

S4E15. Lauren Schieffer

SPEAKERS

Peter Margaritis, Lauren Schieffer

Peter Margaritis

Hey, welcome back, everybody. My guest today was just recently on a month or so ago. The Colonel's Daughter. You know, Lauren Schieffer. You know this person on the social media graphics. I think I've got more people liking her quote during the period of time we were promoted than any other podcasts out there but talked about respect. Yeah, that was really good stuff. And just so you know after we finish the conversation, we're wrapping things up. She told me that she also speaks on the topic of Significance versus Success. 'Arrooo' I think was my reply to you. And then the nine essentials of significant leadership. Scooby came out and 'Zoinks!' So I asked if she would come back and share this topic with you all. And first and foremost, Lauren, great to see you. Thank you for coming back. I'm looking forward to our conversation.

Lauren Schieffer

Thank you. I am just tickled pink to be back. It's a thrill.

Peter Margaritis

I am glad to have you back, though. So, what are the significance versus success? What is the difference? They both sounds similar. But what defines one versus the other? And what bucket do you really want to be in?

Lauren Schieffer

Well, I can't make judgments for you. I can tell you what bucket I want to be in. Most people are programmed to chase success. Success is outwardly focused. And success focuses on titles, and compensation packages, and accolades and accomplishments and parking spaces. Significance is different. Significance is inwardly focused. Significance is service based. It's about being of service first. And significance has nothing whatsoever to do with how much money you make, or what your title is, or how much perceived power you have. Significance is about how many lives you touch, and the manner in which you choose to impact them. Because how we impact people is a choice. And this concept, like just about everything else in my life in my platform, comes from my Dad. Thousands of times in my life. Not that I counted them, but I'm generalizing. Dad would say anyone can be successful, kiddo. Making money, climbing the corporate ladder, that's easy. Choose to be significant. You don't have to change the world. Just change the world you touch. That's what significance is about.

Peter Margaritis

It's the greater good. And I don't know if you know, I think you know this. I have an uncle who's a retired Colonel in the Air Force. When I was writing my first book, Improv is No Joke, he said, You need to put something in here about ethics (...*unintelligible*...) ethic part because it's for everybody and follow that.

And I remember telling him that about the profession in general, and how it's a little bit, a little self-serving that they're worried about themselves. Worried about, yeah, how you're going to leave this for somebody else. Let them figure it out. And he goes, 'No, you got to think of it this way. How will you impact in your community, your state, your country, in the world? This is bigger than just your firm, or you as a CPA. You've got to, for lack of a better term, change your mindset.' People want significant versus looking at just individuals.

Lauren Schieffer

And I want to add to that, because I've had several people ask me, "Well, this sounds a lot like servant leadership." Servant leadership isn't anything new. What's the difference? I believe that significant leadership takes servant leadership one step further. Because to a large extent, servant leadership is designed to be invisible. It is serving others from the wings. Leading when we need to. Encouraging people forward. Significant leadership is not focused on being invisible, but focus on building other people to not be invisible. So, significant leaders put their energy toward building up those emerging leaders who will follow in their footsteps. So that they are also are significant leaders and carry the message into the future. There's nothing invisible about that. It's a very grassroots, very visible vision for the future. That's what significant leaders do.

Peter Margaritis

Okay, I agree. But there's always kind of one. It's almost like a circular argument. I see a lot of times some people it takes six steps in order to feel like they are being significant.

Lauren Schieffer

Sometimes.

Peter Margaritis

Because now I have the financial wherewithal that I can help others through foundations and things like that.

Lauren Schieffer

But if you wait until you feel that you are successful enough to be significant, I really believe that you have missed the boat. You have missed the ship to Shangri La. You have to be significant first and success follows. I sincerely believe that, and you think about the companies that are doing that so successfully. They didn't wait until they were successful. My favorite example is Bombas. Oh my gosh, the first time I bought a pair of Bombas socks, I thought really, I'm paying \$16 for this pair of socks. I'm paying \$16 for this. Why am I paying \$16 for a pair of socks? But I loved the mission. Then the socks arrived, and oh my gosh, they're like the best socks on the planet. Now I have a drawer full of Bombas socks. They are significant and they are successful. And if we go back to the old adage, which could be hackneyed, but it's not hackneyed, because it's so true. That people will do business with people they like, people they trust, and people who make them feel good about themselves.

