

# S4E24. Will Hill & Paul Miller

## **SPEAKERS**

Peter Margaritis, Will Hill, Paul Miller

### **Peter Margaritis**

Hey, welcome back everybody. My guests today put me on their podcast a month or so ago. So, I want to reciprocate because, quite frankly, during our interview my stomach hurt because I was laughing so hard. And my guests today are Will Hill and Paul Miller, and they are...Will's with Thomson Reuters. Paul is an entrepreneur in the tax world actually has a wonderful personality which blows my mind. Because most people when I say tax accountant, they go, "They are kind of dry, aren't they?" I think, nope, Paul is the exact opposite of that. So first, gentlemen, thank you very much for taking the time to be on my podcast.

### **Paul Miller**

Well, thank you, Peter, that's high praise. So, keep the jokes coming.

### **Will Hill**

Glad to be here. Glad to be here.

### **Peter Margaritis**

So, I do know you guys like to start off your podcast with some really deep probing questions.

### **Paul Miller**

That's Will's job.

### **Peter Margaritis**

So, how are you guys feeling today, and are you experiencing any hair loss?

### **Paul Miller**

Well, now that I'm in my 50s, that ends up just naturally progressing on its own. But I feel great. I feel great.

### **Will Hill**

That's the advantage of being six foot five, Peter, is that not many people know, if I'm experiencing hair loss or not.

### **Peter Margaritis**

My brother's six foot five too, and you're right. I can't tell if he's experiencing any hair loss or not. So, my real question to you to start off, is your podcast, it's Thomson Reuters podcast called Pulse of the

Practice. How did this happened, and how did you two meet and become such a great co-hosts for each other?

**Will Hill**

Yeah, well, the way we became great co-hosts, is... I let Paul carry the weight, and that really helps. No, you know, Paul, it's been what? Nine years?

**Paul Miller**

Nine, ten years probably.

**Will Hill**

Nine, tens years since we have known each other. Paul's firm made the wonderful decision to purchase Thomson Reuters products, which all firms should make that same wonderful decision. I'm not even paid on commission. But, so, one of my former colleagues who did some implementation work with him as firm management software practice CS said, "Hey, Will, you got to meet this guy named Paul. You guys both think strange. I think you get along well." Or something like that. Right. And so, one of our events had chance to be Paul we talked a little bit, and, you know, Paul, certainly has a different approach. You know, we're looking at this, this wave of advisory and a lot of firms are fresh into advisory, and Paul's been doing advisory for 10 plus years. And selling advisory first, compliant second for 10 plus years, right. So he had, at that point was very much unique perspective on things. And so, we stayed in touch corporately and individually, and had the opportunity to be a co-presenter at our Partner Summit event. We hold seven or eight of those a year, sans pandemic years. And we, you know, we just say hey, here's another way that you can look at a business model, and here's the things that TR can do to help, and hopefully give them some inspiration. Say, hey, maybe I want to do things differently. How am I really helping clients? So, Paul certainly had a message that resonated well. And now, as clients heard that message from Paul they started to say, "Hey, Paul let me buy your stuff." Paul, I'm making up the story a little bit.... And it's like, yeah, that's my life's work. Not really sure I'm ready to sell that. And I think there was some concern about, you know, Paul you mentioned me you don't want to sell your forms and methods, and then have to pick up the phone and be 1-800-How do I be like Paul. That really wasn't your desire. So he and I sat down and and created what is now known as Practice Forward through Thomson Reuters. Where we help firms become advisory-centric in their client relationships, and we use a lot of the forms and tools that Paul has used and proven through use case in his firm. Built on those and added more with other firms as well. And then a couple years ago, Paul and I were talking so you know, we should just do a podcast. This is kind of a thing nowadays, and we're coming up on our two year mark, Paul...

**Paul Miller**

Right, right. Yeah, it's crazy.

**Will Hill**

You want to do the minutes, how many minutes we've been on the podcast together? Probably not.

**Paul Miller**

We could, we could say how many minutes we actually produced the podcast which is starts, ends, alright, see you later.

**Will Hill**

Right, right. Yeah. But, just, you know, saying, how do we continue to bring value to firm owners? Because the folks out there whether their mentality is super progressive or is a little more traditional, they're still facing the same types of pressures, right? And I think that everyone needs some inspiration, and people need some kind of things and say, "Ah, here's a new idea." Now what's the little bite sized chunk that I could take to move forward? And so, we just kind of did it on her own. This was not. You know, I told my company I was doing it after we started doing it. So, it wasn't any kind of Thomson Reuters deep initiative. It was just, hey how do we help firms? So, Paul, what did I miss?

