

S4E45 Kon Apostolopoulos

SPEAKERS

Kon Apostolopoulos, Peter Margaritis

Peter Margaritis

Hey, welcome back, everybody. My guest today, I've met this gentleman in a very unique way. A friend of mine, Jeff Koziatek, has a podcast called Breakthrough Moments. And this gentleman was being, was interviewed by Jeff, and the title of the interview is, 'It's not about you,' which immediately caught my eye. That was a second day the first thing that caught my eye was his name, Kon Apostolopoulos. And that my friends is a Greek Name. So, I had to meet this gentleman, and Kon, thank you so very much for taking time out to have this conversation with me.

Kon Apostolopoulos

Oh, Peter, it's my pleasure. I've been looking forward to this.

Peter Margaritis

So, I missed something when we initially talked about two weeks ago. I was focusing on your bio and I did skim your LinkedIn page, but didn't read it deeply as preparing for this interview. There was something that popped out at me that just caught my eye. And it said, as you transition into what you were doing now, you're transitioning out of a successful career in the performing arts, stage and tv, can you share with the audience what...?

Kon Apostolopoulos

Oh, wow, that's going...that's going away back now, Peter, but it's, it's probably some of the happiest times of my life growing up. For anybody that's been around Greek people, especially Greeks that living abroad, like here in the US. It's one thing that we pride ourselves in, we pride ourselves with maintaining our connection with our heritage, and, you know, keeping connected to the cultural elements, the religious elements of our background. So, like many young Greeks, growing up abroad, my parents put me in a situation where culturally they sent me off to learn Greek dancing and learn how to perform at the various Greek festivals. Now, little did they know that that would kind of trigger the bug inside me, and I would find a lot of joy and passion. And that passion kind of blossomed over the years and it kind of became a bigger fire and eventually got me to the point where in my college years I studied performing arts as a teacher but also performing arts and I worked in the business for a decade, on as you mentioned, stage and TV performances. And that was one of the biggest, biggest joys of my life in the sense that I was able to convert my passion into my profession, and really enjoy that.

Peter Margaritis

So, give me an example of what what did you do the performing arts on stage, Were you, were you in plays? Were you doing Greek theater?

Kon Apostolopoulos

So, it's a lot of different things. But I studied, I actually studied under some of the probably some of the best teachers of ballet in the world. Now, looking at me now you probably wouldn't believe that, but I was classically trained as a dancer. And I had the opportunity to perform in probably some of the better or best programs in theaters in Greece. On TV, two regular TV Shows a week, plus additional work that we were able to do for different programs, special events. It was a golden age, if you will, for dancing during those years growing up for me in the late 80s, early 90s.

Peter Margaritis

So, that's very interesting. And you transitioned into this new world of yours, but I love how you come across and you say it's not about you. How many times leaders think it's all about them. And we see this eagle leadership still play out today. What's your view as it relates to the phrase it's not about you?

Kon Apostolopoulos

Well, culturally and the way that I was brought up, I watched my parents very, very much dedicate themselves to raising a family. Everything that they did, had a purpose and that purpose was to make sure that their kids had every opportunity perhaps that they didn't have, and to help the next generation be better off than they were. So, that's kind of in our DNA, if you will, and at least my grown up there was very much in my DNA. So, when I was in a situation and I had the opportunity to be in leadership roles, it became a natural progression of my leadership style to embrace that servant leadership model, if you will. To make sure that from my perspective, I was able to attract and hire the best people, train them in a smart way. And then managing became easy because my leadership style was such where I pointed them in the right direction. If I had done everything that I can, I hired the smart people that I thought I did, then just pointing them in the right direction and getting the heck out of their way was probably one of the best things that I could do. And making sure that I was able to support them. But even throughout this whole process throughout the years that I've been working, everything spanning from Fortune 100 companies, all the way down to privately held organizations and franchise operations down to smaller operations. And now, in my own consulting practice, it's been always about those we serve. The people in our sphere, whether they be customers, employees, whether they be the communities that we serve. It's about them. It's not about us. And as the saying goes, the way to reach your goals is to help enough people reach theirs.

Peter Margaritis

Wow, what a, what a wonderful quote. And you had to be before your time with the servant leadership. I mean, you're not 25. You were, you were in organizations that embrace eagle leadership, I'm making this assumption and that has to be a part of you because you know, another way that was more collaborative, more embracing, than just something that's very abrasive.

