

Dan Rockwell: I'm really not passionate about leadership development for the sake of leadership development. I'm into this because I love followers and so many followers' lives have been ruined or made miserable by crappy leaders that ... It's so funny, right? My drive is really about making organizational life exceptional for followers, and the way to do that is to work with leaders and make leaders, help leaders become the best they can be.

Robert Glazer: Welcome to Elevate, a podcast about achievement, personal growth, and pushing limits in leadership and life. I'm Robert Glazer and I chat with world-class performers who have committed to elevating their own life, pushing the limits of their capacity and helping others to do the same.

Welcome to The Elevate Podcast. Our quote for today is from Simon Sinek and it is, "Leadership is a way of thinking, a way of acting, and most importantly, a way of communicating." Our guest today, Dan Rockwell is one of the best thinkers, speakers, and writers on leadership. He's an award winning leadership coach, former business owner, and deliverer of hundreds of presentations on leadership to organizations around the world. He's also the creator of the Leadership Freak blog, the number one most shared leadership blog on the internet. Dan, welcome. I'm excited to have you join us on The Elevate Podcast.

Dan Rockwell: Thanks Bob. It's a pleasure to be with you.

Robert Glazer: So today, you're best known as an expert on leadership, but I'm guessing didn't start that way. How did your career start out?

Dan Rockwell: I don't know about career. I mean, I'm a Maine boy originally, so I was born and brought up in Maine on a dairy farm, which is the worst kind of farm you could possibly be brought up on, because you have to milk cows twice a day.

I tell people, "You know everything you really need to know about me when you hear that I was born in Maine, brought up on a dairy farm."

Robert Glazer: Yeah, well you learned hard work, maybe more management than leadership.

Dan Rockwell: Yeah, I did learn how to work and that's been just part of my life, I believe in it. So I work harder than I need to and I'm glad to, I enjoy it.

Robert Glazer: So what was your first job?

Dan Rockwell: You know it's funny, first job, so here I am up in Maine and I got hired by another dairy farmer to help him take care of his herd. So we had our own farm and before I would go to school, high school in the mornings, I would go over and help this other dairy farmer too, or if that is not nuts, I don't know what is.

Robert Glazer: Then somehow at the age of 16, I read you gave your first presentation on stage. I'd be curious to hear what it was about and if you knew then that you really wanted to become a speaker?

Dan Rockwell: I have seen myself in front of crowds since I was about 13 and I have no idea where that comes from. My dad was a quiet introvert. My mom was not a ... she was much more vocal, but not in front of people as a speaker. But honestly, I could close my eyes before I'd go to sleep at night, at 13 years old, and I could see myself on the platform in front of large crowds. I have no real explanation where that comes from except maybe I was born with it, I don't know.

The first presentation I gave was a high school assembly and in some ways it was a colossal failure and another ways, at least I got it under my belt. It was about half as long as it was supposed to be and some of the content was a little off base but ... and I was nervous, don't get me wrong, it's funny isn't it? You like to do sometimes what makes you nervous or you're also scared about it. I still am nervous about public speaking, but apparently I have enough ego, or drive, or whatever it is to enjoy also being up in front of people.

Robert Glazer: Well if you're nervous then it's probably the opposite. I think people who aren't nervous are probably overconfident and people are nervous, prepare and still take it seriously.

Dan Rockwell: Well, I have enough nerves to really prepare, I'll tell you that.

Robert Glazer: That is good. So I'm curious, did you have any exposure to really positive leadership mentors or ... I found with a lot of people who've made leadership the hallmark of their career and this is true a little bit for me, particularly negative experiences where you said, "Oh there's got to be a better way then and what this person's doing."

Dan Rockwell: High school sports, I think was important. Little league was important for me. Coaches who took an interest in me and pushed me, pressed me, encouraged me. I really saw that and I think that's it. I was also brought up in church and you see a dynamic speaker and that has some sort of interest as well.

Robert Glazer: So what was your first real business experience, not pedaling stuff in the, in the backyard, but when did you really get a chance outside of sports to dive into leadership?

Dan Rockwell: I started doing contracting when we moved to Long Island. We moved to Long Island from Maine and I started doing contracting. So at that stage, you're dealing with employees and subcontractors and customers and all of that kind of thing. Being brought up on a farm, you're self-reliant, you always do what you need to do. So I learned a lot and we built things and all that. So it was natural for me to start doing renovations and bathrooms and kitchens and those types of things. So that's where some of my business experience came in.