**Paul Miller**

No, I think it's pretty good. I think, Peter, you know, when I think back when I first started med well in started talking to Thomson Reuters themselves at a company about what we had done. At that time, I was 10 plus years into advisory, you know, it was really looked at back in 2012-2013 was a little bit more of a disruptive, probably service just because it was like 'Hey what is this stuff, like, this is weird.' And when I first started presenting at Partner Summit, I would get the stink eye from people. Like are you sure does this really work? And, you know, and I believe that there was nothing that unique about what we were doing. I just believe that it was more about a mentality and a process. And so, that's really where Will has the tremendous ability to basically build off of some of the stuff that I know, and I'm always more probably in a sense on the frontlines in the field working with clients. And I've been able to collaborate with Will very well just because he brings it back into more maybe the corporate sense, because he has more of that background. And, you know, it's this kind of work well together and I think we, we have the ability to kind of play off each other. We both like to be creative and think outside the box. And, and basically take it about 85-90%, and then let other people jump on it, and maybe polish it up a little bit from there. But anything that's disruptive, anything that's new, you know, it seems weird at first, maybe, but then you got to kind of push that forward. And I think the podcast we started to do was just to have more conversation about just different issues going on. And as, you know, fate has that we were doing them for a few months, and then of course pandemic hits and all that stuff. We had... the boys had plenty of things to talk about, about what's going on in a firm. And, you know, I just tried to be real with people and like stuff we're doing I don't have all the answers. I just try to be transparent with 'Hey this is what I'm seeing. This is what I'm hearing.'

**Will Hill**

We actually keep track of how many times he's wrong. Little tally board.

**Paul Miller**

What's that number up to?

**Will Hill**

You know, I'm working with my kids on counting right now, so we'll have to ask them. Home school projects.

**Peter Margaritis**

Paul, the name of your business is Business by Design.

**Paul Miller**

Right.

**Peter Margaritis**

And as I was reading about your business on your LinkedIn page, you use a word that I just, I literally was jumping up and down. We are primarily in the 'relationship' that is so simple so unique, but so foreign to a lot of accountants and CPAs. I asked, when I'm in front of an audience I ask people for business they are in. I get advisor. I hear tax or hear audit. And I go, that's a byproduct. That's a byproduct.

**Paul Miller**

Right.

**Peter Margaritis**

And I was getting to the point that somebody wants to come up and just punched me in the face. And then I go, 'You're in the people business first and for most. You're in the relationship business, you're the customer service.' Without the people, you have no business, which is simple but we tend to forget that thought process.

**Paul Miller**

I think in the past, you know, probably, maybe two to three, even four decades, education, and a specific credential, people used to think like 'Oh, I have this credential,' and called accountant, CPA can do this attorneys, financial planners. Anyone who has a specific technical knowledge, used to think that was the badge, right. That was the thing that like whoa, people want to talk to me because of this. And the reality is, I hate the break of the people that nobody cares. You know, unless it matters to me, unless you fix my problem, I really don't care about what your credentials are. And I think that's probably a humbling thing for people to accept. It's not that a discredit what all the work and effort and energy, it becomes to be an expert at something, but that's kind of behind the curtain. When it's shown in front of the client is what they want to see. And I think that it's hard because for years in the world of accounting, if everyone says 'Oh, this is what we think is important.' You know, these are the things we do. This is what's important. And really if you look at it, Peter, or most of it just boils down to simple tasks. I need to do this, this, this. And very little of the accounting relationships, tax relationships, advisory relationships refer to leading clients, managing a relationship. And kind of predicting the future for clients. And that is really what entrepreneurs, small business owners who we focus on. That is what they're starving for. That's what they ask for all the time, when I talk to them. They go, 'Tell me what I need to know. No one's ever taught me. No one's ever explained things to me. We've got people that can process stuff. We've got people that can complete tasks. But I think we as an industry, if you're looking to try to change your value proposition, you're looking at what you do and managing the relationship versus managing paths, that's a big step. And I'll add one thing because we were talking yesterday to a group and I said, you know, in accounting firms, I said, 80 to 85% of the bandwidth, if not

even more, is occupied inside of our firm, managing tasks. That's where our resources, so much of our firm's resources are dedicated toward managing tasks. So little of our resources are dedicated towards managing the relationship. That's what's got to change in the world of an advisory firm, you've got to be able to have enough bandwidth resources do you start to manage that relationship.

