

Russ Riddle Transcript

Peter Margaritis: Hey, welcome back everybody. My guest today is... I think people's last name say a lot about them and my guest today is Russ Riddle. The word riddle. He's got a great sense of humor, I mean, he's a great guy and he's an attorney/speaker/author, kind of wide variety of talents. So Russ first and foremost, thank you so very much for taking time out of your busy schedule to hang out with me.

Russ Riddle: Oh, my pleasure, I always enjoy speaking with you and to help you on your podcast. It's a joy and an honor.

Peter Margaritis: Thank you, and with that being said about last names, I do have a theory. We should have known because his name was Bernie Maddoff. And mine is pronounced margaritas is which cocktail.

Russ Riddle: Which we love in Texas.

Peter Margaritis: Absolutely. I tend to have a little bit of adult beverages every now and then. So, there's something about people's last names. So, I'm going to start off by asking this question. I went on your website and russriddle.com. And you've got a page there Russ Riddle Anomaly at Law. "Arrooo," Scooby would say. I'm the Accidental Accountant is that something like that?

Russ Riddle: Probably yeah. It's a brand that found me. I actually have a registered trademark for it nowadays. You know, I would go to networking events. I would just be visiting with good guys like you, and inevitably you get around to that question well, 'What do you do?' And whenever I said I was an attorney mouth dropped open. And they would go, 'No way you cannot be an attorney. You don't dress like one. You don't talk like one. You don't have an ego like one. I laughed a while ago. I kinda like you. You cannot be an attorney.' And, of course, you know, they were talking about the stereotype that we all kid about, and there are some of those. But that happened consistently, and then one day, I don't even know what event it was, this sweet woman took my hand in both of her hands and she says 'Honey. You're really an anomaly.' And it was one of those light bulb moments. Attorney at law. Anomaly at law. It just kind of fits because I am not the stereotype. Proud of that fact, and I think it served me well in my practice, but that's where it came from.

Peter Margaritis: Well, we do share that similar story, because people ask me, 'You're really not a CPA, are you?' I say, 'Well, I still maintain my license but I'm not very good at it, because I'm the Accidental Accountant.' And they go, "But you've got a sense of humor! You like making people laugh. I don't get that from CPAs.'

Russ Riddle: Right, and I have never seen a pocket protector in your shirt or a calculator.

Peter Margaritis: You never will. So, you're The Anomaly at Law, so you have practice and you still practice.

Russ Riddle: Yes.

Peter Margaritis: And when I think of attorneys, and I think even... I think you how you describe it on your website. 'Many times a lawyers first encounter with opposing counsel can be much like to junkyard dogs circling one another.'

Russ Riddle And wetting on the baseboards, yeah. That's what it seems to be like when you start...you're that's my opponent if it's a case or if it's a negotiation, and you really if you look at it that way that's how it's going to kind of go. There's a better way to go about it, and that's one of the ways I'm different I guess.

Peter Margaritis: So, what's your different way about going about it?

Russ Riddle: Well, you know it kind of this conversation we've been having about my brand. When I was many years ago in my practice, I came upon a time when I was going to negotiate. And I'm a Texas guy and this San Francisco attorney was on the other side, and I hadn't met him yet and he was coming to town. We were going to have this face-to-face conversation. And, yeah, yeah, yeah this highbrow Bay area attorney is going to come to town. He's gonna think I'm wearing a hat and my horse is tied up at hitching post outside It wasn't like that at all. This really nice guy walked in, but I decided I was just gonna smile. That's how we started. I just smiled and he smiled back. You know, it kind of happens that way. And we got along very well, and negotiations are about, you know, give and take in both sides went a little and they give up a little and that. But you know what? Before I knew it, I had negotiated mostly to my side what I wanted, and he was still happy about it. And I think it goes back to that smile. And in the end, when we were basically done and we're going to have to pay for it, he says, 'You know Russ, there are two kinds of lawyers. Two kinds only. Deal makers and deal breakers, and you sir, are a deal maker. And I tried to be and I appreciated that as quite a compliment lawyers don't typically complement one another, but it goes right to that Anomaly at Law. I think I took him by a little surprised as well.

Peter Margaritis: So, what I'm hearing is one, the power of the smile, which doesn't, you know, make people run. It draws people in. And two, even though you hadn't met that gentleman, that smile kind of opened it up to being, 'Oh, we're human. Let me share a couple stories.'