Peter Margaritis

Absolutely.

Lauren Schieffer

That's what significant leadership is about. That's why being significant bring success with it.

Peter Margaritis

So, for those in the audience who don't know about Bombas, and don't know about the mission of Bombas, could you share that with them?

Lauren Schieffer

Oh, okay. Well, I, I don't know, their mission statement or anything like that. I just know that for every pair of socks I buy, they give a pair of socks to the homeless, the at risk communities. And it's not just in the United States. I believe that it's global, but it is also in the United States. They're not taking that money and only go Haiti with it. It's global, and in the United States. And in crisis shelters and homeless shelters, the number one thing people ask for is fresh socks. You know, because if it's not raining outside, and you have a hole in your shoe, but you have brand new socks, your feet feel taken care of. So for every pair of socks that is purchased, they're giving a pair of socks away. Which my husband said to me, you're not paying \$16 for this pair of socks, you're actually paying \$8 for this pair of socks, but the other person is just not giving their \$8 for the pair of socks. So, I bought two pairs of socks, and I gave one away through Bombas,

Peter Margaritis

Through Bombas. I wanted to make sure everyone understood how they operate and how to find that significance. On going down this line, anything about... we see a lot of companies these days who are doing similar type of work, similar type of having that's significance. Do you see that? I guess that's it. I think about some of the older companies that have been around for a while. That was really not, I don't think that was part of their overall goal. I think success was a big part of that goal. And, you know, wealth, creating more wealth. I mean, some of that wealth may have gone to foundations to help out. But I don't, I don't believe that that was the overall intent versus the intent of Bombas. In others of recent, your thoughts on that?

Lauren Schieffer

Not very strong thoughts on that. Your thoughts on that, and then he stepped back. I just want you to point, I just want to point that out. And then he stepped back. A very strong.... I believe that as we head into the third decade of the 21st century, and we are facing a still raging pandemic, a weakened economy. And I believe one of the most divisive environments in modern history. Now, everybody tells me that historically as the nation was forming, it was more divisive than this. This is the ugliest environment that any of us can ever remember living in.

Peter Margaritis

Right.

Lauren Schieffer

The generic efficiency, profit motivated leadership of the 20th century, that leaked into the first two decades of the 21st century, is not going to lead us out of any of these situations, because to a very large extent, it is what caused the problem to begin with. When you are only focused on productivity

and achieving higher profits for your stakeholders and accumulation of wealth, and accolades and market share. And none of those are inherently bad on their own. But when they become the sole focus, over and above, the well being of the employee base, and the community that you serve, it becomes more destructive than constructive. And that I believe is what has brought us here. And especially moving forward into the third decade of the 21st century. A year living at home has made a lot of us reassess our priorities. So, when you have new priorities, and what is now a predominantly millennial workforce, the leadership structure of the past will not work going forward.

Peter Margaritis

I'm going to give you an Amen. I've been voicing the same... about that is the first thing is very simple question at times, what business are you in? And I hear retail. I hear consulting. I hear accounting. No, you are in the people business. First and foremost. If you don't have people, you have the vendors, suppliers, employees, you have no customers. So, why don't we treat people like they should be treated not like a number? And I am seeing that change. I am see that change from the days that we started in the business world where we were just a number and just okay, well, we'll just...

Lauren Schieffer

A commodity. We were another replaceable commodity.

Peter Margaritis

Right? Right. Yeah, but it's also I love it. But if we think about I just put somebody go. What's the fall out their family, and is that the best.. You know, I've been a fan of Southwest since day one. Because their motto was, we love our people. They're our greatest assets, and we're not going to lay him off during downtime. We might not use, we might use a (...*unintelligible*...) training and development. But our people are our greatest asset. We're not letting them go. Herb Kelleher decided that early. They still get that philosophy today.

