.

Peter Margaritis: [00:12:11] You said, aura around those people. And it just—you know what just pops into my head when you said there's an aura on these people saying they're authentic and that's why you saw me jerk back, well, yeah, that aura, you know they're being extremely authentic in their leadership style. So, you mentioned the seven disciplines.

Christopher Jones: [00:12:29] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:12:29] So, you've hit on the first one.

Christopher Jones: [00:12:31] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:12:31] Let's go down this path. What's number two?

Christopher Jones: [00:12:36] Okay. Well, number two—and many these are not going to be a surprise to people, but I found that if you stitch these together, again, you're set up for success, I think, as a leader. So, it's your vision or mission or what I really call like your leadership statement. Just being clear about the type of leader you aspire to be. Getting clear about what does that statement look like. Almost really painting a clear picture.

Christopher Jones: [00:13:00] Once you get there, here's what it looks like to be that type of leader. This is number two. Number three are our goals. You're very clear about your goals, but you're also very effective at helping your team identify their personal goals, personal and professional, I should say. And then, setting them up for success to actually achieving those goals. Giving them opportunities. Giving them experiences that maybe they wouldn't have otherwise.

Christopher Jones: [00:13:26] Also, they're very good—authentic leaders are very good at number four, which is decision making. Making effective decisions, but making appropriate decisions. Many times, those decisions are need to be made by the people on your team and knowing how to appropriately help them to make their own decisions because that's really the epitome, right? Because you want your teams making their

own autonomous decisions, on their own, without needing you to be involved with every decision.

Peter Margaritis: [00:13:54] Right.

Christopher Jones: [00:13:54] So, that's number four. Number five is communication. Authentic leaders, they are effective communicators. I find that most teams rarely complain about the leader over communicating, right?

Peter Margaritis: [00:14:07] Yeah.

Christopher Jones: [00:14:07] And if your team is complaining about you over communicating, then you're probably right about on mark, right?

Peter Margaritis: [00:14:16] Right.

Christopher Jones: [00:14:17] And I would go a little further. I'd communicate it even a few more times.

Peter Margaritis: [00:14:20] Right.

Christopher Jones: [00:14:20] So, that's number five. Six is they're very effective at delegation and accountability. They have a methodology and an approach to consistently and appropriately delegate, but additionally, to hold people accountable to doing the things that they've been assigned or that they have accepted in a way that is not confrontational. Too many people will avoid delegating work or they avoid holding people accountable because they want to avoid the confrontation that goes along with it.

Peter Margaritis: [00:14:51] Right.

Christopher Jones: [00:14:51] When done right, you can actually avoid that confrontation, but hold people accountable. I think your team, they want to be held

accountable. They want to receive delegated work. And when done in the right way, man, you've got a team that, again, they want to follow you. And then, the last one of the seven disciplines is number seven, which is, it's all about relationships. It's a very high priority for authentic leaders to have relationships with everyone they're working with, but especially their team. And to do that through one-on-one meetings, having dedicated scheduled recurring time one-on-one with each member of their team to learn about things they could not learn otherwise if they didn't have these one-on-one meetings.

Peter Margaritis: [00:15:34] So, I've asked leaders about their teams and I go, "Do you know their birthdays?"

Christopher Jones: [00:15:42] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:15:42] And eight, maybe seven out of 10, "Well, no. Why?" "Don't you want people to know your birthday? Did you say like happy birthday to them?" Just that little—I mean, you are getting to know them. I mean, if they're a part of the team and helped to build that level of trust and cohesiveness, we have to learn more about the people that are on it. We spend more time with them than we do with our families.

Christopher Jones: [00:16:09] Right. And it's not one of the things where you can just go out, "Okay. Go find out everybody's birthday", right? Because that would actually be inauthentic. "I want you to know I'm checking this off because I know I need to go to everybody's birthday." No. It's having those regular recurring times when you're meeting one-on-one. In time, you're going to learn that because you are, and not to plug, but I mean, you're authentically having conversations with them. And those things you need to know about your team, they will come to the surface at the right time without it being forced.