Russ Riddle Oh yeah.

Peter Margaritis: And now you just started building a relationship.

Russ Riddle Right, you know, it's just all about... a smile is what I call relational elixir, you know. It really it disarms people. Because they come in. We're going to have us in negotiation, you know. They're all ready for a battle almost.

Russ Riddle: And if you start off with that smile, it's disarming. They let their defenses down a little bit, and it opens up the heart mind and ears to hear what you've got to say. They're not going to agree on everything that comes out of your mouth, but it opens them up to at least hearing it. And you know, a smile does things inside of us too. We get to feeling better. And when we feel better, we're on our A-game. We're just more, you know, there's a law of likeability, and far too many people forget that when they go into a negotiation or go into a confrontation, if you will, of any kind. They forget that the likeability factor is in their arsenal, and they can be used not to manipulate, and let me, let me talk about that. There's a difference in manipulation and persuasion, what would you say?

Peter Margaritis: Oh. Persuasion is getting the person to see from your point of, maybe from your point of view or from your vantage point. Providing the benefits. Manipulation is just kind of using somebody.

Russ Riddle: Yeah, you basically have it. It's at the what's on your personal agenda. What's your intent when you come into it. You know, persuasion is about persuading someone to do something that's in their best interest. Yeah, it may give you a benefit as well, but it's not all about you. It's about them. And manipulation, like you said, it's just to get them to do something because it's good for you. It might be in their worst interest. But you want them to do it because of you. And there's a world of difference between those two. And there's also a big difference between being persuasive and being abrasive. And there's so many people that they think they're being persuasive when they're really being abrasive and they're cutting their own knees out from under themselves. Like they start talking loud. They start talking over people. They start interrupting because they think that's going to win the day and it's the exact opposite. And so, that you know, a smile is kind of like that. It's like they don't expect that, and it's just kind human thing to do.

Peter Margaritis: I love it and you said something so powerful that when we're persuading it's not about us it's about them.

Russ Riddle: Right.

Peter Margaritis: And I think a lot of times we go into any type of situation that we're trying to negotiate, we're thinking solely about ourselves.

Russ Riddle: Right.

Peter Margaritis: And not about the other person because we're view them from adversarial position.

Russ Riddle: Yeah, we're basically viewing them as an object, not a human being, you know. We want what we want. You go in... and there's a lot of mistakes negotiators make that go in thinking they're gonna win.

Russ Riddle: Negotiations not about winning. It's about getting the best result for both sides. Both sides are gonna have to give up a little bit, and so, if you go in there with this winning mentality, in this battle mentality, it's probably not going to go as well as it could.

Peter Margaritis: I think when you go with that winning mentality you're not really showing respect for the other party.

Russ Riddle: Right, you know, and that's one of the things that I really harp on. But you know things I talked about with winning negotiations are...there you see I use the word winning... but successfully negotiating, shall we say, is one of the things is respect. That's where there's so many ways and negotiation can go South. And one of the fastest ways is if you disrespect the other side. You may not like them. You may not agree with them, but as a human being, he or she's worthy of personal respect in the moment.

Peter Margaritis: Well, said. Is it because the word negotiation just puts us in that mindset of one point time we used to negotiate more than we do that win/win. It seems like a lot of it's win or lose.

Russ Riddle: Right.

Peter Margaritis: And how did that, I mean that mindset get changed?

Russ Riddle: Well, I think a lot of us, particularly in the professions that you and I are in. Professional degrees had to have licensure and all of that, you know, you develop a competitive mindset. And I was just naturally competitive all my life, but you go into law school or you go in to learn accounting and that sort of thing, and it's about class rank. It's about, ooohh, you start competing, and I think it's just ingrained in us to want to be competitive. And there's nothing wrong with being competitive, but it's when you go over the top, and you dehumanize the person on the other side. You don't respect them. You don't smile at them. In fact, you scowl at them. You walk in. Typically a couple of lawyers, they'll walk in and they start circling each other and growling and wetting on baseboards to establish turf. And yeah, yeah, I'm being a little facetious but it's almost as though that's going on and it's just too stupid.