Kon Apostolopoulos

That very much so because again, it's growing up in Greece. It's a very much the cultural norm, at least during those years that I grew up, where it is about the collective. It is much more about the unit, about the family unit, about the community. So, much of that is passed on to us. And that again, like I said, becomes a natural extension of our style. Granted, there are different ways of leading, and we can, we

can embrace different styles and different situations. We're all capable of doing that. But what comes naturally to me is that focus on servant leadership is my focus on providing value to those around me, to helping those around me.

Peter Margaritis

What was the something play out in our culture right now of if you're not using servant leadership, and you're still demanding and telling your employees what to do and how to do it. We've got this new one called the Great Resignation happening all around us. And it goes to the point that, you know, we're not asking our people what they want. We told them they could never work at home. And all of a sudden, we found that we can work at home. We found that we can be even more productive at home. However, now that things are easing up. This is verified by a gentleman, Gleb Tsipursky, who I interviewed just recently. He is a disaster expert. Talking about this that Jamie Dimon, basically said, "I don't care, people coming back into the office." And they're not going into his office. They're going to their home office, and getting jobs elsewhere. And if you don't, if leaders don't start taking this approach of surveying they're people. Asking them what they want, what they need. People are going to just walk out. And you would agree, the business that we all are in are in the people business.

Kon Apostolopoulos

Very much so, very much so. And this is something a particular topic that I've been studying for a while now and supporting my clients in how to future proof their businesses to the best degree in order to curb this exodus. Curb this great resignation, this September shuffle that we've been experiencing over the last month or so. And in many ways, there are opportunities for us to make a difference but it all starts with a partnership model. Partnership between organizational leadership, the team members, and working together to help each other find what they're looking for in their job. Now, this kind of model of remote working is not new. I mean 20 More than 20 years ago when I was working on a special project, we looked at how can we make that a viable process. And at the time I was supporting a call center operation and anybody that can imagine a call center, you can imagine those, you know, those cube farms and having agents upon agents in rows upon rows, etc etc. And we looked at the model at the time and it made financial sense to let people go work from home. The numbers were there, but the two main factors that were inhibiting that were one was the technology at the time. It hadn't caught up to us like the way we are now. But the second was trust from leadership. Trust from management. And those two factors came to play now with the pandemic. And when you look at the situation that we dealt with, well, technology was finally here. I mean, look at us now. We were practically in the same room talking to each other. The technology is there. And the trust wasn't necessarily a desired choice. It was a necessity. But as you said, what came out of that is people proved they can be at least as productive as they are in the office when they're working from home remotely under the right circumstances. So, that plays into it. But I want to take it one step further, Peter, you mentioned something else that I think is important. And I don't want people to misunderstand when I say servant leadership, there's an evolutionary piece of that and it's all about making sure that we do our part to serve those that we need to. Those that we are there to support, but it's also about providing direction. So, there's always a balance that we have to strike. In too many cases, whether it's the way that the power from an employment cycle goes. Sometimes it shifts towards the employer, or sometimes it shifts towards the employees, like it is now. And that power struggle, that power shift is never too healthy when it goes to the extremes. And right now what we're dealing with is people don't

know what to do. There are, there are leaders that I support that I coach right now that are really at a loss because their old playbook isn't isn't helping them right now. They're trying to figure out what to do. Well, when we look at this, that swing, that balance between the two pieces, you look at that and say okay, it creates almost a paradox. On one hand leaders need to be empathetic, I mean, even the most recent Forbes and, you know, Harvard Business Review articles point that out. That empathetic leadership seems to be the new buzzword.

Peter Margaritis

Right.

Kon Apostolopoulos

It seems to be the new thing that everybody's seeking. Everybody wants a leader that is empathetic, understanding. Somebody who can walk in their shoes. And that's an evolution of our leadership model. It's a wonderful thing. But to me, I caution people because I also know that as somebody who had, you know, leaders above me and and people that I supported as a leader of theirs. I can tell you for a fact that people also look for leadership. They also look for tough love. They want boundaries in order to feel safe. And from that perspective, that creates in itself, what we call the leadership paradox. Empathy on one end, tough love on the other. Those things need to come together and leaders nowadays cannot afford to be binary on one end of the spectrum or the other. They need to be able to synthesize both of those things and come together and embrace that paradox.