Peter Margaritis: [00:16:39] Right. Well, it goes to the relationship. What type of relationship are you building with your team? And I'm just taking it further, your stakeholders.

Christopher Jones: [00:16:51] Sure.

Peter Margaritis: [00:16:53] It's all about relationships.

Christopher Jones: [00:16:55] Yeah, you better embrace your team because if you didn't have the team, they wouldn't need you, right? Your job is to lead your team but you better really appreciate them because the results that they produce is a direct result of how you lead them.

Peter Margaritis: [00:17:12] And appreciation goes—there's so many ways of giving appreciation as a boss, as a leader and even comes from the tone of your voice.

Christopher Jones: [00:17:25] Oh, yeah. You know if it's real.

Peter Margaritis: [00:17:28] Right. And, you know, I was raised by the Olympic yeller. My father could have been a multi-gold medal yelling, he was an athlete, he was outstanding. So, I'm trying to break some of those habits because nobody gravitates the yelling. Nobody.

Christopher Jones: [00:17:49] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:17:50] Kids, adults, nobody. It's just, "Okay. You made a mistake. Okay. So, let's fix it. How are you going to fix it? What are we going to do? What do we learn? And let's move forward."

Christopher Jones: [00:17:59] Yeah, yeah. It's your job to create that environment, right? And that's not, again, something you do overnight. Over time, you create an environment where it's safe to make mistakes. And as you said, too, let's learn from this so that we can now prevent it from happening in the future. Nothing wrong with making mistakes. The very unfortunate thing about life is that the very best way to learn is to make mistakes. Unfortunately. I wish that wasn't the case. And believe me, I am a master black belt in making mistakes. I'm really good at that. So, I'm a genius because-

Peter Margaritis: [00:18:34] Oh, my God. That was hilarious. It was so funny. Thank you so very much. I mean, I was-

Christopher Jones: [00:18:40] To make Peter Margaritis laugh, now, that is something that I can put that on my wall.

Peter Margaritis: [00:18:45] Oh, my God. That was even—no, that was more than a laugh. I had a slight tear coming out of my eyes, I was laughing so hard because I wasn't expecting master black belt boom. Yeah. Making mistakes. That was—yeah. But, you know, unfortunately, in today's workforce, a lot of cultures are, well, it's punitive if you make a mistake.

Christopher Jones: [00:19:07] Well, yeah. It's risk-adverse culture. It's so dangerous. A quick story actually, I had done some executive coaching at nuclear power plants for a period of time. So, I was traveling to nuclear power plants and doing face-to-face executive coaching. And one of the problems of one of the plants we're working with is that they had a risk-adverse culture so much that they were not getting anything done.

Christopher Jones: [00:19:32] It gets, "I'm too afraid to stick my neck out and to do something needs to be done because if I make a mistake, man the hammer is going to come down hard on me." And they were not making progress. They were not moving forward because they had too much of a risk-adverse culture. Now, you can imagine that's a very hard balance at a nuclear plant. I mean, you've got to be safe. Yeah, I guess, right?

Peter Margaritis: [00:19:54] Right.

Christopher Jones: [00:19:54] But not to the detriment of growing the business in and growing the culture, so you're learning from these mistakes. It's that low-risk mistakes are okay.

Peter Margaritis: [00:20:07] So, that behavior had been learned at some point in time by someone that, "I made this mistake. I took a risk, I made a mistake and it was very

punitive." And as that leader was probably going to their team, "No, no, no, don't make that. Don't do that." They're not allowing them, "Don't go up those ladders or whatever because something bad is going to happen." And it just—and now, it creates several subcultures within the organization.

Christopher Jones: [00:20:37] Yeah. And let's be honest here. Those types of cultures and those type of mindset, it all comes from the top. There's no other place. The responsibility for that type of culture is from the top.

Peter Margaritis: [00:20:51] Yes. And it's the wrong culture to have. I get being safe. And recently, I was at a company that supplies some of the stuff to nuclear power plants and builds these things. And they had a very safe environment. But they are not all risk-adverse. They're allowed to take risks or allowed to lean into those things. So, it just—and it also empowers, inspires new ideas.