Russ Riddle: It's not, yeah okay, you're good. You need to zealously represent your side. But if you go about it in a negative way, you're going to get a negative result. And if you disrespect someone, you're pretty well done in having any leverage with that other person. If you don't smile. You know, there's a couple other things, you know, I would say the best tip to negotiation is to be the most prepared. Most of the work for negotiation happens for you ever walk in the room.

Peter Margaritis: Right.

Russ Riddle: You've got to have thoroughly done your homework. If you haven't, it'll become apparent. They will realize, 'Okay this person hasn't done their homework. I should be able to get a lot of what I want here,' or they feel disrespected just by the fact that you didn't treat it with the importance that it deserved. You didn't put any time in. And so, you know I've got a couple of checklists on the preparation side. That one is about knowledge. It's about the facts and in all the players and everything, You know, with the Internet, here we can do so much research. And it's a small world. Chances are you know someone. Your LinkedIn to someone that has dealt with this person or this company before you can do all kinds of recognizance, if you will, and you should. But you have to you have to be go in prepared. Go in smiling. And here's another thing. You've got to be patient. I have seen so many negotiators come in and think, 'Okay let's get this done.' Doesn't work like that. It's a process, not an event. Again that's a faulty mindset to think that you just go in and get it done.

Peter Margaritis: Let's talk about preparation time. I'm an improviser, and people think I just make stuff up. And when I tell them is that's the last thing I do. I have to go on with that knowledge. That's going in prepared. I don't walk it with a script.

Russ Riddle: No.

Peter Margaritis: And you can lose in negotiation, by being too scripted.

Russ Riddle: Yeah, you can lose in court by being too scripted. I've seen attorneys had their list of questions, and they'll go down their list of questions and sometimes they're not even listening to the answers.

Peter Margaritis: Right, right.

Russ Riddle: And I've had judges told me that all the time, you know, he doesn't even listen to the witnesses or she is not even paying attention to the responses. And yeah, you get lost in a script. You get lost in a list, but you can have a loose outline. You can have, you know, a piece of paper. It's not that you can't have any notes, but don't prepare a script because you're going to get like deer in the headlights with that.

Peter Margaritis: Right, and you'll miss, something. I mean you've got... one thing about the world of improv is you have to be an excellent listener, and you have to be able to adapt to the situation. If you've got this script running through your head. You're not paying attention, there might be that window of opportunity that goes, "ffftt..."

Russ Riddle: Right.

Peter Margaritis: You didn't even hear it.

Russ Riddle: Right and they go hand in hand. You know, the prep before you get there, so important because you're looking under all the rocks and behind all the shadows and all that to know as much as you can about the facts, the situation, the issues, the personalities. All about everything that you can know that's relevant to what you're going to be talking about. And also your strategy. You don't need to be shooting from the hip with, "Ahhh. We'll offer this.' You need to think about what your start is going to be? What's your walk away is going to be? What you hope to be in the middle ground? You know, when the timing of when you put offers out there. It's all, you know, it's not manipulation. It's just my playing the negotiation well, and you have to be careful, but yeah you go in prepared that, as I mean you talk all the time. Because to your point, you need to let them talk. The more you can have...The best prepared negotiator usually wins, and the negotiator who listens well typically. And again, I'm using the word win, but you know what I mean. You get more of what you had in mind getting. And they will tell you so much that they don't realize they're telling you if you'll just listen. Just be in the moment. Hear them. Don't be distracted. Don't be thinking about your next question or your next what you're going to say. They'll feed you so much on a silver platter.

Peter Margaritis: It goes back to what you said, patience.

Russ Riddle: Right, and here's another one that I see happen all the time is his emotions.

Peter Margaritis: Oh, yeah.

Russ Riddle: You gotta keep the emotions in check. Because you start screaming, you start talking loud, interrupting and all its you're done. Again, you've gotten to a place you didn't want to get. So, you've got to go into it, thinking about what your own buttons are. Because if you're not, if you don't have thought about that, they probably have. And they're going to try to push a button to get you off your game, and you just need to be just even keel. It doesn't mean you're a robot but you keep those emotions in check. Be patient, listen, respect, but you walked in as better prepared.

Peter Margaritis: Yeah, emotions. I read an article once that emotions will hijack every negotiation, every conversation, and it's the biggest time waster.

Russ Riddle: Oh yeah.