After that I went to work for the local Penn State affiliate and I worked there for like 15 years and that was not my own business but at that stage, I was dealing with a lot of businesses and doing training for them and setting up training and hiring faculty and all those kinds of things. So I've been involved in really the business world for 30 years, probably.

Robert Glazer: What's your definition of great leadership?

Dan Rockwell: You to go with Maxwell, I think and leadership is influence, but you have to also include this idea of identity. So I think it's a Frances Hesselbein who says, "Leadership is a matter of how to be, not how to do." So it's not simply setting out to go influence people, but to understand that who we are is the channel through which we are influencing the people around us. It was a Jim Parker, who was the CEO of Southwest Airlines during 9/11 who, when I asked him, "What's your favorite word of advice to young leaders and managers?" He said, "Be yourself." Now that's one of the most underwhelming bits of advice I think I'd ever received but as you think about it, you realize that really the essence of our influence comes from who we are and maybe even who we aspire to be.

Robert Glazer: Well, that's an interesting point and I'll transition to something I want to talk about, which is why do you think leaders have such a hard time being authentic and saying what they feel and doing what they think and and getting those things in congruence versus really believing one thing and saying or doing another?

Dan Rockwell: Yeah. So people pleasing is I think, something that many of us are either blessed with or afflicted with. A little bit of people pleasing goes a long way. It's important to build good relationships, care for people, want to make people happy, want to make your customers happy. All those things are important. But boy, that tips over and let's face it, you go to first grade, what do you want to do? You want to please your teacher. Before you go to first grade, you want to please your parents and afterwards too, then you get your first job, you want to please your boss and it's just brought up in us. I honestly believe this, a real part of the journey of life is coming to define ourselves by who we are, instead of who other people expect us to be.

So I think we struggle with authenticity because we're people pleasers and then of course, there's just a lot of pressure in leadership. You've got the customers who want this and you've got board members who want this and employees who are ... they're pulling this way and that's why when Jim Parker said, "Be yourself," I came to realize that if you aren't settled in who you are, you're going to be pulled this way, you're going to be pulled that way one minute and somebody says this and, "Oh that's a great idea." In the afternoon somebody says something else and boom, you're pulled in the other direction because you're not settled on your own personal values and what your life is all about.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. I've written a lot recently about how I think a lot of these companies have these fake core values on the wall out of Dilbert or the Office Space or any of

the things that ... "We all have integrity in this and we get along and we try our best." My take is that like real core values in a company should have a differentiated point of view. It should attract some people and turn some people off. I wonder, is it the same for leadership? I mean, I've had to really learn to stop trying to make everyone happy and I've been really pushing that in our company too because I've seen some of our emerging leaders say, "Oh, we got some pushback here," or, "Oh we got some here," and feedback is great, but I can see them starting to try to please everyone, which I think gets you into no man's land versus having not necessarily people against you, but a bunch of people who are really passionately with you and others who aren't so excited and want to go elsewhere.

Dan Rockwell: That's the thing, isn't it? If you're going to be who you are and have strong core values, then you have to be willing to say no to others. I've just been reading about Chick-fil-A, fascinating company, kind of controversial in some situations. They close on Sundays, that's part of their core value. They are the most profitable fast food chain in the world and it's nuts but see, part of what's going on is they know who they are and you know who they are. For me, for example, it took a long time, but I finally realized, I'm really not passionate about leadership development for the sake of leadership development. I'm into this because I love followers and so many followers' lives have been ruined or made miserable by crappy leaders. It's so funny, right? My drive is really about making organizational life exceptional for followers, and the way to do that is to work with leaders and make leaders, help leaders become the best they can be.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. One of my favorite stories, I think also about Southwest, and if anyone hasn't read the book on Nuts! Which is the biography of Southwest, it's really a great read if you want to see how ... Herb Kelleher is just one of my heroes and how they live their values but there's a story where this customer wrote to Herb like four times and said, "I hate your plastic tickets. I hate waiting in line. I hate the uncertainty." He finally wrote a letter back and said, "Dear Mary, thank you for your notes. Really sounds like another airline would be a better choice for you." So, Southwest has a differentiated point of view, which is if you want low fares and you want to be on time and you want people who are friendly, here are the sacrifices and they're apologetic about that in the same way that Ikea is unapologetic about disposable furniture. It's not meant to last, it's fast fashion.