Christopher Jones: [00:21:28] Sure.

Peter Margaritis: [00:21:28] And right now, that's the key. And leadership is the ability because I've said this before on this podcast, and I may have said it on yours, that the collective knowledge outside of your office far exceeds the collective knowledge inside your office.

Christopher Jones: [00:21:42] True.

Peter Margaritis: [00:21:43] So, how well you are utilizing your team, how well you are helping them to help you solve your problem versus, "I've got all the answers."

Christopher Jones: [00:21:52] That's old-school thinking. The fact that the leader has to have all the answers, that's gone. That does not exist anymore. There's not a requirement of a leader anymore.

Peter Margaritis: [00:22:02] But we see it.

Christopher Jones: [00:22:03] I know.

Peter Margaritis: [00:22:05] We see it and there's still some companies that are operating that way.

Christopher Jones: [00:22:10] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:22:10] And you kind of wonder, "Oh, hey. Wait a minute. I'm going to get shot for this one." But leadership styles and things, Macy's department store, just recently said they've been closing 125 stores.

Christopher Jones: [00:22:22] I saw that. Including their headquarters, I think, right?

Peter Margaritis: [00:22:24] Headquarters in Cincinnati. It's been a long-standing building. And then, you're thinking about, "Okay. Is that also leadership?" And then, you go, "Okay. Let's look at Kmart and Sears and GE." And how—maybe that thought process is what has driven them out of business versus that new leadership thought process, which is just the opposite. But as you well know and you can attest to, this doesn't come overnight.

Christopher Jones: [00:22:55] No. Well, you know, one of the things that I tell leaders and one of the most powerful things I think a leader can say is, "I need help." Because your team, they're waiting for you to ask. I know a lot of leaders will think, you know, "I'm the leader. I have to have all the answers. I feel like I look weak if I ask for help." Think about this. The fact that you have a team is proof that you need help.

Peter Margaritis: [00:23:19] Right.

Christopher Jones: [00:23:19] Because if you didn't need help, you wouldn't need a team. They're doing all the things you can't do, but they're waiting for you to say, "I need your help. And I don't have all the answers."

Peter Margaritis: [00:23:30] And I think you just described a leader being vulnerable.

Christopher Jones: [00:23:35] Yeah, that's key. Don't pretend like you are this fantastic leader because your entire team knows that you're not, right? Have you ever worked for a leader that are pretending to have it all together and they know all what they're doing, but you know that they don't, like just admit it, "Just admit you don't and we'll help you." But the fact that you're pretending like you have it all together, you know everything actually is eroding your effectiveness as a leader.

Peter Margaritis: [00:24:00] Exactly. But what's getting in the way? What's stopping that from happening for the person who thinks they know it all? Their ego.

Christopher Jones: [00:24:09] That's exactly right.

Peter Margaritis: [00:24:11] Their ego is so overdeveloped, it's eating itself.

Christopher Jones: [00:24:15] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:24:15] And I had a situation not too long ago and of course, I was teaching and a gentleman walked in on, "Oh, it's that guy again."

Christopher Jones: [00:24:22] Oh, gosh.

Peter Margaritis: [00:24:23] The I'm the smartest guy in the room and nobody can say anything because I have all the right answers and all this information should appeal to me. And then, we go on, "How do you-" And he manages a team. I just sit there and go, "I'm not sure. I wonder what the turnover rate of that team is."

Christopher Jones: [00:24:43] I know. Well, I tell you, it's higher than others that aren't acting like that.

Peter Margaritis: [00:24:47] Well, right. But then, we look we look at these leaders out there and they set the tone, they set the culture, but the business doesn't grow. Now, how do we get this new leadership style to be more—it's getting better, but there's still

that resistance. How do we get it to become more mainstream? How do you work with your clients to get them to change their mindset?

Christopher Jones: [00:25:18] Well, that's a real struggle in my business. It certainly is. It's very difficult, if not impossible for me to be assigned someone to coach as a leader. I'll tell you a quick story. Actually, one of my first coaching clients I worked with at the nuclear plant was with this guy. He's called the shift the shift manager. Now, when I think of shift manager, I think of when I worked at a grocery store, there was a night-shift manager and a day-shift manager.