Peter Margaritis: Try to put a deal together. Try negotiating any position. And every time I think about that, I think about the movie *Wedding Crashers*. At the opening scene, where the husband and wife are getting a divorce and trying to sell up the property. And they're just going at each other. And then one of the characters goes, 'Well, you guys loved each other at time,' and that just remove all that emotion. Made everybody human and they will negotiate the deal.

Russ Riddle: Right yeah, you just got to step back. It's not personal. It's negotiation to get the best that is best for your client or your company or whatever, whoever you're representing, but it's not personal. It's about processing and getting to an end. And you're both walking out being okay with the outcome.

Peter Margaritis: What if you're up against that person who's got a very healthy or over-served ego who comes in with the 'I win/you lose,' and starts taking possibly personal shots at you.

Russ Riddle: You don't, the first thing you do is you don't react. You respond in a very measured way, and say let's get back to this point, this issue, we were talking about and try to get them talk down a little bit. But if they just keep escalating, they just keep digging, especially if they start getting disrespectful and personal, it's okay to dismiss or, you know, adjourn that particular session of the negotiation. Remember, I said it's not an event. It's a process. And for that day at that given time because of how they're acting, you've pretty much reached the limit of the productivity of that session. And so I, you have to say this in a very respectful way, though, even though they're very much disrespecting you, say. 'You know, Peter, I can tell that you're pretty emotionally charged right now, and I think that we've gotten to the point that we've ended what we can do productively today, so I'm going to call a timeout. Let's reconvene. I'm happy to do that, whenever it's works for your schedule, but we are done for today.'

Peter Margaritis: Okay, so that takes in essence a tremendous amount of skill, patience and knowing your own emotional reaction.

Russ Riddle: That's why the preparation on the front end going in was so important. The thinking about 'okay my buttons are, and he or she's gonna try to push one of those buttons. You know, I'm not gonna let them.' I mean you might get in your car and scream the entire way back to the office, but not in the session.

Peter Margaritis: Yeah and, I think that's hard, especially if it's just coming at you. I think there's some point, like you've got to know yourself.

Russ Riddle: Right.

Peter Margaritis: And you've got to have that self- discipline that. It gets the point and just yeah change that mindset going... yeah, okay.

Russ Riddle: Well, here's what happens. It's like this in court as well. When you're cross examining a witness or you start getting louder and disrespectful to them and cutting them off. Just yes or no! It's a yes or no question, you know those kinds of things. There's a famed attorney name Gerry Spence. You may have heard of him. I don't know. But he teaches trial advocacy, and he uses the metaphor of a double-barreled gun. And one of those barrels is curled around and pointing at you. And when you shoot the witness, so to speak, or in this case for negotiation, you shoot that the opposing side negotiator, you're also shooting yourself.

Russ Riddle Because you're losing ground. You're losing leverage. You are really harming yourself way more than you're gaining anything by bullying that other person. So those emotions, that is the undoing of a lot of otherwise good negotiators and lawyers.

Peter Margaritis: Right. So, thinking about negotiation and thinking about different places that we negotiate, I think we tend to forget about we negotiate every day at work in what we do.

Russ Riddle: All day long.

Peter Margaritis: All day long, and I haven't... Well, I do have an annual performance review on my wedding anniversary every year. She wants to exercise another year of it. She keeps exercising the years.

Russ Riddle: Yeah, you negotiate with your spouse, your significant other, your partner all the time. With your children, all the time. With people in the marketplace. Maybe with a police officer, if you're pulled over because you were misbehaving in traffic. With your boss, with your peers in the workplace. You're always negotiating. And some people say, 'No, I don't. I don't do negotiations.' Well, you're not living breathing because you are. You just not aware of it.

Peter Margaritis: And that's a good point that we're not aware of it, so we need to raise that level of awareness.

Russ Riddle: Right.

Peter Margaritis: And watch our, you know, I think we get so wrapped up in our days we become numb to our surroundings and what we're doing. Versus taking a hard look at okay after this conversation I just held my boss, let me sit down because that was a bad negotiation on my part. What did I learn from this?

Russ Riddle: Right, right. You can always ask the other side, what can I do better next time?

Peter Margaritis: Yeah.