It seems that people and these brands that can just lean into that do so much better than the ones that are worried about offending or checking off the box. So the example that someone gave when they were telling that Kelleher story was, so imagine that person was ... and this was Francis Frei was talking about this, Southwest in a different context. Imagine that person, who writes to Southwest about all the things they hates about ... husband is on the board or wife is on the board and they send that letter and then that letter gets to the board and then it goes to Southwest. Like, "Look, you guys need to board people faster and all that stuff." And it was just like, "No, that's the worst thing that could happen," would be to put pressure on them to change what they actually are happy about being.

Dan Rockwell: So someone said, I don't know where this comes from exactly, but I remembered it. That part of one of the things, that you could say here at Southwest Airlines from a customer who wants the airline to change, is they might get a note that says, "We'll miss you."

Robert Glazer: Yeah, exactly. Right. I and here's what's interesting, and I've said this to a lot of people. So when anyone ever says, "Who is the leader that you admire the most? Kind of role model?" One of my only regrets, not met him, it's Herb Kelleher, in terms of just the decisions he made, the counterculture, doing something in that industry. I just really respect and I've read a lot about him and everything he's done. I do not like flying Southwest. I try to avoid it. I fly a lot. I like getting on the plane early, I like being first. I like my status, I like all that stuff but I really appreciate that they are true to ... but if I need to get somewhere cheap and fast, then that's what I would do but otherwise, I like getting to the airport late and knowing I have my seat but I'm not going to write hate mail. I'm just going to fly another airline.

Dan Rockwell: Exactly. I fly American, you like to get in line early and get your luggage in there, you get your carry on in and all that.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. All right everyone. We're going to take a quick break for a word from our sponsors and we'll be right back with Dan Rockwell.

In 2004, Mike Zani and his partner started a search fund, a search funds where you raise money with a leadership team already in place and then look for a company to buy. Well, here's what Mike learned the first time he bought a company.

Mike Zani: Bob, we were really pretty good at the strategy stuff and we were good at the financial side of things, knowing what to pay for a company. But when we finally bought the company, figuring out how to get the right people in the right roles and managing them was really hard, surprisingly hard, and we sucked at it.

Robert Glazer: So Mike and his team used The Predictive Index to help them fix their people problems. Then when they bought and ran two more companies, they used The Predictive Index again. In fact, they became so enamored with The Predictive Index that, you guessed it, they bought the company.

Mike Zani: Yeah, we bought a 60 year old technology company. I have to pinch myself. I get to run a company that helps people solve their people problems, designing teams, hiring inspiring managers and when it comes down to it, almost all business problems come down to people problems.

Robert Glazer: So if you're trying to figure out how to get more out of your people, I'd recommend you go to predictiveindex.com/elevate and request a demo of their product. That's predictiveindex.com/elevate.

And we're back with Dan. So Dan, I'm curious, we just talked about before the break, on things that you're going to do, or not do, or knowing what your strengths are, or knowing your weaknesses. There's some mixed schools of thoughts on if leaders should focus on strengths or weaknesses, what is your take on that?

Dan Rockwell: Oh, fundamentally strengths. There are some weaknesses that are going to hold you back. A classic example would be, let's say that you're really great at analyzing, gathering information. It's likely that you need to up your decision making game, in other words, analysis paralysis, so that's a very common illustration. Fundamentally, performance is in our strengths. I think Drucker brings this to the whole leadership community, that you can't perform out of weakness, that's just impossible. So focus on your strength, do what you do well and some of your weaknesses need to be brought up. If I'm a public speaker for example, and I have ums, or if I have these little phrases that I repeat over and over again. I had a friend tell me the other, day, actually a couple of weeks ago he said, "You know you said, 'I kid you not,' like four or five times." Once is okay, I kid you not, I don't want to say that ... It sounds like I don't believe what I'm saying.

Robert Glazer: Well I think that's a great example. So you're talking about you are a speaker, you want to be a speaker and therefore things that are impeding your ability to deliver a good speech are things that you need to work on if you want to be a speaker. If not, then you avoid being a speaker. Right?