Peter Margaritis: [00:25:49] Yeah.

Christopher Jones: [00:25:49] That's not what we're talking about here. At a nuclear power plant, the shift manager, they are ultimately responsible for everything that happens at the nuclear plant while they're on shift, including the site vice president. They have to—anything he says needs to be done, he's accountable for it. So, in other words, if something really bad happens at a nuclear plant, they're the ones going to prison. So, this guy has been a shift manager for 30 years. And I will tell you, nuclear plants are scrutinized beyond belief.

Christopher Jones: [00:26:22] You would not believe—they have laborers of the day coming and all the time trying to fix them and trying to—so, I had one of my early coaching sessions with this leader. And of course, he had an attitude. And he's like, you know, maybe the second or third meeting with him, he said, "Chris, I got to tell you, first off", this one-page plan thing which we helped them put together, their leadership plan, he said, "that leadership plan, that's really good. I can see myself using that with my team, so that's a great tool. But this whole coaching thing, I think it's a waste of time. I think it's a waste of money. I really don't want anything to do with it."

Christopher Jones: [00:26:57] It's one of those kinds of out-of-body experiences where I don't know where the words came from, but somehow, these words came through me and came out. And what I said to him was, "First off, thank you for sharing with me that you think this is a waste of time and money. I can appreciate that. And I'd rather know

than to not know I'm banging my head against a wall, like, 'What the heck? Why am I not getting through?' So, I appreciate you being transparent with me and sharing with me."

Christopher Jones: [00:27:22] And I went further on then say, "Now, I'm being paid to be your consultant and to be your coach, what I'd like to suggest is that why don't we continue to meet? I'm going to share with you the same concepts and tools and ideas that I'm sharing with the other leaders I'm working with here so that when you go to a meeting, you're just not caught off guard. But I'm not going to expect you to do anything. I'm not going to ask you to do anything. I'm not going to ask you to do any homework. I'm not going ask—I'm just going to give you all of the information I'm sharing with everyone else."

Christopher Jones: [00:27:51] He looked back, he's like, "Well, it's hard to argue against that one. I guess let's try that. We'll try that for a while." He ended up being one of the very best leaders I ever coached because I disarmed him, right? And I said, he's an adult. I mean, he's seen every flavor that they go through. I totally get it. I can never make a leader do anything. All I can do is present to them some concepts or ideas or some suggestions and really quite honestly, help them to discover the answers that are already inside them. Most of the time, the answers are right there. I just help them to discover on their own.

Christopher Jones: [00:28:27] And if they discover on their own, they're way more likely to actually do it. So, to go back to your original question, you know, I have a hard time when I get assigned to someone to work with as a coach. I have much more success if the leader recognizes they need help and they come to me for help. So, that's where most of the leaders I work with are those who recognize that. So, if someone does not want to get better as a leader, it's very hard—you cannot really force them to. Except to help them have that aha moment like, "Maybe I could get a little better." That's what I love about great leaders. I mean, some of the most fantastic leaders you know, they know they still can get better.

Peter Margaritis: [00:29:07] Right.

Christopher Jones: [00:29:07] It's never over for them.

Peter Margaritis: [00:29:09] So, when you're working with these folks that want to become better leaders, is there a common thread that all of them are struggling with? That-

Christopher Jones: [00:29:20] Yeah. No question. It's actually the delegation and accountability one is I think what most leaders struggle with that is pretty consistent with just about every leader I work with. So, I work with them and help them understand new ways to think about how to delegate. One of the things I shared with them is what I call phases of delegation where when you're delegating something, you just don't throw it over the wall and just expect them to do it.

Christopher Jones: [00:29:49] It all depends on the amount of trust they've earned with you. So, it might be, "I'm going to give you a very specific task. I need you to go do this. And this is exactly how you do it. Go do it right now." Like that's phase one, right? And it goes up through four phases. And ultimately, the ultimate delegation is where it's now a full bona fide part of their job and you barely even know it happens anymore.