Russ Riddle: You should always be learning. I think we're lifelong learners. If we're not, we're kidding ourselves, you know. We got to keep growing. Keep getting better. There's no perfect negotiation. There's no perfect negotiator or it's something that we you know... When I teach a workshop on negotiations, I'm pretty transparent. The attendees, participants I tell them, 'What I'm teaching you or what I'm sharing with you are from hard lessons learned over the years. I've skinned my knees more times than I can count and most of these lessons came in a moment when I just doing exactly what I'm telling you not to do.'

Peter Margaritis: Right, and I do some of the same type of work. And the one thing I've noticed is if we're negotiating all the time, and we're getting late in the day and I've got to go to somebody's office and have a conversation. If I show up dragging tail, and not coming in, not making an entrance just kind of lollygagging. And I tell the audience, your fish in a barrel. They're just gonna keep shooting at you. You need to come in with your A-game.

Russ Riddle: Yeah, you've got to be rested. You got to have energy. And it's better to schedule it at a time when you will have that. You're not always in control of the schedule.

Peter Margaritis: Right.

Russ Riddle: But try to get it at a time. And if it's not in your prime time of day or evening, you've got to get ready for that. You've got to change something about your habits, so that you can come to that, with your A-game, so to speak.

Peter Margaritis: Amy Cuddy talks about presence. And actually, she does this in her Ted talk where to gain energy you put your feet about shoulder width apart. You take your hands, you make fists and you assume the superhero position. Now, I've been doing teaching that for a long time, never knew and once that she validated that and I tell my audience go into the bathroom, close the stall...

Russ Riddle: Right.

Peter Margaritis: For two minutes do this. And you'll be amazed when you walk out the amount of energy you have. But I remind them, you do behind closed doors.

Russ Riddle: Right. Because if you walk in like you're Superman or Batman or somebody. You know, down here in Texas, I don't know if it happens up your way, but a lot of people, particularly in a big pickup truck, they back into their spots, you know. It's just I know the theory is that you can get out easier. You can see better not to run over someone but I gotta think a lot of those folks, 'I'm Batman. I gotta be ready to get a quick getaway.' But you select that with what you're talking about yeah you could do that, behind closed doors and it's beneficial, but don't do it because, you know, then you're going to have them laughing at you.

Peter Margaritis: Yeah exactly. But you know as part of that preparation, if I know I've got 4:35-5:00 o'clock meeting with someone, then I better bring that energy and it could be, I guess, I guess post COVID when we're when we're able to get back to some meeting and maybe over dinner or coffee or something, it's maintaining that level of energy and professionalism throughout.

Russ Riddle: Right, yeah and you know, it's not only being aware of, you talked about the real abrasive kind of person, on the other side. And we talked about you being very over aware of your own buttons so that they don't they can try to push them, but you basically you deactivated them.

Russ Riddle: If they could punch that button all they want you, because you're ready. You're not going to take the bait. There's a lot of gamesmanship that happens in negotiations, and like, you know, the first offer or the first demand for what they want you to pay is going to be outlandish. There's a reason for that. It's to set the outside boundaries. Okay, but if you just get all insulted and react to that because they low balled you, you're losing sight of this is a process. That is a tactic. If they are going to do, but there's a reason they're doing. It's not personal. And then, you know, they'll do all kinds of we talked about smiling how that helps. They'll do all kinds of facial expressions and verbal cues to try to throw you off your game or gets you to react. You know, you'll say something they flinch. You know, or they make a face, or you know. You can't react to that, you know, you just can't. You just know it's there. They do the Que Sera Sera Doris Day kind of thing. Well, whatever. Whatever. They don't mean they don't care. They're all kinds of that gamesmanship going on. And again, if you walk in and you haven't really thought these things through, you haven't learned about their personality, their quirks. You don't know everything you can before you walk in and have planned your strategy. You're going to be just like deer in the headlights or ducks in a pond being shot at. Fish in a barrel, I think you said.

Peter Margaritis: Yeah, it's like shooting fish in a barrel, excuse me. So if I'm in a room 100 people, and I say, 'How many like to negotiate?' How many hands, do you think I'll get up in the air?

Russ Riddle: Not many, not many. Because they have this fear. They have this negative thinking. This negative mindset that they're going to go in there. They're going to be on the hot seat. They're going to have pressure. They may not get what they want. They might not win. They might have to, you know, apologize to their to their company boss, or whatever that they didn't get what they were supposed to get. They put all this pressure on themselves, which is negative energy. And really, no one will raise their hand if you ask that question. Very few, very few, but you have to remind them, you negotiating all the time. This is just maybe a little more formal. Maybe a more prepared measured kind of way, but it's no different than negotiating with the car salesman. Negotiating with your cousin who's being really obstinate about a family reunion. There's all kinds of negotiation. Take your foot off of your own neck.