### **Will Hill**

Let me jump in on that, and as you're making that comment about the relationships, there are two things came out. Once upon a time was, whatever that says. One of those is that someone once told me, 'Hey, What business is Starbucks in?' And I kind of looked at them, 'The coffee business.' Said, 'Nope, they're in the distribution business.' They just happen to be distributing coffee, and they've got all the network and channels and all this things to distribute whatever they want. They've got supply lines. They've got outlets available for customers other infrastructure. It just happens to be that they're distributing coffee and related products, but they're really in the distribution business. And I think that, to me, what that means, from the accounting firm being the relationship business is you have to realize where your real value is, in order to keep growing and moving. If you are just in the tax business, let's take a look at the UK, then they're making tax digital. What are you going to do when all the taxes are done for you if you're just in the tax business? I'm not sure what you're going to do. And you have to step back and say, I may do taxes as a function, but what's my real value in the, what am I trying to do? So, if I can reposition that say, I'm in the relationship business for you. I help our business clients achieve their goals, so that the owners can get what they're trying to get out of their business. Now all of a sudden, how do I do that? Well, I do some taxes. I might do some payroll work because those things have to happen, but now I'm open to shifting and being with the needs of the customer with the dynamics of the environment, whether that be that just the general business climate or the regulatory environment as that continues to shift and move. So, we've got to be able to take that up a level and say what is my real value? And I used to say that to the same thing to people I work with internally at Thomson Reuters say hey, I'm, you know, some of our trainers, I'm a, I'm a trainer on ultra tax. Well that's great, but what if our next generation product comes along, being a trainer and ultra tax is not your real value. Your real value is you know how to communicate information in a way that helps that listener, apply and become more efficient in what they do. Now I could take that skill and transpose it to the next generation product that comes along or I'm a great facilitator. So, we have to think a little bit more about the skills that we're using that feed into the output, because the outputs are going to change, but it's our ability to use our skill to adapt to a newly needed output. That allows us to continue to grow and move with the industry.

### **Peter Margaritis**

Absolutely. And as I'm listening to both you guys, the one thing I hear a lot is, we just don't have time. And I don't know, that's just some excuse or whatever, but I do know that between the regulatory environment and tax law changes, technology changes, we got all this forthcoming in, we seem to have our heads down, versus just looking forward. And as I always get inundated by a sea of information. And I do know the P and CPA stands for the Procrastinate because that's why I became a CPA. I'm a super CPA in that aspect, but we tend to procrastinate until it's like at that last minute. But what we're talking about here is not something that's the last minute, it's something that needs to be worked on today and every day.

## **Paul Miller**

Yeah, you know, I think it's this idea that you would prefer to make a transition. You know, there isn't an accounting firm probably out there that says hey we need to be, we need to be more busy. You know, we have plenty of things that we're doing. The question is, the things that you're doing isn't really what you need to be doing. And I think just, you know, going through and dissecting and really being honest with yourself, you know, when you look at the the environment, the landscape, not only that we're in in a pandemic, but beyond pandemic, even pre-pandemic, you know, you've got a human capital issue. You have the labor shortage. You've got deep pressures they're constantly out there. You got compliance regulatory issues, changes happening. All these things are all happening, and I guess my question is, you know, to a firms saying, 'Do you think it's going to get any better?' That what makes 2022 better. And so I think we just have to be realists. From being in the business for almost 30 years, I would probably say, I think it's really easy to get caught in this grind of deadlines. Like, I just march forward. There's a deadline. Boom, we get past that, okay. I'll just get to another deadline. Boom, done. And before you know it, a year goes by, two years go by, and you're just find yourself doing a lot of the same thing. And I think it's just important, especially in this day and age, to be able to step back and say, you know, is this really what I want to be doing in 2022-2023, even 2024? Because the key is in the actions you take place today...the actions you take today are going to be the things that are going to show up down that road. I think the hardest part is a lot of the things we do don't necessarily have an immediate payoff. You know, they're gonna be like, Man, I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired. I'm gonna wake up tomorrow and this is gonna be a whole new day. You know, it took gradual change, especially for firms that have a sizable client base, right? We have 700 clients, and moving those clients, and changing, and training them to think differently or do something differently, takes time. But I think you've got to be resilient to the fact that you can make these changes, it just, you have to start with some of the easy things sometimes some of the little things that can make that fundamental change.