Peter Margaritis

That's an interesting paradox, and I know we touched on it in our previous conversation, but how do you get someone to even who's over in the tough love to then begin to think that I need to move towards the empathetic side? Or at least culture to become more vulnerable in my leadership style and have that balance there?

Kon Apostolopoulos

Well, part of it is necessity. I mean, quite honestly, right now when people are leaving in droves from your operation, you can't afford but stand up and pay attention. So, it's forcing leaders to stand up and pay attention to this and look at and say, Okay, what do we need to do differently? So, when people turn around and say, Look, you're not hearing me. You're not understanding where I'm at. That's important piece. Let's go a little bit back. A few months back into this past year that we kind of all had a very different experience with. When people were sent home because operations didn't have a choice, they had to trust people. Well, Gallup did their studies about employee engagement, and at the beginning of the year, I believe it was April or May, they recorded their highest engagement score in a very, very long time. Probably since the beginning since they started doing this. And it was up at 38%, 38% engagement. Now, part of that is because people really didn't have anything else to do so they were kind of focused on their work. On the other hand, they were also very concerned about whether they will have a job. So, they tried to show the value that they could bring. Those two motivating factors, increased engagement to record highs. Now, fast forward to November of last year, and all of a sudden that number is plummeted down to 31% engagement, which was one of the lowest scores that Gallup has recorded. Why? Because over that time, pandemic fatigue set in. That prolonged, languishing, feeling stepped in, and leaders that were not engaging their people in the right way that we're not

empathetic. And also at the same time showing tough love. They struggled. Their people started disassociating with the rest of it, with the rest of the operation. Started distancing themselves from the team. But those people that were able to connect and show empathy and understand that you know what, Suzy is sitting there at the kitchen table next to a fifth grader and her three year old, trying to pound out that project that you gave her and she's trying to be a project manager. She's trying to be Mom. She's trying to be daycare. She's trying to be a short order cook, and chances are she's trying to be the cleaning lady in between that as well. So, she has a lot of hats to wear. If you can't understand that different people have different circumstances that they're challenged with at home, then you may not deserve to be a leader. But on the other hand, you also have to balance that out and say, you know what, hey, Susie, let's reprioritize your workload. This is not the normal. It's not going to be forever. So, let's take a look at what it really means that we need to get done. What is it that we really have to get done as a priority? And then I really don't want you to work until 2am because you put the kids to bed at 10 and now you're trying to get your work day in. Because you're still gonna have to get up at six o'clock the next morning to start your day again. And when this goes on and on and on day after day, week after week, month after month, that gets very old very fast, and Susie's gonna get burnt out. And now that's why we are, the reason why we are where we are and people are saying I'm burnt out. If you didn't treat me very well, I'm looking for my next career move now the things that get better.

Peter Margaritis

The thing that I find interesting about this is that if we get 38% of our workforce that are engaged, I can do the maths, and that's basically saying 62% of the workforce might engaged. Which is I just my jaw hits the floor. But then again, I was also part of that 62% in a couple of previous employers. And has any of that been addressed like okay, we got 38% engagement. Now, we're down to 31%, that's 69%. But you said 38% was one of the highest. Well, I think we had a bigger issue here.

Kon Apostolopoulos

We do, and that's a bigger symptom of a lasting problem that we have. The companies that are truly excelling when you see those lists of top 100 places to work. Those places are excelling because their people are happy. They've found a common cause between themselves and their employers, their team members, and they are all pulling in the same direction. The work that I've been able to do, the breakthrough results I've been able to get with my clients is because we're making that shift. It's not just about making sure you have people that can do the job. It's about having people that will do the job and are committed to that. Those are two different things, Peter, when you look at that, and employers have gone too long was saying you know what, hey, I give you a paycheck that should make you happy. This generation coming in, you know it as well as I do, that will not pass. That will not fly. These younger professionals that are coming in now and dominating the workplace right now want to have a purpose. They want something that's going to get them up in the morning they can get excited about, and if it's not your business, it's going to be a different one. And if it's not somebody else's business, it's going to be their own. And that's the part now that we're seeing the explosion in the gig economy, in entrepreneurs. The highest numbers that we've recorded in a very, very long time again. I mean, these extremes that we're seeing, are people trying to find their place where they fit in. They know there is no such thing as this 35 years in the same business and here's your golden watch and here's your going away party. They've watched their father, their mother, their grandparents, get let go during different

periods of time. Without a blink. How many companies have these big companies furloughed 1000s of people without even thinking about it twice?