Peter Margaritis: Mm hmm.

Russ Riddle: Because everybody's put too much pressure on themselves.

Peter Margaritis: You take your foot off your own neck. That's a great phrase. And I think about that, and I think about, you know, some say the same thing I'll do is if I'm speaking to a group of accountants, I say how many of you are sales people. Very few raise your hands. You don't think you're selling every day?

Russ Riddle: Everyone's in sale.

Peter Margaritis: Everyone's in sales. But you know that connotation of a salesperson.

Russ Riddle: Right.

Peter Margaritis: Now, it's that same negative conversation as negotiating and the ability to look at it from a different lens that we do it all the time. It's what we do. Let's get better at it.

Russ Riddle: Right, it's a process too. It's, you know, it's real. It's all about relationships, and you've been doing relationships all your life. And you've done well in some and you've not done well and others. But, you know, it's about relationships. It's about gaining rapport, and this is not new. None of this is new. It goes back even predates Aristotle. But Aristotle talked about the art of rhetoric, you know, and the three types of things that are going on and every conversation. Whether it's a sale or whether it's a negotiation or whether it's just talking about the weather with a neighbor at the fence.

Russ Riddle: Yeah, there's three things going on. There's ethos going on. There's the pathos. There's the logos. And you just got to get it in the right order, you know. And again, it's not about manipulating. It's about thinking how you're going to present this. If you start out with the logos which is everything you know. Here's how smart I am. Here's what I can do for you, and here's... and people start there. That's starting it backwards.

Peter Margaritis: Right, right.

Russ Riddle: You know, if you just think it through. That's why being prepared in advance is so important. Because they are sizing you up, when you first start. You've got to come across as credible as likable, hence the smile we talked about. You know, you're not walking into the party like you were walking onto a yacht as the song *You're So Vain* talks about. You're walking in with your, you know, good posture and confidence but you're not walking in like you're the smartest thing in the world, because there's sizing you up. You've got to be prepared for that. You've got to think it through. And then, they've got to know second how you care about them. That's not all about you.

Peter Margaritis: Right.

Russ Riddle: That you're wanting the best outcome here. You know, contracts... successful contracts or successful outcomes of negotiations has it can't be onerous or slanted too far one way or the other, because it's not going to serve well in having a healthy relationship. If you're just wanting a one offs win then okay. But if you're wanting to have an ongoing relationship, success that comes out of this it's got to be done well. They, you know, again you don't have to love each other, but you gotta respect each other and you got to know that each other cares about the other side. And it just takes a real prepared mindset, if you will, again, not a script, You're not manipulating but you gotta think about it. You can't just go in like Wild Bill Hickcox shooting at the lights.

Peter Margaritis: You said something there that I've never thought about it this way before. But really negotiating is not a transaction, it's about building relationships.

Russ Riddle: Right.

Peter Margaritis: And in my mind, I go back to you mentioned something about going to a car sales, negotiating with a car salesman. Well, if I go in with the wrong attitude or point negotiation or not being friendly or, you know, because of playing games and I know I might be a different attitude, because I'm going to be buying over my lifetime more than one car.

Russ Riddle: Right.

Peter Margaritis: So, I build the relationship with the sales person, because when... if it's a good relationship and if he's smart or she's smart enough, well what the best outcome for both of us, because then I become a referral service.

Russ Riddle: Right, and also, you know, they are going to play games, 'Well, let me talk to my business manager,' and they go back there and they talk about last night's ballgame. But they come back, you know, but if you think about it, the salesperson... they've got a range of Commission.

Peter Margaritis: Mm hmm.

Russ Riddle: And when you're getting a better deal, yes, the car company, the dealership has some margin that they can give on, but some of it starts cutting into that person's Commission a little bit and if they don't like you.

Peter Margaritis: Oh yeah.

Russ Riddle: They're not about to give up a penny of their Commission. You see what I'm saying. So, you just get, you know, if you can have a good relationship they're willing to give up 100 of their Commission bottom line. Just to A: Get sale. That's a success for them. They still making money but they don't have to fleece you because they like you.