## **Will Hill**

So Peter, I think that if you want to find time in your accounting firm, you have to focus on resource allocation. While I'm living up to taking your ideas into the corporate world here right now by using words like resource allocation. But it's not something that's talked about, especially a lot of kind of small to midsize firms. I think a little larger firms look a little more closely perhaps some of the resource allocation, but I'm also saying that the owners themselves, their time is the resource. How are they using it? Where... this is gonna sound simplistic, but where can things be pushed down? Well, what can be automated? And now, I think we even have to look at what can be outsourced, right? So, we've got to look at what's our resource allocation. And part of that may be that I've got to stop doing things. Just because you've always done something does not mean you have to continue. So, as you look at your resource allocation, you discover that, boy, we are wearing ourselves thin with a certain type of client or some one off industries that we're just making some top and money on but the bottom line is, is next to nothing on that. We're just keeping ourselves busy. Well, wait a minute. Timeout. That's not good resource allocation, and I'm not talking about let's put somebody else on it. I'm talking about, do you need to stop doing that altogether? So, I think that most firms don't look at stopping things. They're concerned because customer service is where they put their bread and butter, right? And they say, hey, we just want to serve clients. We can't tell our client, 'No.' We can't do something different after we've already done it one way, but that may be something that you've got to do, right? You may have to say

look, we got a 1040 is overplayed, right? But you know we got to, we got to stop doing the 1040 onlys. We don't have time for that. We're missing opportunities to better learn what's going on, to use your time for business clients, more advisory work for them. Maybe it's, we're handling, two or three nonprofits, a year. Does that really make sense? Nothing against the nonprofits, but are you their best service if you're only doing a couple of those a year? How can you reallocate your resources differently, and use that to find time? So, think you've got to take just a really thorough look at your resource allocation, Peter.

**Peter Margaritis**

Are we talking about me? Because I thought there for a while we were talking about my business. And I was right there with you. And there's a bunch of stuff I need to stop doing. I just have some control issues and I just can't quite let them go, but, but at that point, all businesses, firms, industry whatever needs to take a look at that resource allocation. What can I quit doing? What can I automate? What can I outsource? But we can bring greater value to what we're doing, and listen to the two of you guys, I sit here thinking, job description of a firm, of the partners in a firm... Those job descriptions look like they are changing, from even two years ago. Care to comment on that thought process?

**Will Hill**

Well, your job is different.

**Paul Miller**

I mean I honestly say, Peter, even the past year, our roles are completely different. And you look at you on a day to day basis the questions we get that the demand, we have from our clientele it's just very different than it was, 12-18-24 months ago even. And this is what I think that people have to wake up to the fact that we have to stop thinking that, 'Nope, this is what I do. This is how it works.' You have to be open minded to the fact that we don't make the rules for this. We are in a customer service relationship business. Our clients ask us, and demand certain things and that's how we get paid in a sense. So, we have to be aware that these things are ever changing. You know, when you, when I think about, you know things even we even did in our firm 10 years ago, you know what I have senior accountant to do. You know, the percentage of time they would spend on certain things. It's completely different now. You know, when you look at how many things can be automated. How many things can be done in a non, with a non-technical staff or team member. There's so many different things that you can do to find time. You're not going to do that when you just sit back and you're just kind of trying to take these deadlines. You've got to be able to be actively stepping back and saying what do I need to do to run a business, Peter, not just, oh I'm gonna let the work run me. And I think that's where this, this shift of thinking is we are, we all are entrepreneurs, business owners running our own firm working at our own firm. Most people in small firms even have a direct impact of the end result. We got to know that that implementation and change is all up to us. You know, we can make those changes, and we just have to be aware of that it's changing very fast.

**Peter Margaritis**

Will?

**Will Hill**

I concur. Ditto

**Peter Margaritis**

Ditto on that. So, I'll ask this question. Thinking about this job description what we should be doing, and we're customer service centric, client service centric, should we have the foresight to pick ahead of what we think our clients need? And I'll go to the point of, okay, the PPP, the EDILs, the MOUSE, that came out to help, you know, during the pandemic. And I know some firms who did this. They said okay, I need to understand this because my clients are going to call me. And maybe those who didn't call, did we call them and say, Have you considered this? I haven't heard from you. Have you considered this? And if not, we can help. I hear some firms did that, but also... and I'll speak to my CPA firm. They did not. They went radio silence. And that just makes me so very happy.