Dan Rockwell: Exactly. Exactly.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, the, "Um, so ... " thing is interesting. I had a coach say to me, "You know you said, 'Um, so ... ' 220 times in the presentation you gave." He counted them and that hit me right in the face. I listened to a transcription of one of my presentations that we were turning into a blog post and I could see it all there and I decided, "Oh yeah, I got to deal with this." When I started dealing with it, I started noticing it and everyone else in our company and hearing it, because once you start hearing it, it's like nails on the chalkboard for you. I've really pushed other people in the company to do it because I don't think that they realize ... this is good example of again, where it's a weakness you may not [inaudible 00:17:12], they didn't realize how dilutes their message and these are people who are trying to communicate and speak and one person on my team ... I encourage everyone to put a little Post-it Note on their computer about that.

One person even who was speaking and who was really struggling with it and he asked the audience, and this is someone who's a great learner, a great leader, if you're willing to do this. He said to the audience, "I'm really working on trying to not say um and so, so if you hear me say it during my presentation, please raise your hand."

Dan Rockwell: That's courageous.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. I mean, I gave him credit. I did not think he was going to go that far because I had given him the feedback several times that I really thought it was something that he needed to pay attention to.

Dan Rockwell: What's so cool about what you're saying, I think a motivated person who wants to excel in a certain area doesn't mind feedback, enjoys feedback because they're trying to get better. I'm working with a business leader and he's struggled with his team and every time I got on the phone with him, he would talk about this other team, "10 years ago, this, 10 years ago that, and we did this and we did that." Finally I just said to the guy, "That is sucking the life out of you. You've got to let that go. I don't want to hear one more word about 10 years ago this." When people see it and because he wants to perform, so he has not referred to 10 years ago ever since I brought it up to him.

So sometimes we just need to get a little bit of somebody pointing out, "Oh, there's an um, there's an uh." 200 times or more in a presentation, that's a kick in the pants, stings a little bit, right? But it works.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, because I want to be a good speaker. I want to communicate a mission and this is why feedback has to be, I think what's in it for the receiver. A lot of people give it in a way that it's just about them, or it seems personal and we've coached all of our team on this and even dealing in client services, when you have to tell someone something, or it's not difficult, why is it bad for that? You want authority, you want people to listen to you, then you need to speak better. If people don't care about that, then they're not going to want to want to improve. Every time a client asks us for something out of scope or above and beyond, we've coached our team to say, "I would love to do that for you. Which one of the other five things I'm currently working on, do you not want me to do? Or are you okay if doing this new initiative takes away time from these existing initiatives and we're going to have to change our goals for the existing initiatives?"

Well now that we've positioned in why it's not good for them versus saying, "I don't want to do that extra work." There's a very different perspective around it.

Dan Rockwell: Yes, I love this idea. Just ask somebody, "What are you trying to accomplish? What are your aspirations? Where do you see yourself in a couple of years?" If you can tie your feedback to those aspirations, then they're excited to hear it.

Robert Glazer: Right. So when you're coaching people about leadership, what's the biggest challenge you encounter? What's the most common thing that people are really struggling with, or that you have to spend those initial hours with them on?

Dan Rockwell: I think my clients fall into two general categories. Some of them are-

Robert Glazer: Good and bad?

Dan Rockwell: Right. No, some of them are kind of ... they've lost themselves to work and they've lost the joy, they've lost her energy, they just ... One guy said to me, "I feel like I'm on an interstate highway in Texas. It's flat as a pancake and it's 2:00 AM in the morning and there are no exits. I'm just exhausted," so they've themselves and those are very interesting coaching engagements and the others are much more specific as you would know, right? "I want to become a VP, I want to do better with this. I'm struggling with this situation." So those are much more topical or very, very specific engagements.

I would say this, the thing that I've noticed that seems to create tipping points for leaders is when they receive feedback on where their energy is. It took me a while to get this, but I'll be either on video, or face to face and somebody will start talking and they'll light up. So I'll interrupt them and say, "Well, what's happening for you? Because your eyes are bright, you're ... " and they start to learn what makes themselves tick. Then what we do is explore how to bring that into a different context.

One leader, we went to dinner and when he started talking about his kids, he just adopted four kids. Really, I'm going to say I kid you not.

Robert Glazer: I kid you not. Yeah, I felt it coming.

Dan Rockwell: So he said, "I've adopted four kids," which to me, freaks me out. As soon as he started talking about it, I mean, he is lighting up and we've been together all afternoon and I hadn't seen anything like that. So we've talked about it. "I think for you ... " He said, "I see myself as a dad, I'm a father," and this is a little weird, but I said, "Okay, let's think about taking off the typical leader hat and you're showing up tomorrow with a father hat on. Now, you can't go around telling everybody who's your daddy, but somehow you bring that father orientation ... " and again, employees aren't children and I have to ... You might be interested in this. So I said, "When you put your father hat on and show up at work, what's the first thing that you notice about yourself?" And he said, "I'm better at holding people accountable." And to me, I'm shocked. Isn't that interesting?