Lauren Schieffer

As compared to December of 2002. we relocated our entire family from Phoenix, Arizona to the Kansas City area, because my husband believed that he had a job in a telecommunications company here. Major global telecommunications company, headquartered in Overland Park, Kansas. We arrived on the 22nd of December 2002. I just want you to get that date in your head is the 22nd of December 2002. That was the same day that that global telecom company laid off 2400 employees by email. Everyone that was laid off three days before Christmas, got an email that said your position has been terminated. Please pack your belongings and be out of the building by noon. I know that because my husband got one of those emails, and he had never set foot in the building. That's commodity. That's the kind of mentality that ultimately led to the demise of the organization. So, that leaking into the first two decades of this century. It has to stop. But what if Okay, what if? What if we could build up a brand new generation of leaders that was focused on integrity and empathy and compassion, and accountability, personal accountability as well as organizational accountability? What would the next 50 years of the United States look like? That's, that's what gets me up in the morning.

Peter Margaritis

A lot better than what we've experienced. And as you're describing that, I've recently come across this term Psychological Safety. The ability that I can speak my mind, take risk an the organization with my team be very vulnerable and not be punished for it.

Lauren Schieffer

Exactly.

Peter Margaritis

Only good, rather, that...except when it butts up against ego.

Lauren Schieffer

Ego is a big factor, but it cannot be a factor in leadership going forward, but it can't. And it's very interesting that you brought that up, because, and the consulting and the training that I do, anytime we discuss conflict management, communication, emotional control, I hammer in what our objective is. And our objective is threefold. Our objective as communicators, is threefold. First, all people feel safe and treated with respect in my presence. Now, by safe, I mean physically safe, intellectually safe, emotionally safe, and treated with respect. And then I take the time to say, think about a time that you did not feel safe. And it's just in the last couple of years that this psychological safety term has... I've been, I've been teaching this for over a decade. But anytime you don't feel safe, physically safe, intellectually safe, emotionally safe, you are not open to furthering a conversation. You are mentally planning your escape plan. And treated with respect, we talked about the difference between respect for and respect to. While we stand, the second part is while we stand our own ground, and third, we get our message across. That's completely backwards from the way most people train on communication. Most people who train on communication, even my well, beloved and respected colleagues, will tell you that the most important thing is to be clear, to be understood. Well, I've encountered a whole lot of people who are very clear in their communication, they lay dead bodies behind them as they do business. But it's why I have to approach it from the other direction. And I'm not willing to compromise on that hierarchy of needs.

Peter Margaritis

Absolutely, and it's very well put. And they leave bodies in the wake. So let's pick this path, you've got nine essential ingredients, if that's the right word, but significant leadership?

Lauren Schieffer

Yes, that's exactly what I call them. The nine essentials of significant leadership.

Peter Margaritis

And what are they?

Lauren Schieffer

They are too many people a very 40,000 foot concept. So, the first one is understand your own value. Understand the value that you bring to the table. And I start there, because people have a true...who a true understanding of their own value, it frees them to be humble. The most arrogant people that I've

ever met, you know, those big egos. If you crack them open like an egg down there in the center, you're gonna find a very small child with no self esteem.

Peter Margaritis

Absolutely, yes.

Lauren Schieffer

So understand your own value. The second essential is treat all people with respect. The third essential act with integrity at all times. As you say that, I hear you, I believe it. But we get in situations where that integrity, acting with integrity becomes very gray because of pressure. Pressure?

Peter Margaritis

Pressure from around them. Pressure from boss, pressure the earnings... all this type of pressure. A lot of the times, we cave into the pressure.