Peter Margaritis

Right.

Kon Apostolopoulos

You think just because you opened your doors that all of a sudden gonna line up?

Peter Margaritis

Yeah, they do. But they don't. Right. Right. Yeah. I shared a story with you that, you know, the accounting profession when went to the recession, they were laying off people right left. Now, in public accounting...usually, if you leave public accounting and go to work in industry, there's a very small chance that you'll ever go back to public accounting. And there's only a few of them who have done that. And if the partnership weren't even considering so let's take a pay cut. Let's do something that keeps the people here. Once they leave. They're never gonna come back. Then what's their strategy.

Kon Apostolopoulos

Because the same thing applies to your employees that applies to your customers. It costs you much less keep them happy then to go out and find new ones. This concept of churn and burn and going through cycles of employees just because you think there's, there's an infinite amount of their people wanting to work for you. That doesn't exist anymore. That doesn't exist. It makes much more sense to keep your people happy and to start raising that 31-35-38% number up. The companies that I work with are pushing boundaries were much higher percentage of their people are truly engaged. Why? Because they found a way to meet their goals, their aspirations within the company, because they have a shared goal with a company. They believe in the purpose and the mission, and they are able to move forward together hand in hand, because the company supports their goals, and they support the company's goals. And together they can accomplish a lot more than by themselves.

Peter Margaritis

So, are you familiar with the term psychological safety?

Kon Apostolopoulos

Very much so, yeah.

Peter Margaritis

And this, maybe you can explain this to the audience, that is something that the shared goal is part of the status of these companies that people want to go to work for? The concept of psychological safety?

Kon Apostolopoulos

Yes, and that's a precursor to much of this partnership that we've been talking about. If you don't feel comfortable being open and sharing your thoughts, your ideas, your fears, your desires, with the people that you work with. If you don't feel that psychological safety and you're constantly looking over your shoulder, how are you going to excel in any kind of environment? That's toxic. That's a war zone. That's

PTSD day in and day out. That's why you see the absenteeism. That's why you see people calling in sick all the time. They have higher rates of absenteeism and illness. People don't want to be there and if they have to be there, it manifests in so many different ways. And even when they try their best, it comes out in one way or the other, Peter.

Peter Margaritis

I've been in a number of organizations like that. It's, "Oh God, here he goes again. What is he gonna say this time?" You asked me my thoughts. They just don't align with other people at times because we all think differently. But that was 'poo-pooed' on.

Kon Apostolopoulos

But safety, psychological and physical safety are at the foundation at the base of the pyramid of needs. If you are looking at it the same. I wrote an article not too long ago, and it's all about really re-engaging your workforce, and looking at it through the eyes of Maslow, Abraham Maslow. Abraham Maslow being one of the fathers of motivation. Where he talked about his pyramid or his hierarchy of needs. And at the base of that is truly that safety. If you're in an environment where you don't feel safe physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, however you want to put it. If you don't feel safe from our perspective, you will not perform. You will not be able to come because you are dreading every minute you're in that environment. No, no but but that's it. That's the first thing I mean, take a look at now companies want what their people to come back into the office. Let's say Jamie Dimons of the world want people I don't care what you're doing, just come back into the office, okay. If you cannot, if you cannot show me that this place is safe to my satisfaction, I'm not coming in. And if you force me to come in, I will resign because you know what, down the street, there's a little boutique operation that will hire me at a higher rate. And now I can align my goals with those guys. Guess what, I can leave Silicon Valley where I don't feel comfortable coming into this big office that you have and paying this ridiculous amounts that live in the city. I can move to Idaho and have 40 acres and a mule and now all of a sudden, I'm paying much less for all of that than I did for it for a one bedroom in the city.

Peter Margaritis

Go ahead, I didn't mean to... And you got a mule.