Christopher Jones: [00:30:13] But there are steps to go through between this. So, you have to decide at what level or what phase the delegation is appropriate for what you're asking them to do and then, delegate at that phase. So, I help leaders with understanding and thinking about delegation differently in ways they don't think of otherwise. Because most people don't get really an education and delegation in how to do it effectively.

Peter Margaritis: [00:30:35] Right. And what I hear most people say is, "So, I can get it done quicker and better and right. It's going to take me much more time to do this." And then, I go, "Well, yeah, but is this task that you—is it still in your job description or is it in that person's job description?" Because if it is in your job description and you're doing it, you can't complain for being there for 12, 13, 14 hours, that's you. But there's some folks, and I know a few and I've recognized myself, I was one of them, who had a little

bit—they're control enthusiasts in certain parts of their business, in certain parts of the leadership that I'm the only one who can do it. Well, you know what, I got to just let go.

Christopher Jones: [00:31:23] Yeah, you do. Was it—Mark Victor Hansen I think said that he delegates absolutely everything he possibly can except for his genius. What he's really saying there is that he's very clear about what are the things that only he can do and no one else can. And if there's anything that anyone else could possibly do, he delegates it.

Peter Margaritis: [00:31:50] I love that. And as a solopreneur who's had this business now—this is my 10th year and I've just now delegated some—and I'll do it—I'm following your approach. I'm not just going, "Do this."

Christopher Jones: [00:32:09] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:32:09] Well, I know it's going to be a six-month curve for me and them, but I'm now starting to push stuff off that I need to be focusing on the genius aspect of it and continue to work on my platform skill, continue to work on my craft, invest more of my time into that versus the administrative side. But it does take time. But I've noticed that, okay, all of a sudden, this time subject free up, all of a sudden, more things are getting done. I just had to—well, is it the movie Frozen, let go? Is that the song or something like that?

Christopher Jones: [00:32:40] Yeah. Something like that.

Peter Margaritis: [00:32:41] It's something like that. Yeah. Yeah.

Christopher Jones: [00:32:43] Yeah. The unfortunate thing about delegation is yes, you're right. It does take time. And it's not quick. As a matter of fact, it can take more time to delegate than it does to actually just do it. But as you were saying, it's an investment that pays you dividends in the long run. So, you just have to invest that upfront knowing that it's going to pay dividends way, way down the road.

Peter Margaritis: [00:33:06] And it doesn't happen overnight.

Christopher Jones: [00:33:08] No. I wish it did.

Peter Margaritis: [00:33:09] And it's—yeah, I wish it did, too. I wish I can hit a switch. And it becomes even more challenging when you've got remote employees that you are trying to delegate to, as well as lead.

Christopher Jones: [00:33:23] Which means you have to delegate even more. I mean, it's even more important you're delegating this the most effective way possible.

Peter Margaritis: [00:33:31] Exactly. Because you empower the team, you get more out of them in the long run, but it takes a while to build up trust. And that's the key. You know, I worked for some really terrible leaders and I've worked for some really great ones. And one of them was to this day, I've learned more from—she had this little edge about it, but I loved it. And she called me a human being one day and no leader ever called me a human being. Have you ever been called a human being by some of your own leaders?

Christopher Jones: [00:34:05] I was called an FTE one time. More than one time, actually.

Peter Margaritis: [00:34:10] Well, yeah. That's probably the ultimate insult, but I had made a pretty large mistake and I thought she was going to like just shoot me upside down or the other and she didn't until she asked me what's my solution. And I had none. Then, she did that. But when she was done, she said, "Look, I expect you to make mistakes because you're human."

Christopher Jones: [00:34:35] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:34:35] "Well, I also expect you to come in here with a solution. Now, get out of my office. Come back in an hour with a solution to the problem."

Christopher Jones: [00:34:44] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:34:44] I shared that in a lot of my presentations. And you wouldn't believe how many leaders, managers would go, "No, I just take care of that. I don't-" They come in with their problems. I go, "It's just eating up your day."

Christopher Jones: [00:34:59] Well, back to what you're saying before, that's ego right there.