**Will Hill**

So, Peter, there's a firm in the Minneapolis area, maybe you should give a call to that could help your business a little bit more. It's called Business by Design.

**Peter Margaritis**

Can I get the phone number?

**Will Hill**

It's interesting that in June of 2020 I was on the phone with the firm, and we're talking about the PPP as an opportunity for them. And like many firms, they're simply overwhelmed by everything that was going on. The extended tax deadline. They're very focused there and said, Well, we've had some clients call about the PPP stuff. We're trying to work through. Should we start with them and figure that out? And I said, "Actually, I think you should be really afraid of all the clients that haven't called yet." And they kind of stopped and they said, "Well, we, we don't have bandwidth to help them. Why should we hope they call?" And the reality is, we are in an hyper, hyper information age. People are gonna get their information from somewhere. And so, if you've got clients, they're not calling you about these things, you have to make an assumption. I'm not saying it's always gonna be true but you have to assume they're hearing about it from somewhere else. And if they're not calling you about it, then are they getting service somewhere else. If I'm a small business. Let's say I have a landscaping company, and I'm in a state that had some rather large impositions on them right so, Michigan, Minnesota, Kentucky, something like that. And now we're sitting here looking at the ERTC. And I, I was great. I got some PPP money had some people get sick, but they survived. Hopefully, I tried to keep as many people employed as possible. Finding new ways to mow lawns and all this kind of stuff. If my firm, doesn't tell me about these credits, and I hear from some other firm, 'Hey, you've got 10 people. We think that you're actually qualify for about 50 grand.' I tell you what, as soon as that process is over, I'm switching firms. Because one firm is there to help me, the other firm is there to take my money. And to do compliance work. So, I think you have to assume it's coming from somewhere else. And even if, let's say we assume it's coming from somewhere else, so we call them and find out that never heard about it. You don't look bad. All right, I think you're gonna come out just fine. So...



**Paul Miller**

And I think, Peter, part of it is that ,you know , I think what's in the DNA of most accountants is just to be right. We're very clear on the fact that we have to be correct, all the time.

**Peter Margaritis**

Right.

**Paul Miller**

And so, what's been magnified to me in the past, you know, 12 to 15 months or so, of the since really the pandemic stuff specifically, kind of more started with attack bot changes is PPJ then... Is that true leadership and true relationship management is not necessarily about being right. In managing a relationship you don't have to be right. You just have to be present. And so, I think that having the conversation with people is more important than being right. And I, that I know blows in the face of all what many accounting firms really are wired for. But this is what the shift is. All this goes down PPP as Will was talking about these things and, you know. And even take the ERTC I had that exact scenario last night. A client emailed me, he got an email from an outside source. That said, you can get \$20,000 per employee credit. We can help. He forwarded this to me and he goes, 'Isn't that what you guys are talking about?' The way the email was worded sounded like, holy crap he's got 50 employees. He's thinking, this isn't a loan. This isn't anything. It was worded very well, but there's people out there hustling your clients, poaching your clients. And those companies are now doing give us, they basically say we're not going to charge a fee. It's all contingency at 30%. That's basically what their charging. And he sent it to us, he goes, 'Isn't this what we talked about just a couple weeks ago?' And I said, 'Yep, we got it.' And as all the conversation was. Now, he doesn't qualify for quarter one. We're watching a quarter two. But if you don't think your clients aren't being approached, or being poached, then you're crazy. Because, as Will was saying there is information coming from all different sources. And I think, so I think we got to move away from the idea of like, sitting on the sidelines, making sure we have all the facts. We know exactly what we need to do to really just being present in the moment and saying this is what we know. This is what we don't know. Once we know more, we'll let you know.

**Will Hill**

Well said. I think about, I think about this in terms of, like, you're not ready for this example, Paul. I just want to let you know this right now. In terms of a wilderness. Right. and so here's the wilderness guide taking you on this hike for a couple of days into the woods. That wilderness guide does not know the exact sequence of events that will happen. They cannot tell you when the bear is going to show up, and they can't tell you when it's going to exactly rain on the fire, and when you're gonna get a rip in the tent or anything else like that. But they're there because they're prepared for whenever it happens, they know what has to happen in order for us to continue reaching our goal. right?