Kon Apostolopoulos

And these are the things of people, people have had time to look at the quality of life Peter. People have had time to look at that and say, "You know what? This is important to me." And again, I mean, I don't mean to belittle that point, but many people that 40 acres and a mule is their entire livelihood. You look at that said that's my dream that I aspire to. A lot of people are looking at that very differently. Now granted, that's not for everybody. There are still plenty of people that want to live in the city, that want to engage that way. But here's the point, a hybrid workplace the workplace of tomorrow, the next normal, as I call it, is not a little bit of this and a little bit of that patched together. It's a new way of looking at things. It's realizing that instead of worrying about where you perform the work, or even to some degree, how you perform the work. It's about what you perform. Are you getting the results that I need you to get? And are you doing it for the right reasons? The why behind it. Because once you start looking at that that way, then you remove all of these artificial restrictions. We never thought people could work from home this productively. Well, here they did. We never thought that we'd be able to be

in the same room and increase our reach to people all over the globe. Here we are. I mean all of a sudden my business has doubled over this past 18 months because people are seeking answers. They're looking for a new playbook. And helping them find that, find what works for them and find what works for their teams is something that makes a big difference. That's how I've been serving them. That's my servant leadership in this new world.

Peter Margaritis

To get to that point. You said it earlier, one of the key ingredients is trust and building the trust the people that you hire, which goes even deeper than you have to look at your hiring process and not just putting the mirror underneath their nose, if they fog it up, then they're hired. It's... a friend of mine... She wrote a book, Stop Knocking on My Door. It was an HR book. And she shared the story that she helped one of her clients reengineer the hiring process. They came up with their values, the mission statement, all that stuff, and posted on the website. And the first part of the process was a phone interview and have them read that. And have that candidate simulate, or communicate how they would fit into that culture. And if they couldn't, no second interview. If they could, then created the second interview but they took the time in hiring the right people. Too many times, we hire too fast and fire too slow.

Kon Apostolopoulos

And that's absolutely true. And that's why the mantra that I have for my organization for Fresh Biz Solutions, when I work with clients is hire hard, train smart, manage easy. If you're gonna make people jump through hoops, if you've got to be picky, be picky before you bring them on board. That's where you need to be picky. Are they a cultural fit? Remember, can they do the job? Will they do the job? And then use your resources to train smartly get people up to speed and then by all means leading the managing their work becomes a lot easier.

Peter Margaritis

Invest into your people and invest in a lot of different ways, but invest in their learning.

Kon Apostolopoulos

Yeah.

Peter Margaritis

Providing those resources that to help them grow.

Kon Apostolopoulos

Yeah, we go back to the differentiator between a lot of the high performing companies and the old so and so companies are the ones that are struggling right now, Peter. I mean, everybody talks about all my people are, our people, our biggest asset. Well, the way you treat them you don't treat them like an asset you treat them like an..... And that's the problem right now and you look at it you say okay, if you truly value them, then invest in them. Encourage them. Build them up. Because you know what, when you are able to develop your talent, this is a big part of what I'm called to do, to create that pipeline of leaders ready to execute the plan. Because otherwise your strategic plan is just a paper exercise. It's not even worth the paper that it's written on. It's just something that you noted down and put up on the

wall or in some fancy binder. If you don't have the horses to run that race, if you don't have the people to execute, you've got nothing.

Peter Margaritis

Absolutely nothing. But it's amazing to me that they do think to have something. It's almost like this mirage that they see. That's not real.

Kon Apostolopoulos

Right. It's a virtual reality. It's not real. It's in their mind, but their mind sometimes cannot separate the virtual from the factual. And that's a part of it just because I wrote it down in a binder and I printed it off on fancy paper. It means absolutely nothing. Because until your people are able to execute that plan. It's not real. It doesn't mean anything to anybody.

Peter Margaritis

Except for that leader who thinks that that is the greatest idea. And he's basically saying that the ego is I can't pay them to get in the way.

Kon Apostolopoulos

Right. And there's a Japanese saying that fits perfectly under the circumstances. I mean, you look at that and so you said you know what? Vision without action is daydreaming. Action without vision, on the other hand, is a nightmare. And that's the part where, again, we have to balance both. We need a visionary leadership to create the proper plan, but you still need the people to execute it. Because even those at the top are still people. They're still the talent that the organization has. Their role is to set the course. But it's also their role to make sure that the people, that people that are going to execute this know without a doubt what they're trying to do and why.

Peter Margaritis

And you said it earlier, and get out of their way and let them do it. Nobody likes, I don't like to micromanaged. Nobody really likes to be micromanaged, because it's that whole lack of trust. Get out of the way. Let them do and when they fail because they will at times or stumble and make a mistake. You don't beat them up for it. That shouldn't be punitive.