Peter Margaritis: [00:35:02] Right.

Christopher Jones: [00:35:03] I get to solve the problem. I get to be the firefighter that puts out the fire. And that that feels really good, but it's not what is healthy for your team and your organization. As a matter of fact, when you're a leader you hardly ever get credit when done right. If you're getting credit for being a leader, you're doing it wrong. Your team should be getting all the credit for all the great work that they do.

Peter Margaritis: [00:35:26] Right. Exactly. And I use this example. And I pulled up the article recently NFL, the Arizona Cardinals are playing the Seattle Seahawks. Game ends in overtime tied 3-3. Both kickers missed field goals, this game-winning field goals. And during the press conference, Bruce Arians, coach of the Arizona Cardinals just basically through his kicker under the bus, said, "We pay him to kick the ball.

Peter Margaritis: [00:35:55] He's supposed to kick the ball through the upright." And so, you can hear the muzzle, thump, thump, thump, thump, as he just—Pete Carroll said, "I love my guy, Christopher is my guy. I love Christopher. He had a bad day. He'll do better next time. But I have my faith and trust in him." And two days later, Inc. magazine and I think Fortune both came out with articles on that leadership style.

Christopher Jones: [00:36:19] Yeah. Oh, my gosh. There's abuse of power. That's a powerful contrast between the two. I love that story. You got to tell that story every time. That's a really good one. Aha moment.

Peter Margaritis: [00:36:32] I will send you the article. I did pull it, save it to my evidence. I'll find it and send it to you, but it was. And I actually watched the game. And then, I heard about it and I went, "Wow, there are two different styles of leadership." Two days later, man, they will write it up big time. So, this about three, four years ago.

Christopher Jones: [00:36:50] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:36:51] But we see that dichotomy in leadership.

Christopher Jones: [00:36:54] What's that kicker thinking on the Cardinals team the next game? And when the press is really on, what's he thinking?

Peter Margaritis: [00:37:02] He better not miss it but he's going to miss it because now, he's overthinking it.

Christopher Jones: [00:37:06] Oh, absolutely. Oh, my gosh. I do not want to hear the wrath of the coach here. But now, he's spending all this cycle time and energy on not getting chewed out rather than I'm just going to do my job and kick the ball. I'm going to do my very best right now, which is what the Seattle kicker is doing. "I know my coach is behind me. He's going to support me no matter what. I'm just going to focus on doing my job and doing the very best."

Peter Margaritis: [00:37:31] "And I'm allowed to make a mistake."

Christopher Jones: [00:37:33] Yes, yes.

Peter Margaritis: [00:37:34] "I'm allowed to have a bad day." I don't—I should research this. I don't believe that kicker was with the Cardinals very much longer after that. I don't know if he made it through the end of the season or they didn't pick him up the next year, but I would please somebody else to take me.

Christopher Jones: [00:37:54] Please. I know. Anybody.

Peter Margaritis: [00:37:56] Anybody but this team right now. And leadership, it's like you said, it's not easy, but why do people think you it is this? Why do people think they can come to you for coaching and want you to leave, "Oh, I've got it all. I could go or come to a seminar. Oh, now, I'm a leader." No, you're not. You're starting to become the leader.

Christopher Jones: [00:38:21] Yeah. It's a lifelong development. It's a lifelong learning. And unfortunately, those who are really good leaders, like we said earlier, they make it look easy, but it's taken them maybe 20 years to make it look easy and natural. You just don't see what it took for them to get there. Most have learned through hard knocks.

Peter Margaritis: [00:38:40] Exactly. Through a lot of hard knocks. And the other aspect of it is I don't believe people take the opportunity. I believe that not everyone wants to be a leader.

Christopher Jones: [00:38:52] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:38:52] I also believe that there's people out there who do, but they don't look for the opportunities to learn early on.

Christopher Jones: [00:38:59] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:38:59] In volunteering, I learned a lot of my leadership style through what volunteers of the Ohio Society of CPAs. The CEO, Clark Price, who, I mean, I learned more from that gentleman in the leadership than I have in many other organizations. But I would volunteer for committees, I would chair committees. I would put myself and yes, I would fail and I would screw up, but I learned. But I think that those other opportunities other than what's inside the building. We're shortsighted in ourselves and that training, that learning.