**Paul Miller**

That's deep, Will. That's real deep.

**Will Hill**

Thank you. Thank you. So that's, that's the way I view this. It's not about that, 'Oh, I can't do this job and take a client somewhere because I don't know what's going to happen.' No, but you're armed with

all the knowledge and experience that when stuff happens, you're going to put them in the right direction. You know, you're gonna send them up the tree when the bear, well, we should get away from the bear example. It's probably not a very healthy one.

**Paul Miller**

The bear example, you know, the bear example is yeah, you don't have to be the fastest. You just want to be faster and everybody else, right? That's all you need.

**Will Hill**

That's true, that's true. So, we won't ask your clients which one is the slowest one in the group that you're going to push in front of the bear. I think I think the example holds despite the, the big issues with the bear here. But, you know, it's not, it's not about knowing the exact sequence, and the perfect steps. It's about knowing the skills that when you encounter the difficulty, you've got the skills to help them maneuver, navigate, survive and move forward. And we've got to lean a little bit more into that.

**Paul Miller**

And Peter, just add to add to that too, is I think we as Will and I have worked with firms and through Practice Forward, that was one of the bigger issues that sometimes that people have when they move to this realm of advisory. And we deal with people in Practice Forward their biggest things is, 'Oh my gosh, what's going to happen? What do I need to do?' Because there's so system and process oriented, and where you have to step back and say, 'Okay, that's cool. I don't care what order things come in. Whichever order they come in, I've got ways to handle it.' And that's one of the harder things I have in sometimes teaching new staff about what we do in the world of advisory. It's not always it's going to come in the same sequence. However, if I know I'm in this a particular arena, like a particular industry or a particular business, these are the factors that could come into play at some point I'm going to need to tackle these things. I'm gonna need to teach this entrepreneur about their tax efficiency bank account use, the record keeping and how they pay themselves. You know, I don't know the order it's going to be an exactly. And I think that's a little bit what I said earlier about something that's disruptive. That it's just kind of goes against the grain of what maybe is so ingrained in the DNA of a lot of firms.

**Peter Margaritis**

I've referred to that is the ability to improvise, and adapt, but it's very changing, and disruptive landscape. And those are the words, improvise and adapt scare many in the profession, because we used to improvise. What does that mean? Are you going to try to make me funny. No, I'm not trying to make you funny. I'm trying to do just exactly what you explain. In this industry, here's the tools that we have so it comes in, which one do I need to pull off the shelf. Which one can I use? Which one can I focus on? And everybody's different. Versus that system. It's the ability to kind of free yourself as a perfection, which is very hard to do because that's what the profession is built on is perfecting a lot.

**Will Hill**

Right, maybe more accountants need to watch Chopped. Because you know, in that show on Food Network, each chefs presented with mystery ingredients. Yet, they know all the core factors where it doesn't matter. They know they have to balance acidity and sweet. They know they've got to do these different things, and so they just have to tap into their expertise and apply it to the current scenario

that's in front of them. They don't have to learn anything new. They have to use what they know in what seems like a different scenario. But yet, all the main factors are truly the same. They're just disguised differently with different vegetables. I don't know if we keep going I can have like five other analogies here. We're on a roll.

**Peter Margaritis**

Hey Paul. I just figured out something about Will. He spends a lot of time on the Discovery Network.

**Paul Miller**

He does. I don't know how he gets his...That's why he doesn't go into the office anymore.

**Peter Margaritis**

He's got Discovery Plus.

**Paul Miller**

Exactly, exactly.

**Will Hill**

My kids love food television.

**Peter Margaritis**

Will, you're right. I mean exactly what you said, and I love that analogy. Because I'm Greek I'm a food guy. But I also own a restaurant, but I don't. But I think that I do in this house. But it's the ability to adapt to what's in front of you. What's what's given to you, and be able to run with it. And not go, 'Oh my god I don't know what to do.' Just, you know what to do because you'd like to just don't have to learn anything new. You just have to adapt, grasp and take your clients forward.