Lauren Schieffer

Oh, because we're all human. Absolutely, my definition of integrity, as not original To me, it's just the one that I happen to utilize. Integrity is doing what is right, because it's right every time whether anyone is looking or not. Now you know that very wise sage Anonymous says that integrity is what happens in the dark. But we will all fall, we will trip, we will land face first. And then we get up and we brush ourselves off and we try again the next day. All we can do is endeavor to act with integrity. And that is in our personal lives, especially as leaders. Because you... people are watching you. Your team is watching you. Not just how you do business but how you live your life. So, in our personal lives, and our business lives, and our financial dealings, and our work ethics, and how we treat people, especially those who seemingly can do nothing for us. That it's a biggie.

Peter Margaritis

Absolutely a biggie.

Lauren Schieffer

Okay, so number four, open your mind to new possibilities,

Peter Margaritis

Open your mind to impossibilities or possibilities?

Lauren Schieffer

New possibilities. New possibilities. Only, it is only a bloated ego that thinks that they know everything or have the only solution. Oh, let's see I just had the conversation that....did a presentation today. That came up Last week did something. That came up. See but the thing is when you let your team know that you don't know everything.

Peter Margaritis

Right.

Lauren Schieffer

It empowers them to contribute to the process. And significant leaders know that what worked in the past, while it may be a good starting point, by virtue of the fact that it's in the past, may not be the best path forward. So, getting opening your mind to new possibilities, Okay, number five is craft a vision. But it's not just a vision for the organization. It has to be more robust than that. It has to also be a vision for those we lead. What they can grow to be, and what that vision, what it's going to look like for each and every one of them when that vision is achieved. Or as you're describing that I'm sitting here writing down support, are we supporting the people that we lead, so they can grow in their own leadership? No, as sometimes it's rare, but it happens. Something that I believe in very strongly grows out of a fallacy of my Father's, rather than a strength of my Father's. And the Colonel had this habit of saying, 'This is what I've planned. Won't we have fun? This is what I planned, this is what we're going to do. This is how we're going to carry it out bink, bink, bink, bink, bink.' I mean, it was very, it was a very military way to do things. And sometimes he would plan a day. And the only way that he could make the day work was by dropping me off at wherever I needed to be an hour and a half ahead of when I needed to be there and just assume that I would find a way to occupy my time until I needed to be there. This is what I plan for us what we have fun. So, in crafting a vision, it has to incorporate the needs and the desires and the why of the team that will put that vision into action.

Peter Margaritis

Collaboration.

Lauren Schieffer

Yes. Okay, so that was number five. Number six is communicate respectfully. We've talked about that a lot. Seven is lead by example. And sounds so trite, but I tell you what, if there's a moment where you have communicated that it's all hands on deck, and everybody needs to put 100% into solve whatever this little crisis is, at the moment, and you decide to knock off at noon, they see that. Have to lead by example, in every avenue. Number eight, celebrate the results of others. Rather than celebrating your own, celebrate the results of others. Give you a great example of that one. What because I've got some percolated in the head. Percolating in your head, the Colonel was a really good example of that. Okay, my father's team designed the advanced composite materials that I can't remember if it's absorb or repel radar. That the B-2 stealth bomber is made out of. He never took credit for it. Because it was the team, great team. And my father absolutely refused to accept his DOD medal until every member of his team was recognized for it. Celebrate the results of others first. I can give you many examples going back over the last few years, where that did not happen in a very public manner, but your team sees that. You know, you can't take credit for the results if you're not willing to take credit for the disasters. But how about you let others take credit for the results. Celebrate their results first? Yeah, yeah. Bear Bryant said that. That original to the Colonel. Bear Bryant said if the team wins big, we all did a great job. If we squeak by with a win, I've got some work to do. If we lose, it's all on me.

Peter Margaritis

You being the football enthusiast as you are, Miss Kansas City.

Lauren Schieffer

Yeah.