Robert Glazer: Yeah, I thought you were going to say he was a better coach or a better teacher, yeah."

Dan Rockwell: Yeah, something softer, right?

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Dan Rockwell: And he said, "No, as a father, sometimes you have to hold your children accountable." It gave him the courage and really the channel through which he was better able to face some of the tough conversations that he'd been avoiding.

Robert Glazer: That's very interesting.

Dan Rockwell: Isn't it?

Robert Glazer: Yeah, this goes to ... I was just having this discussion with someone on the process of figuring out your values, your core values and how it's such an important ... it was the critical turning point for me personally and professionally. We know our values, and I think your example here was a perfect case. It's kind of like you're driving a car and you don't know where the wall is, but you know when you hit the wall. You know when it feels really bad or when it feels really good, but you can't put verbiage to that. So it's a process of actualizing them because they're there. But once you can put words to them and you say, "I excel in situations where I can do X," or, "I am drained in situation I can do Y." It's like you suddenly have your playbook to yourself and you can make great decisions about how to use your time and your energy and what company you want to work for and how you want to work in that company. I think this is the great struggle for people.

Dan Rockwell: Yes. Yeah. So how did you come to your values?

Robert Glazer: I went to a really intensive leadership program that was run by Entrepreneurs' Organization and actually it's two things within three months. I went to that over four or five days, a gentleman named Warren Rustand led that, who I don't know if you're familiar with, but he is an incredible human being, has since become a mentor and has coached thousands of leaders around the world and very values-oriented leadership. I also saw someone who was sort of a disciple of Simon Sinek lead an exercise on how to find your why and core purpose and I watched him do this with people and I went through the exercise with him and that turned out to be a core driver for me and one of my key values.

So over that next six to 12 months I worked on a creative list. I cut it down. I finally had these four or five things and then I started aligning everything in my life around them. One of the examples I give to people is that even with my kids, I am best in the service of my kids when I'm doing something that's aligned with my core values. I've given myself permission not to feel guilty about other things with them where I show up, but I'm not as engaged. It's hard for me, I'm authentic, hard for me to fake being interested in something that I'm not, but I'm really good with them on the things that I'm good at and so that was the process for me and this whole, they're always there, really got nailed home for me a year or two ago when my parents were moving out of their house.

They decided they're just going to dump all my childhood stuff over with me and I got boxes of the stuff and I found all my report cards from when I was a little kid and this two page write up when I was five years old in preschool that I changed some words and showed to my leadership team and told them it was a 360 review and they all believe me. I changed playmates to coworkers and it was just amazing reading through these things, how I had been the same person for all these years, it was all there. I could connect the dots.

Dan Rockwell: Wow. That is so cool. I love how you were talking about over the course of a few months, there were pivotal events that seem to tip you toward the direction you needed to go.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, right and I was at the stage, I think where I was just doing more, I thought more would get me more and not ... I hadn't figured out what I should be doing and what I shouldn't be doing.

Dan Rockwell: Yes, yeah isn't that the case? I mean, how many of us have fallen into this trap of trying hard, or something's not working and so instead of stepping back and evaluating, we just grit our teeth, grip the handlebars a little firmer and peddle harder thinking if we just do something that's not working with greater [inaudible 00:26:42].

Robert Glazer: Yeah, the hamster wheel,

Dan Rockwell: It's going to start working magically. It's like, no.

Robert Glazer: Well, we have that conversation, we've had that conversation several times with people on our team around, you need to step off the hamster wheel, spinning it harder and look at rebuilding, the wheel or the process. Spinning it faster is just not going to do it for you.

Dan Rockwell: We were talking about what are tipping points for leaders and what helps them change. I think sometimes it's somebody having the courage to say, "Okay, you've been doing this for a year, two years, five years. You've been frustrated the whole time. It's time to stop."

Robert Glazer: Yeah. "How's that working for you?"

Dan Rockwell: Yeah, "How's that working for you?"