Kon Apostolopoulos

No, because you can't change that. And as long as you take the learning from that, it's not a missed opportunity. It's something that was just an expensive lesson at times, and that's okay, because that's part of the growing process. Again, as a leader, you need to balance it at all times. Again, the paradox. Sometimes you need to provide more direction and keep the reins a little tighter. And sometimes you need to allow people to fly and get out of their way totally. But again, it's all about reading the situation. How's this person relative to the task I'm asking them to do? I would never hand the keys over to over \$45-50,000 brand new vehicle to my 16 year old nephew that just got his permit. That would be irresponsible. So, you better believe I'm going to micromanage that issue. So, from that perspective, there are times where you also need to be responsible enough to have that tough love. Remember that piece? To set those boundaries and make sure that what you're doing is you're not setting your people up for failure. You're giving them enough that they can learn, they can stretch, they can grow. But within

that framework of somewhat of a safety net where you can intervene if you need to, until they're ready to fly in their own.

Peter Margaritis

Right and that doesn't happen overnight. That takes time. That's called experience and going through that journey which I think a lot of people really don't like that are going through that journey because a lot of the mistakes. Management looks as punitive. Versus you know, someone told me that fail is an acronym, first attempt to learn,

Kon Apostolopoulos

Correct, right.

Peter Margaritis

That's the difference.

Kon Apostolopoulos

It is. And to me, I mean, even whether you're an entrepreneurial or you're working within an organization, I mean, a failure is back mechanism. In my mind, it's not the opposite of success. It's on the way to success. It's a place along the way. We said okay, I'm not there yet. I'm not at that point yet. So, this didn't work. Okay, what's going to get it to work? But too many times management...old school management looks for blame when they focus on the person rather than the issue. And too many times we have systemic issues that don't allow good performance to excel. When you look at it. I mean, the old saying, again, you put a good person in a bad system, the system will win every time.

Peter Margaritis

Right. It's also this to that unconscious bias that somebody might have on. You just screwed this whole thing up. And what that hangs with that person and they can't get past that and that person is always perceived in that way. When this... everybody makes a mistake and just accept that. And let's move forward and go in the right direction.

Kon Apostolopoulos

Right. And how did they do with that mistake? How did they respond to that mistake? Well, you and I talked about it last time. Part of the reason why I go by the moniker Coach Kon. It's not just because I coach executives because I coach kids. And I coach soccer for kids at a young age and some of them are just starting out in their sports careers and learning and just trying to stay out of trouble. And some of these kids are future Olympians. So, in many ways, I've got experience with working at all these different levels, you know what they have in common? The way that we teach them throughout the week, we put them under situations where we push them to the failure point. Why? Because it's the Learning Zone. It's the place where we want to safely allow them to test their boundaries and try something new without the fear of being punished. But we separate that learning zone during the weekend practices from the performance zone, which is the game on Saturday where we really keep score. But because we've done all the work during the week, then on Saturdays when the game is played we up the expectations. That's not the time for me to yell at the kid why they made a mistake and try to correct them from across the field and embarrass them. No. That's the time for me to make

sure that they are set up for success and if they make a mistake, then we carry that forward to the learning of next week. But that's where coaches at all levels of sports for business that's what they explore good leaders explore that peace and stand the difference between the Learning Zone and the performance zone.

Peter Margaritis

I love that. Now, here is the learning zone. And I've subscribed to that, and I've failed a lot. But I was raised by a father who did not... failure was a mistake. It was never, never good. And it took me a long time to get past that. And I might as I was raising, raising my son even his early years, I wanted him to fail. He said Dad, I want to ask this girl out, but I'm afraid to do it. Well, go ask her out. Well, she might say no. Well, she might say yes. He came home, said she said no. Okay, well, go ask another girl out. But she's gonna say no. You don't know. She might say yes. Well, strike two. She said no. But that third time, he came home all happy she said yes. And he got a little bit too excited. I think he thought he was gonna be a player or something. He was Mr. Casanova. I said, Dude, you'll find out over time. But yeah, but you have to fail in order to learn in order to figure it out, in order to succeed.