Christopher Jones: [00:39:33] Yeah, it's a great place to practice, right? Practice your leadership. You said another thing that not everybody wants to be a leader and I hope people listening to this will hear that. It's okay to decide not to be a leader. Not

everybody is meant to be a leader. And it's perfectly fine and okay to decide, "You know what, I'm not just going to be in a leadership role. It just does not like get me excited." Fantastic. You can still have a hugely successful career without having to be a leader. So, don't think that being a leader equals being successful in your career.

Peter Margaritis: [00:40:09] Right. And perhaps something early on that, you know, we get these folks who are very competent in their job and they get promoted in the leadership positions and they fail. Two years ago, there was an article in Harvard Business Review, you know, high-performing people don't make the best leaders or something along the title. And they talked about these highly technical individuals, these very competent, but they don't want to become leaders. They don't want to manage people. They don't like talking to people. They just want to do their job. But when we shove them in those roles, they fail and then, they have to leave. And that knowledge is walking out the door. Find a way to keep these people in your business, make them happy, create new job titles for them.

Christopher Jones: [00:41:01] Yeah. Embrace them, love them.

Peter Margaritis: [00:41:03] Love them for their technical and their knowledge, but just recognize not everyone's a leader. Don't try to keep putting that square peg in a round hole.

Christopher Jones: [00:41:12] So true.

Peter Margaritis: [00:41:13] So, you remember the National Speakers Association. You're in the Virginia chapter. How long have you been a member, professional member?

Christopher Jones: [00:41:20] You know, I just joined this past summer, actually. Over the past probably two years or so, the speaking part of my business has really grown actually without me trying very much. So then, I realized, maybe I should put a little more effort into this whole speaking thing because obviously. I got a lot of people asking me to speak. So, I just put that on the back burner for so long as I was trying to build my

business. And then, when everybody's coming to me asking me to speak, that was my message, saying, "Chris, it's time to make that a bigger part of your business now." So, I just joined this past summer, actually. And it's a great group.

Peter Margaritis: [00:41:55] So, you've just joined and you're a professional member of NSA and the Virginia chapter and Mary Foley.

Christopher Jones: [00:42:02] Oh, I love Mary Foley.

Peter Margaritis: [00:42:03] I will have to tell you, I love her to death, but I have to give her a call because—well, maybe, let me ask this question. Are you now on the board?

Christopher Jones: [00:42:13] I am not. I believe she's looking for board members at the moment, actually. It's time to fill those gaps. I actually saw a video from her recently.

Peter Margaritis: [00:42:23] It's funny because I mean, when I joined the Ohio chapter, they caught wind of my experience. I've been on the board from the Ohio Society of CPAs and so on and so forth, that, you know, "We have a new member. Oh, he's our new board member, too."

Christopher Jones: [00:42:39] That's a way to get a board member right there.

Peter Margaritis: [00:42:41] Exactly. And actually, a couple chapter meetings that goes, someone said, "Yeah, we have some new members. Hey, welcome to the board." And everybody started laughing and they had this look of terror on their face.

Christopher Jones: [00:42:57] That's funny.

Peter Margaritis: [00:42:57] But I tell you, leadership in NSA does create or develop new leadership skills. Immediate past president of our chapter, I've learned a lot added stuff that I didn't have there before through that process of spending time as the president. And Mary has doubled that by spending two years in the role as president.

Christopher Jones: [00:43:26] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:43:26] She's going to go off and into the sunset here coming up and probably sit on the porch and just sip some nice red wine.

Christopher Jones: [00:43:34] I tell you—yeah, I'm sure it's some red wine for sure. She's so amazing. Seriously, I don't know there's anyone better in that role as president right now for where the chapter is at the moment. She's just—truly, I'm such a big fan of Mary Foley. She's just a terrific person and she's doing a great job for this chapter.

Peter Margaritis: [00:43:53] If she'd just be a little enthusiastic, don't you think?