Robert Glazer: There was a speaker once who I saw who, she's a great speaker, [Gina Malaco 00:27:27] and I was telling her about some problem I had with this perpetual relationship or friend, and she basically was like, "How's that working for you?" We were talking about giving your energy or walking away. I'm like, "Not well." She's like, "That's what it sounds like, so why don't you change it?" So I did.

Dan Rockwell: Fantastic.

Robert Glazer: So what inspired you to start Leadership Freak, your blog? Did you always have a vision to make it something that was wide reaching or did you think it would be more of a close group of people?

Dan Rockwell: Well, I get asked with this, Bob semi-regularly and my responses are rather unimpressive. I started writing. I hadn't written before except for contracts, and technical types of writing, but I just started writing. I got my MBA late in life and

it interested me, organizational development, all that kind of stuff. So I just made a commitment to myself that I wouldn't start writing and if it got traction I would keep doing it. Obviously it did get traction, but there was no plan. There was no like, "This is going to be a business," I had no idea. So a year and a half in, I got my first invitation to go speak and I thought, "Wow, this is awesome. I could make money doing this." So now it's on up on 10 years at the end of this year, I think and I just had no idea.

So there was no plan. I really started writing out of a few things. One is a fear of not mattering as much as I could in life. So I know, again, this is not noble. It's not like, "Hey, well that's such a great motivation." I was afraid I wouldn't matter and I had a good position with the college. I was working in the community and that whole thing. But I was about 50, I guess and I went through a typical midlife crisis. I've had several of them, I think they're exciting, you ought to have a lot and you evaluate yourself.

Robert Glazer: Did you buy a lot of cars?

Dan Rockwell: I have kept my shirt buttoned up, by the way, and I still don't own a big gold chain but I just evaluated myself and I thought, "You have more in you." That was one of those key moments where I said, "I have to stop defining myself by what other people think I should be doing and define myself by who I am." It wasn't long after that that I started writing and one thing led to another and off you go.

Robert Glazer: How big is your audience now?

Dan Rockwell: I'm getting several million unique visits a year, and every single country in the world has readers, except the Western Sahara, which every time I look at the map and I see the Western Sahara is not lit up, I'm ticked about it.

Robert Glazer: Well, maybe we have some listeners in the Western Sahara.

Dan Rockwell: I tell audiences this, "Hey, if you [inaudible 00:30:25]."

Robert Glazer: You're going on some obscure Western Saharan blogs and podcasts trying to [inaudible 00:30:30].

Dan Rockwell: Please log in so I can sleep at night.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, that's very funny. The other question I have, because I think one of the biggest envy things I hear from people is about writing. So they want to write a book, they want to write more. "Oh, I see you write a lot. How do you do that?" So I always think it's a little helpful to unpack that process of how do you decide when you're going to write, what you're going to write? What's your cadence?

Dan Rockwell: I'm not deciding when I'm going to write, I'm going to write in the morning, so it's not [crosstalk 00:31:03].

Robert Glazer: So it is a decision?

Dan Rockwell: It's sort of is a decision, but it's not like I wake up and say, "Now are you going to write today or not?" That is not the question. I think this is the difference between a commitment and a convenience. A commitment is a decision you make once and a convenience is, "Well, let's see if it works out." So I'll make the decision many times, but I made a commitment and so when I get up, it's not like, "Are you going to write?" It's, "What are you going to write?"

Robert Glazer: How do you decide your topic for the day? Do you keep a running list? Do you just wake up and whatever you feel like that morning?

Dan Rockwell: Both. I love to write angry and again, I hate to [crosstalk 00:31:44].

Robert Glazer: Passionate, yeah.

Dan Rockwell: There we go. Thank you for saying that. I love to write about, "I've had a conversation with somebody and there was a huge screw up, something's wrong." I loved to fix what's wrong. Now, I don't post that. I'm going to write a solution that might be flamed or fueled by some sort of frustration. I just don't think it's healthy to rant all the time. I mean, I do a little bit. So I find topics in my own personal frustrations on solving my own problems, do that all the time. Matter of fact, if you were to just read through a couple of months worth of my blogs, which go out every weekday now, you'd probably get a pretty good idea of what's going on in my life and sometimes it's [inaudible 00:32:30].

Robert Glazer: Like, "Dan's mad."

Dan Rockwell: Reading also helps. I take walks and I listen, I use Audible and then then I have to keep in my phone ... I give myself audio notes, because I think of something else. A great book for me, and by the way, thanks for your book Elevate, I appreciate getting it. Love it.