Kon Apostolopoulos

Exactly and that's how we build the resilience. If we never experienced the failure point, what joy is there and succeeding. If we never feel the contrast... life is lived in the contrast. That's the piece that people don't understand. I mean, how many people are now rejoicing because they can get outside? How many people are rejoicing when they can be in an environment where they don't have to wear a mask? How many people are rejoicing that they can actually hug their loved ones? And those are the things that life, life is truly lived and appreciated in those contrasts. Enough, you know, if we have enough sadness in our lives, just enough, we appreciate the happy moments that much more. Yeah. That's the part that people don't understand. We live in an environment of toxic happiness, that we need to have some sort of a perfection thing going on that, you know, God help us if we actually have a down moment or we don't feel well or, or we put ourselves out on social media in a less than perfect way. That is created such an artificial reality. Again, going back to that artificial reality that lives in somebody's head. And you look at that and you say what a distorted view of things. And that's not real. That's not real.

Peter Margaritis

Yeah, it's what would other people think? What other people say? I don't care what other people think, what other people say. I'm gonna be myself, and get thinking like, I don't want to... I'm not gonna live up to the Joneses or whoever. I'm gonna live up to my standards. But when you're talking about that virtual...that reality, it's like okay, it's like a Facebook syndrome. Everybody on Facebook, it's just that all The Stepford houses and everybody...

Kon Apostolopoulos

The perfect house, the perfect car, the perfect vacation, the perfect spouse, the perfect kids. That's not real. Nobody believes that stuff. Yet, we're all out there trying to pretend that it's real. But that's why I applaud you, Pete. I mean, all of your episodes, the episodes that I've listened to along the way, and I will continue to listen to the future. I know that they are authentically you. And because you are yourself. When you give yourself permission to be yourself and be authentic, you're giving me on the

other side of this of this screen, the permission to be myself to be less than perfect. But it is my authentic...Yeah.

Peter Margaritis

And you let me be less than perfect when we started this podcast, because I did something today I haven't done in a very long time. We started the interview and we're talking, and out of the corner of my eye it's said recording paused. I went, "Oh no!" We had to start over. Take Two! Good thing he was in the performing arts. So, I we could talk for hours and we will but as we wrap up, what's the one piece of advice you'd give people in my audience about this conversation that we have, that we've had?

Kon Apostolopoulos

I would say that you know, and it's a chapter within our book, Seven Keys to Navigating a Crisis. And it's the chapter at the end that we close the book with about kindness. And that's something that's sorely missing right now from our world in many ways. It's, it's on it's a major display, but it seems like it's it's an outlier. We need more of that and we need to be kind or some foremost to ourselves through self-care, which is our first key. But self-care is kindness to ourselves. And then beyond that, try to be kind to those around you, to the ones that you care about in your family. Beyond that in your neighborhood, beyond that others around you. If you're a business, kindness applies to you just as much. Be kind to your employees to your people. Be kind to your customers. Be kind to the communities that you reside in and you serve. That kindness goes a long way because guess what, the minute you show kindness to one person, you get something back because the receiver of of the kindness gets something out of this, but the giver of the kindness gets something so much more. And that's something we all need right now.

Peter Margaritis

That was perfect. And I'm glad that you brought that up, Kon. It's been an absolute pleasure. I can't wait... if you have to get to Columbus, Ohio, please let me know and but there's probably a better opportunity getting out to Denver, Colorado, then you come to Columbus, Ohio. We will keep in touch. I promise you that, and it's been pleasure having these conversations with you. I look forward to more. Thank you so very much. And it's October so starting to get ready for the holidays.

Kon Apostolopoulos

It is. It's that time of the season, and, you know, we broke the mold you and I today. I don't know if you realize that. But normally they say when two Greeks get together they open a restaurant. Now, in our case, we did a podcast

Peter Margaritis

Woah, well, you put it out in the universe. We may have to get a restaurant together!

Kon Apostolopoulos

Why not? Hey, we're talking about servant leadership. Let's serve up some good Greek food, brother!

Peter Margaritis

That's right. I'm right there with you. Actually, I made a batch of homemade Youvarkia soup that I am going to dive into this evening for dinner.

Kon Apostolopoulos

Perfect. Perfect for the season. Everybody should look that one up.

Peter Margaritis

Yeah. Well, thank you so very much and I can't wait to our paths cross soon. I want to thank Kon for his time in discussing all things, leadership and the great resignation of 2021. There are plenty of nuggets to pick up throughout this interview to start applying them today. Now, I'm going to conclude with an Improv quote that has concluded over the last three or four episodes I've interviewed because they'll it means the same especially with dealing with all this commotion and the exodus of people in the great resignation of 2021. And that quote is "Improv takes place in the present tense." Thank you.