Peter Margaritis

So, you might remember a few years ago, the Arizona Cardinals were playing the Seattle Seahawks. And the game... the regulation ended in a 3-3 tie. Both teams are going into overtime, and both kickers miss the extra point that could have won the game for them, and time ran out so they ended up in a tie. So the press conference, the coach of the Cardinals. Bruce Arians, was asked what about his kicker. And he threw his kicker under the bus and ran over him twice. We pay him to kick the ball through the uprights.... Pete Carroll, I wish I could remember the kicker's name. Pete Carroll said, 'He's my guy, he makes more than he misses. He had a bad day. I still love that guy.' It took maybe a day and a half, two days, an article on leadership in that will wind up in Fortune or Forbes, all around and I go back to that. That was a telltale sign of someone's leadership style. That, hey, it's on me the leader. I didn't prepare the team.

Lauren Schieffer

That's right. That's right. It was a great moment. You know, I have a love/hate relationship with Pete Carroll. But and it's all, you know, it's all in my head, because he doesn't know me from Adam. But it was a great moment of leadership.

Peter Margaritis

Right.

Lauren Schieffer

Before we forget, number nine, work for your replacement. The first task of a leader is to find their replacement, and build them, and grow them, and work for them. So, those are your nine essentials of significant leadership. Absolutely. Every time, when I had to hire somebody, I said, you're taking my job. We'll get you ready to take my job because I'm going to move up or move out or wherever that leads. Well, at least want to make sure that this position, lack of a better term.... you're ready to take over that role, and move forward with it. But a lot of people are territorial. They are and they want their job security. There's fear there. But fear never accomplishes anything. Other than saving your life in a crisis. Fear never accomplishes anything in a business environment, and no one gets to work forever. So if you step out of your role without creating a solid succession plan, then the universe creates for you. And you let go of any control you have over your own legacy. That is so interesting because there's an association who will remain nameless whose longtime CEO is more than likely going to be retiring in a few years. And now most people report to him almost trashing the place, and throwing people under the bus, and it has now turned into a toxic work environment, because everybody is trying to aspire to that role. And it is very, very sad. Why? It's almost expected at times. But it shouldn't be!

Peter Margaritis

Oh, I agree. It shouldn't be!

Lauren Schieffer

It shouldn't be expected. We should be giving every person that has any aspiration for leadership, all of the tools they need to replace us. And even if they don't have the aspiration, but we know. We believe in them. We give them the tools as well, until they believe in themselves. That's what significant leaders

do. They say I believe in you. And I'm going to keep believing in you every time you fall on your face. And I'm going to pick you up and I'm going to brush it off until you prove yourself incapable for the job. I'm probably still going to believe in you then. That's what significant leaders do. And significant leaders have been wrong because we're not all perfect. We are human. Oh, sure! I've had my little heart broken. People have broken my little heart many times.

Peter Margaritis

And you know, we've broken other people's hearts as well. But we're not stopping the process. We're not stopping that wanting to be of significance and help others. We're learning from that. Transforming ourselves to be better, and learn from those mistakes.