Christopher Jones: [00:43:56] I know. She'd maybe explode actually if that were to happen.

Peter Margaritis: [00:44:00] Right. Yeah. Mary has a ton of energy. Love her energy. Love her passion. And she epitomizes what a true leader can be. And to your world, an authentic leader because everything about her is extremely authentic.

Christopher Jones: [00:44:14] She is. You know, I've had her on my podcast as well. Since we've talked about her, we should probably tell people how to reach her because there's enough interest, I'm sure, people—I think it's maryfoley.com if that's okay to plug someone that's not on this.

Peter Margaritis: [00:44:27] Absolutely. And her e-mail is mary@maryfoley.com. Website is maryfoley.com. She's a wonderful leader, high energy. I've known her now for two or three years. And I have a question sometimes, call her up, send her an email. I mean, she's all over it. She's wonderful. And now, she's going to have to buy us cocktails at Influence because we really helped increase her brand out there.

Christopher Jones: [00:44:55] She has my favorite website when you first come to the very first picture that shows up of her and I won't say any more about it so that we can

tease people to go check out her website. The picture she has on there is so 100% Mary Foley. And you'll get what I mean when you look at it.

Peter Margaritis: [00:45:11] Yes. Yes, you will. And as soon as you said that, I had the picture of her home page, it's very powerful. I absolutely love it. Now, we cannot end this without you plugging your website, your business. How can folks get in contact with you?

Christopher Jones: [00:45:29] Yeah. The best way to reach me is christopherrjones.com. We talked before how there are a lot of Chris Jones's in this world. So, the best way to be in the unique is I'm christopherrjones.com. Also, I live a lot on LinkedIn. So, LinkedIn is a fantastic way to reach me. I post a lot of things on LinkedIn. I do a lot of commenting on there. So, I would definitely encourage people to check out my LinkedIn page. And then, try to think even what—probably, on your show notes page, you'll have a link to it.

Peter Margaritis: [00:46:01] Yes.

Christopher Jones: [00:46:01] I think it's something like I am Christopher Jones or something. I can't remember exactly what the name is. But additionally, I use Instagram. And Instagram is kind of a behind the scenes of Chris Jones. I post on stories there and it's typically not necessarily where my clients see, but if you want to kind of see what's Chris doing day-to-day and what's some of the weird stuff that he does and where is he right now, Instagram Stories, I've been posting on there pretty frequently.

Peter Margaritis: [00:46:32] Oh, cool. I follow you on all social media. I didn't realize you're on Instagram. I will connect with you there as well. So, as a parting word or parting piece of advice to the audience, what would you tell them on this topic of leadership?

Christopher Jones: [00:46:46] I should be better prepared for this question. I think it's just so important that people do a self-evaluation and just check yourself. Unfortunately, we talked about this earlier that those who have a strong ego in their leadership don't

realize or want to admit that they have strong ego, but those leaders who feel like they aren't as good as they can be and need to be better, I mean, those are humble leaders.

Christopher Jones: [00:47:12] And those are the leaders who are going to be even better leaders in the future. My strong encouragement is to just be recognized as the kind of leader that your team would follow you anywhere. They would do anything you ask for. And it's because, like I mentioned before, that you would do anything that you're asking them to do. And if your team is following you, because they want to, it has nothing to do with your title, you're a very effective leader.

Peter Margaritis: [00:47:38] And with that, we'll call it an end. Thank you so very much, Chris, for taking time. I've enjoyed our conversation. I look forward to crossing paths with you soon.

Christopher Jones: [00:47:45] Me, too. You're a fantastic interviewer. Thank you, Peter.

Peter Margaritis: [00:47:50] I'd like to thank Christopher for taking time to share what it takes to be an authentic leader. Now that you know what an authentic leader is, what changes in your mindset do you need to employ so that you can be calm and authentic clear? Something to ponder until the next time you listen to my podcast. Thank you again for listening. And if you enjoyed the podcast, please take a moment and leave a review on iTunes or whatever platform you download your podcast from. Also, please subscribe and share this episode with a friend. Make today and every day your best day.

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