Peter Margaritis: Absolutely, and I'm walking away with this conversation. Looking at more negotiations more about building relationships than anything else.

Russ Riddle: Right.

Peter Margaritis: And I intuitively know that, however, the way you phrased and framed it, that was an 'Ohh! Yeah!'

Russ Riddle: Again that's way the prep is so important, because if you let your guard down, and I don't mean having a guard where you're not being your authentic self.

Peter Margaritis: Right.

Russ Riddle: If you go in and your ...what happens is our human instincts kick in. We do get angry. We do get emotional. We stopped being patient. We stopped showing as much respect. All that kind of starts happening instinctively as a human being, sometimes. Unless we're really thinking about...Okay, this is a person who's going home to a family, you know. I'm not going to attack them personally. I'm going to be firm in what I want and all those things. But you're really, it's really when you stop seeing them as a human being.

Peter Margaritis: Right

Russ Riddle: That it goes South, and you could say 'I never do that.' Well, your actions seem to be suggesting you're doing that. Your words and your tone and all of that, you know.

Peter Margaritis: I'm guilty of that at times. I forget that I'm talking to another human. If I think sometimes we feel like we're just talking to another number.

Rus Riddle: Right.

Peter Margaritis: And that's from accounting kind of was just that, but it to remember that they've got a spouse, boyfriend girlfriend, whatever, that their going to go home to night. And I don't as a human, I don't want them to have to go home and feel terrible, and just be cussing at my name the entire evening. 'Oh, this Margaritis kid!'

Russ Riddle: Right.

Peter Margaritis: Margarita soul man okay.

Russ Riddle: Well, you know we do it all the time and traffic. You know. We start dehumanizing people as soon as we turn the car on. But... And that's where we get the road rage happens and the shooting at people. All kinds of things happening. On the roads today's because the road rage escalates to that that, you know, and they cut you off and you react. Maybe they are trying to get to the hospital because someone's dying, or you know there's all kinds of maybe they're a jerk but chances are they didn't intend that. They are just trying to get to where they're trying to get and they've got problems of their day going on. And if we could just step back and realize that and not react, it's no different in negotiations than it is on the 405 but, you know, or whatever highway. When you when you stop thinking about them as human beings, it's not going to go well.

Peter Margaritis: I'm going to butcher this but George Carlin had a joke, he said, 'Did you ever notice when someone who's flying past you on the road, they're an idiot. But when you're driving behind and they're doing a speed limit, they're a moron.'

Russ Riddle: Yep, yep.

Peter Margaritis: But I, you know, I've been better at that road rage negotiation, because, you know, with my wife, my mother, whomever. "I can't believe that idiot! That little... they're cutting me off!" What you said you don't know what's going on with them.

Right: Right.

Peter Margaritis: They might be. They may have somebody the hospital that they've got to get there or they're late for an interview or they might just be a jerk but that's.

Russ Riddle: Yeah. There's less jerks than you think there are. You know, there are jerks. We can't deny that. But, you know, it's like... I don't know, in Dallas, it's just the way they drive. It's like everybody has left two days too late to be where they're supposed to be.

Peter Margaritis: Two days too late. That's funny. Yeah so, as we begin to wrap up. What advice, so let's say you're talking to someone who's graduated and starting a professional career, and they're now moved up to the level of maybes let's say Manager. And they're starting that Ascension. What advice would you give somebody at that level about becoming better to becoming a better negotiator?

Russ Riddle: Well, you know I think you need to continue learning as I've said before. Just because you got out of school or just because you got the position that's just your ticket for admission. You really have to grow at this. You really have to... you've got to keep learning. And I would challenge you to learn everything about persuasion you can. What it is. What it is not. There's a huge difference in persuasion and manipulation. There's a difference in being persuasive and being abrasive. And, you know, go to the thought leaders Robert Cialdini, for instance, has written a couple of books. He's the persuasion guy and he's got great stuff to learn from. And realize, you know, that it's not personal. That's the hardest thing I think is realizing that just because someone is zealously advocating the other side of something doesn't mean they're being personal. It's just to get to a result. And, you know, it's about remembering people are human, yes, but also remembering that they're not necessarily attacking you. They're not trying to make it personal thing. And so, it's really about practicing patience. Keeping your emotions in check. Being kind. You know, there's a Tim McGraw song that I love called *Always be humble and kind*. And if you're always humble and kind, it's going to go so much farther. So much farther.