Robert Glazer: Thank you.

Dan Rockwell: So I'm listening to a book and a great book for me is a book that gives me thoughts that aren't even necessarily related to the book. I've got a short attention span and I think, "Oh that's a great ..." and I'll do a little audio note to myself while I'm walking. And by the way, when you get back, have you done this? When you get back it's like, "That's the dumbest thing I ever heard."

Robert Glazer: I get back and I'm like, "What the hell did I ..." because I usually try to audio transcribe the email. I'm like, "What was I emailing to myself?"

Dan Rockwell: It's like, "Really?"

Robert Glazer: It's like gobbledygook, I didn't understand what I wrote.

Dan Rockwell: But sometimes it works, right?

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Dan Rockwell: So you get this idea and I'm always thinking about it. I want to write a post about how to really run an exciting meeting where everybody participates, because we all hate meetings, and so it's dripping in the back of my mind and it'll come together one of these days.

Robert Glazer: That sounds like a unicorn. Do you have any future books in mind?

Dan Rockwell: I'm actually working with a fellow right now and we're going to write a book together. I'm not sure exactly what that book is going to be about, but I'll tell you, I have a real passion to write a book about humility, mostly because I am relatively distant from the topic and I love pursuing it. So I definitely want to write a book about humility. I have so many blogs and I don't try to make a theme, they don't necessarily run from one to the other, but I sometimes will go back and look at them and we've collected up different topics and I'm excited to write one of those books that has very short chapters and is not long. For me, writing is about trying to be as practical as possible. So I'm excited to get some of that stuff out there but the first one, I'm going to write with someone else who's written 30 books and he's going to guide me through the process because there's such a difference between writing blogs and writing books.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. Although I think books are starting to look more ... Blogs are getting longer and books are getting shorter, so there's a convergence. Well, last question for you, Dan, and this could be a singular or repeated, but what is a mistake you've made personally or professionally that you've learned the most from?

Dan Rockwell: I think having higher aspirations for others than they have for themselves. I'm a developer. I love to develop, I like to learn myself. I want to be a learner. I am a learner and I have people on the team that I work with and I have these aspirations for them. I see things in them and they don't see those things. Sometimes I'm just imposing my own aspirations on them and I want them be a great speaker and they couldn't care less, they don't want to be a great speaker. I can't figure you out. If you don't want to do what I want to do, what's wrong with you? So what I found is I have frustrated others and frustrated myself because I didn't pay close enough attention to their own values and strengths and I tried to impose myself on them.

What I found, wow, when when you step back and you see what people do well and you realize you've been making them fail, you've been setting them up for

failure because you're pressuring them to go do this and go do ... and they just don't have any energy and they drop the ball and it's so frustrating it's, what's wrong with you? No, what's wrong with me? I'm trying to make you something you're not. So what I've learned and I still have to grapple with this, is make sure you figure out what people are about and what they're passionate about and jump in their boat and row with them as hard as you can instead of saying, "You get in my boat, because I'm going to take you over here."

I knew you were going to ask this question and I thought about it because there are so many screw ups. By the way, that's how I get so many topics to write about. There are so many screw ups but honestly as a leader, I think maybe this is one of the fundamental mistakes that I made all along and that is imposing my aspirations on others.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. It reminds me of a quote that I've heard, which is I think, "A man convinced the against his will is of the same opinion still."

Dan Rockwell: Oh yes. Yeah, love that. Love that. You made me think about the little two year old who said, "I might be sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside."

Robert Glazer: Oh, that's a good one too. All right, well Dan, how can people find you and your blog?

Dan Rockwell: Thanks for asking that. Just go to leadershipfreak.blog. If you type in Leadership Freak on Google, you're going to find me and the email is dan@leadershipfreak.com.

Robert Glazer: All right, well Dan, thanks for sharing your story with us. You have a clear passion for leadership and are out there really making a difference and an impact on a new generation of leaders.

Dan Rockwell: Thank you so much.

Robert Glazer: To our listeners, thanks for tuning in to The Elevate Podcast today. We'll includes link to Dan and his blog the detailed episode page at robertglazer.com and if you enjoyed today's episode or any of the episodes, I have a huge favor to ask, and that is could you leave us a rating or review because it really helps new users to discover the show. If you're listening on Apple podcast, all you have to do is hit the library icon, click on Elevate, and scroll down to the bottom to leave your review. Thanks again for your support. Until next time, keep elevating.