Lauren Schieffer

And, you know, when we look at the nine essentials, many people will look at those and go, well, those are nice concepts. But they're not bottom line leadership. And I would beg to differ. Because any really substantial organization. And my experience has proven that when you focus on the high level concepts that are in the nine essentials is significant leadership, the bottom line of increased profitability, increased employee engagement, reduced attrition, increased market share, improved customer service and profitability. All of those will fall in line when you focus on the higher level concepts of the nine essentials of significant leadership. Absolutely. And I don't know this for a fact, but I have to believe that... well, at this point do. I know there's more leadership development programs that have embraced significance. But there are still those out there that are still teaching leadership the way it was in the 70's, 80's and 90's. I mean, teaching by the absence that they are taking in front of their organization. We do what we see. I mean, we're being taught 70s 80s leadership in 2021? Well, I think part of a reason for that, and part of the complication with that is in the 70s, and the 80s. The concept of treating people with respect, 'yes, please, no, thank you.' Common courtesies, communicate respectfully, those were still a given in our society. So the management side of leadership is what was taught. Because the other was just expected by society. In the 21st century, it is no longer expected by society and therefore needs to be retaught. In my opinion, we know that opinions are like elbows. Everyone has at least two of them. Well done, well done. It's your opinion, my opinion, and we all have opinions, but you're out there, you're seeing it. You're doing it, you're interacting with it to make that change, that significance that you bring in your work to others. So that's leading by example. So that's walking the talk. I hope so. I try. From my vantage point, it sure seems that way in what you do, and how you go about your business, and how you go about with your clients, or how you go about was an association that you're involved with, and other things that you do. Now you're in Kansas City and I'm in Columbus. We see... well, we see each other, maybe once or twice a year at a conference, but not in our daily life, but that all transcends. That all kind of transcends into what we see, even in those days that we have. Well, we're all human. And I trip and I fall flat on my face more often than I choose to admit. But if I don't try and walk the talk, then I'm just a fraud and what I'm teaching. And that, you know, so many of us, especially professional speakers, and trainers and consultants, we have enough challenge, living imposter syndrome, that if I'm not walking my talk, I wouldn't be able to get out of bed in the morning. Because there are many things that I don't have, you know, I don't have an MBA. I've never sat a C suite position. But the C suite is not my target market. You know, I have managed hundreds of people, middle management, emerging leaders, those are my target ears. Those are the ones that are going to take us into the next half of the 21st century. Absolutely. Describing that I'm

going, you even mention this... falling on your face. There are people out in this world in this country leaders who have never even admit to falling on their face. But when you are vulnerable, and open with your team and your organization, I screwed up, I thought... I made a bad decision. And people look at you in a different light. And that's a bad light. It's like, no, she's really human. She has failed, fallen. And she's open enough and honest enough and vulnerable enough to share with us. Go ahead, please. Yeah, please learn from my mistakes. If you can avoid tripping on the pothole that I just got out of by my telling you, 'Oh, my gosh, I failed so badly and ended up in that pothole.' If my admitting that can keep you from falling into that pothole, why would we not do that? Right? You know.

Peter Margaritis

Exactly. The one thing that is always frustrated me with some leadership is the person who has a personality outside the office. And the internal personality which is the exact opposite. And not in a good way.

Lauren Schieffer

Yeah.

Peter Margaritis

I just don't understand. But it's that ego, that power, that control, that...

Lauren Schieffer

That lack of authenticity.

Peter Margaritis

Yeah.

Lauren Schieffer

Yeah. Yeah, that that. As we begin to wrap up, we've covered a lot. And those who are listening, give them one sustainable takeaway that they can begin to work on every single day in order to point themselves in the role of being significant. The Colonel always said, 'There's no reason to be nervous when your heart is in service.' So, if we take that, we try and focus on being in service every day. And we follow the nine essentials of significant leadership, which we all have to grow into. I wrote them for heaven sakes, and I'm still growing into them. But if we've focused on that. See, you will know that you are a significant leader, when people who talk about you don't talk about what you've achieved for yourself. But rather, they talk about what you accomplished to benefit others. So, there's no reason to be nervous, if your heart is in service. Focus on that every day, and you will start taking steps naturally toward being significant. That is the best takeaway that you could give someone because it is, it is something that you need to somehow keep in front of you every single day. Write the quote on an index card. Make sure you have it in your planner, whatever on your phone. Because the more you see it, the more you'll continue through that. But if it's not there, over time we forget. We do forget.

Peter Margaritis

We fall back where we once were, so take that advice. Oh, Lauren, thank you so very much. Always pleasure to see you. Great interview. I can't wait to see you in person.

Lauren Schieffer

Los Vegas in July. That's a possibility though. I will have both shots. I'm still the whole airplane thing is still, but I'm sure that it'll be hopefully sometime in 2021 that our paths will cross. Thank you very much. Thank you for having me.

Peter Margaritis

I can't thank Lauren enough for sharing your stories and wisdom about the difference between the significant and successful. Which one do you aspire to? And I will conclude with an improv quote as fit into this interview. 'Comes a day you're going to have to decide whether it's about you or the work.'
Stay positive, test negative