**Paul Miller**

And I think the pandemic is just a great measuring stick for firms of like all that. You know, I look at the things that we've tackled yet it's been a hard, you know, I've done my wife last night, it's just been the last 10-12-15 months It's been tough. Just because there's been a lot of things thrown at us, but all the training that we've had before and the work we do has led us to be able to adapt and change to it. And whereas I think that for a lot of firms, it's really thrown them for a loop. Where it's like, well, what are you talking about these loans, we're not bankers. You know, why do we care about this? Why do we care about the retention credit? We don't do payroll. Well, you know all these things impact your client. And I have a saying, I always say, that if you're near the scene the crime, you're going to get blamed for it, you might as well get paid. So, you might as well, you're going to get suckered into these things. You know, I would I have a proposal, I'm going to be delivered here after we're done recording, and this is a business that they're selling their business. And oftentimes when we do business transition, I have a law firm we work well with. So. we do a lot of joint kind of engagements, and we're able to kind of work off each other. Well, this is one they have an attorney they've worked with for a long time. And, you know, I've met with them a couple times, and I can tell where there's going to be just some, you know, I'm gonna have some extra things. And so, when I deliver my engagement, I'm going to say, "Hey, this is just how it's going to work, and this is what you what's going to happen in the sequence of events.

This is how I can predict these things." Now, there's some variables, I won't know because I haven't worked with this gentleman, but that's okay. I can manage that. I can navigate around that. So, I just think being able to be so look at the world has been adaptive, and if there's any one thing going forward that the common theme. Now, in, I know specifically like the year or so, Will, of all the guests we've had a podcast and the things I personally deal with. You have to know what you see now is probably not an anomaly. You know, what we feel right now is not like, I can't wait for this everything go back to normal. You know, what if this is normal. What if this is what you, what you see is what you get. You know, are you happy and fulfilled with your business and your life as it stands right now?

### **Will Hill**

So, I think I was thinking about this earlier this morning actually, Paul. Where firm owners or employees in firms are sitting, waiting for a return to the old ways. Now, I'm not talking about like social life, old ways right? I'm talking about with your business, old ways. Those are the ones who are more tired because mentally they're just sitting and going, I'm trying to hold on until this is over and I get back to what's familiar. And that's exhausting. It is less mentally tiring to say we're in a new paradigm. What do I need to do differently? And if I can put myself in that mental position of saying, I'm going to do something differently now because things aren't going to go back to the way they were, as I have some success in that change as opposed... I get energy. I get inertia, as opposed to just sitting and holding on watching these waves crash over me going, I think I can still breathe. I think I can still breathe. That's life sucking. That's not energy giving in any way shape or form. And so, the sooner you can say, a business is going to be different. Let's figure out how we're going to be different now. The more energy you will have. The less exhausted you will be because you're not just sitting there trying to hold on for a reality that is frankly not likely to come. And even if it does return to normal in some weird way, by the time it gets there, that normal is going to be different than what you expected, and then you're going to be frustrated. So, you might as well spend less energy, get more energy, by looking to change. I know that feels counter. But I think from a mental perspective, that will help with the tiredness. Is it's not just about oh let me take a break and then let me hold on, again. That breaks not gonna do any good. Take a break, and then step forward.

### **Peter Margaritis**

It's interesting that we spend a lot of time focusing on things we have no control over. Your tiredness, and that's the one thing that improv has taught me is focused on the things that I have control over, not the things I don't have control over. And right now the only thing I have control over today and maybe a little bit of tomorrow, but I can't go by... I've lost control back here. I can wish it back, but it's not going to come back. So, focusing on the things that we have control over, to your point, brings that energy brings that mindset and gets away the tiredness, but don't get too far ahead of ourselves into that future unknown because now I have no control over that. And it sounds simple to do. It's very hard to do it daily, and consecutively in that mindset.

### **Paul Miller**

And I think that that is that you know as a firm owner myself, I think that one of the more exhausting things has been trying to figure out some of the things that are coming. You know, and I just think that, I can't imagine sitting there thinking, like, oh, how can I just grit my teeth and bear through what's here just hope for something in return. Because as Will said, by the time it returns we're on to the next thing.

I mean, so many things have advanced and in, you know, your perspective on life changes. And so many things are just so different now from a perspective standpoint. And I just think we've got... I see so much opportunity, Peter, right now. There's, it's like the Wild West. In the world of tax and accounting. I mean, you can kind of write your script to do whatever you want. And I've never seen so much opportunity in all the years I've been in tax accounting as there is right now. Where everybody's kind of scrambling to try to figure out what their kind of deals going to be. And you can be right there with them, but you just have to be open your mind a little bit and start to invest in yourself, and give yourself a little bit of time to figure that out, and not just be driven by a deadline, not just be driven by the work that's in front of you, but start kind of being intentional with what the end result is

**Peter Margaritis**

Will?