Peter Margaritis: I'm just making a note of that.

Russ Riddle: It doesn't mean that you're able to be manipulated. That you...that they're going to get one over on you, but be humble. Be kind. And that was the preparation going into it and the human element. Being likable. All of that's going to take you so far, but it goes against our instinctiveness for most of us. Most of us react, I guess, if I could sum it up one way. It's respond, don't react.

Peter Margaritis: Good Point. And by the way, let's talk about thought leaders in this area. You've mentioned the words *Persuasion versus Abrasive*. That just happens to be a title of one of your books. So, don't sell yourself short on the thought leader aspect of that.

Russ Riddle: That was written in the context of the courtroom. I interviewed 55 judges across the State of Texas, and ask them what they see day in, day out. My impression was that people just go in and they're their own worst enemy in the courtroom. And the judges to a judge agreed with that, and just talked about the way that they're so abrasive. How they're so unprepared. How they don't listen. How they are attacking of other people, and so they think they're being persuasive. They think they're showing their brains. They're smarter. They're better. No, they're showing their stupidity. They're showing they're not thinking. They're shooting themselves and their client, by the way, in the foot. And so, I think that you may not be a lawyer in whatever the negotiation situation is, but abrasiveness is not going to win the day. I promise you. You may be the smartest person in the room, but you can't act that way.

Peter Margaritis: Well said and, by the way. I would love to have an autograph signing copy of that book *Persuasive versus Abrasive*, and I'd be happy to pay you for it.

Russ Riddle: I know where you are.

Peter Margaritis: You know exactly where I am. I'll be happy to pay you for it, but I just I think about reading that book and seen it from a judges perspective... I'm not a lawyer, I don't play one on TV, but I think it adds a lot to the conversation.

Russ Riddle: Did you ever see the movie *My Cousin Vinny*?

Peter Margaritis: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Russ Riddle: it's one of my favorite movies. I've seen it over and over. And Fred Gwynne, you know, Herman Munster, is the judge. And you know how he kept having his staff call to see if this guy went really had a license.

Peter Margaritis: Yeah, yeah.

Russ Riddle: He was he was not behaving well. I had judges tell me that they actually called the state bar on some people because they could not believe. So, that was such a funny thing from the movie. but it happens in real life. It was nuts.

Peter Margaritis: Wow, that is nuts. Well, thank you so very much for taking time. I've loved this conversation. Actually. I'm walking away with more than I walked in with. And that's the one thing I love about this podcast. I do that all the time when I'm interviewing people. And I thank you. I can't wait till we can actually have a beer or something else face to face.

Russ Riddle: Sure!

Russ Riddle: Not there might be an occasion for that. You know, I'm gonna return a little bit of the compliments here, Peter. I've done podcasts. I've been interviewed before and I will say this. You listen really well. You know, I've known so many podcasters that they've got a list of questions. They've got their agenda. They want to get this recorded. They want to get it produced. They want to get it boom put out there. But, you know, you didn't script me. We didn't plan ahead, We just came in had a conversation, and what I would say is you listen really well. And I think that's why your podcast is probably so successful.

Peter Margaritis: I thank you very much. I can honestly say that I have worked on becoming a better listener for a long time. And I fail a lot, but for the most part I'm getting it right, more often than not, because I've invested that time into it.

Russ Riddle: Yeah, I've been known to teach listening and I come home and my wife tells me, I still haven't mastered it.

Peter Margaritis: Well, you know, there's a difference between...I tell people I'm a great improviser in the business world, but when I come home I'm probably the worst.

Russ Riddle Yeah, I think it's a common problem with us guys.

Peter Margaritis: So. I hope, because when we started before we started recording mentioned, I hope this heavy snow that's scheduled to come into your area dissipates before it hits.

Russ Riddle: Well, usually does. We get our hopes up that we're gonna get to build a snowman. We get maybe a little powder that melts but you know but hey you know, maybe we will. I love snow because I live in Texas and seldom see it.

Peter Margaritis: Well, thank you very much, Russ. I look forward to when our paths cross, hopefully in the near future.

Russ Riddle: Thank you.