**Will Hill**

I mean, I think I started the conversation with that, right? It's you've got to change your mindset about where things are. And until you do that behavior doesn't change, right? Mindset always comes before behavior. And you may take some time, right, whenever this tax season happens to end. You may have to take some time. Say, 'Hey, we're shut it down for a few days.' Not, not to rest. But to reset. I think, maybe sometimes, as humans, we have to separate and distinguish when are we resting. And when are we resetting. And if we go into rest when we're supposed to reset, we're gonna be tired in a hurry when we come out of it. If we reset and we're just supposed to rest, people are gonna like what are you doing, why, why are we changing things, this isn't the right time. So, there's been intentional when you step away. Am I resetting or am I resting today, and preparing yourself that way.

**Peter Margaritis**

So when the pandemic hit, after the first couple of days of me going, 'What the hell just hit us? What the hell just happened?' And I went, I saw my business just for the first half of the year just evaporate. Just go away. And I just took that time I still see it. I sat there for two days, two or three days redesigning my business. So it can survive, and that's what firms should be doing right after tax season. Is okay, maybe we did that before, but we still can look into...we can still predict, but it's not going away, that five year plan, but it's at least one at six months to a year. What do we think is going to happen,?Start planning for it. And then when something's...when an opportunity is handed to us a sense of something, is this something I need to do? Something I should do? Or something I should not do? And start using that time in redesigning the way the firm looks moving forward. So, with that being said, and need to respect your guys time. I know Paul's very busy. Tax season. Will, well Discovery Channel is on to something big you're missing right now.

**Paul Miller**

You know, there's something they've got recorded or he's got to stream or something. So.

**Will Hill**

Maybe I should expense, maybe I should expense the streaming service I use some illustrations for a business purpose. Paul, how do you think the IRS would respond?

**Paul Miller**

We'll talk offline.

**Peter Margaritis**

You said you said something funny to how the IRS respond? They respond?

**Paul Miller**

Yeah.

**Peter Margaritis**

They tried to deposit or they did try to deposit my economic relief, this latest round that came out into somebody else's account. So, now it came back apparently they're gonna send me a check which I should have it by 2024, I think.

**Paul Miller**

So, that's how I got that money. Now I know where that came from. Thank you!

**Peter Margaritis**

You're more than welcome. I hope you enjoy it. Gotta love, I love the IRS. Gentlemen, thank you so very much. I enjoyed being on yours. I love having you guys on mine. I love the attitude, the humor, as well as the thought, because I think, for those of audience listening to this, whether you're in tax accounting or solopreneur, entrepreneur or whatever, there's a lot of valuable advice that these guys gave. Listen to it. And how can they find you two? We can find Will on the Discovery Network. We know that.

**Paul Miller**

Will's on the FBI's Top 10 Most Wanted.

**Will Hill**

Now now. If anyone, if anyone wants to talk to me, feel free to reach out. I have the easiest email address in our company will.hill@tr.com. And again you can find our podcasts in any of your podcast consumable platforms called Pulse of the Practice.

**Paul Miller**

And if you want to email me email with willhill@tr.com.

**Will Hill**

You didn't even say it right. It's will.hill.

**Paul Miller**

Will.Hill. Sorry! We screwed that up.

**Peter Margaritis**

Because Paul's in the witness protection plan. He can't give out his email out.

**Will Hill**

I look forward to answering on your behalf. This next Friday you have 12 calls coming up.

**Paul Miller**

Oh funny.

**Peter Margaritis**

Paul are you going to give your email address or you just want it all to go to Will?

**Paul Miller**

Have it go to Will. I got plenty of people to reach out to me.

**Peter Margaritis**

So, if you want to get a hold of Paul, send it to Will.

**Paul Miller**

Will's my agent.

**Will Hill**

My side gig. Yeah, as you said, you know, Business by Design. We do Pulse of the Podcasts or Pulse of the Practice. You know, it's whatever, if people want to reach out, reach out to Will. He's got all the smart answers.

**Peter Margaritis**

Well, guys, thank you so very much. I thoroughly enjoyed the time that we spent, and I look forward to someday maybe our paths actually cross live and in person, and we can maybe have a Sprite or Fresca. Thanks guys, I want to thank Will and Paul for the time in discussing relationship building, and for the great laughs we had. To conclude with an improv quote, that is fitting for this interview. "React, honestly and truthfully." Stay safe out there.