

Announcer:

Welcome to The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast, a podcast all about leadership, change and personal growth. The goal? To help you lead like never before in your church or in your business. And now your host, Carey Nieuwhof.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, hey everybody, and welcome to episode 350 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. So excited to bring you Ryan Hawk as my guest today. I know so many of you as leaders, you're like, "You know what? I just really wish that I could have a podcast or meet top leaders." Or maybe you've got some ambitions that aren't quite fulfilled. If that's you, you're going to absolutely love today's episode. That's where Ryan was a couple of years ago. And we talk about how he changed everything. Today's episode is brought to you by the Lead to Win podcast, Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller bring you some incredible leadership insights. If you're looking for new podcasts to listen to, and I hope you are, check out Lead to Win.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And go to theunstuckgroup.com/cnlp, that stands for Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. Download your free copy of my friend Tony Morgan's new resource, 4 Roles a Senior Pastor Can't Delegate. Tony's one of the best thinkers in the church today, so you can get that at theunstuckgroup.com/cnlp. Well, Ryan and I talk in this episode about how to get in the door with world class leaders, which is really challenging. I mean, here we are 350 episodes into this podcast, and I've interviewed some incredible bucket-list people. Ryan tells you how he did it, and how he did it fast. How to deal with rejection. Oh my goodness, does rejection ever show up in leadership? And how to go from top performer to great leader. And he gets us through the Peter Principle, which is basically that top performers often get promoted to their level of incompetence. It's a fascinating interview.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Ryan, to give you a little bit of bio on him, he is a keynote speaker, author and advisor, and hosted the Learning Leader Show, a podcast with millions of listeners in more than 150 countries. He's the author of Welcome to Management: How to Grow From Top Performer to Excellent Leader. And he's a lifelong student of leadership. He is a former professional quarterback, he is a VP of sales at a multi-billion dollar company. He regularly speaks at Fortune 500 companies and facilitates well with sports teams too in the NFL, NBA, NCAA. And he facilitates leadership circles that offers structured guidance and collaborative feedback to new inexperienced leaders. Plus, he never quits. When you hear his story about how he got to interview Jim Collins, Seth Godin, Liz Wiseman, General Stanley McChrystal from a guy who nobody knew his name a few years ago, it's a pretty fascinating story.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So glad you have tuned in for this. Hey leaders, I just want you to know I'm with you. All spring, we did crisis leadership episodes. So this one went on the back burner, and I'm so glad to bring it you. And this summer, we'll be bringing you more of our regular dose of leadership than we have in the past, but we will have a few special episodes here and there. And hey, if you're looking for a podcast to listen to this summer, and you haven't yet checked out Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller's podcast Lead to Win, you need to do that today. It's proven practical advice to guide you through the complexities of leadership. And together, they've got over four decades of professional experience leading teams and driving results.

Carey Nieuwhof:

One of my favorite things about their podcast, it's not just strategies to grow your business, although they have a lot of that. They're going to prioritize what Michael calls a double win, where you win at work and succeed at life because let's be honest, that's the most important thing. So you can get Lead to Win. Of course, anywhere you listen to podcasts, Apple, Spotify, wherever. And yeah, that's a weekly dose of leadership. So add that to your subscribe list now. I don't know about you, I only listen to the podcasts I subscribe to. So make sure you check that one out. And then Tony Morgan is one of my favorite leaders and favorite thinkers. And we have been through a season of crisis unlike anything else. And crisis demands we adjust our leadership style. You take the range, you get more involved in decisions. But if you operate that way for too long, you're going to find some other rules getting really fuzzy.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So Tony wants to help you with that. He is the founder and leader of The Unstuck Group, and he wrote a brand new resource called 4 Roles a Senior Pastor Can't Delegate. There are certain things. I mean, you should delegate a lot, but there's some things you just can't get rid of. And so what Tony will help you do this summer is to focus on your essential responsibilities, what the church always needs from you no matter what's happening in the world. And because you listen to this podcast, you get this ebook for free. So what you need to do is head on over to theunstuckgroup.com/cnlp, that stands for Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. So it's the theunstuckgroup.com/cnlp. And there you can get your free copy of 4 Roles a Senior Pastor Can't Delegate, and you can get it today.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So without further ado, why don't we jump into my conversation with Ryan Hawk? I think you're going to love this one, guys. Ryan, welcome to the podcast.

Ryan Hawk:

Oh, thanks so much for having me Carey. It's good to be here man. Already been a wealth of knowledge for me, so I appreciate talking with you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I was going to say we could have used the entire interview window just connecting personally at this point.

Ryan Hawk:

Actually, I love that though. That makes it fun.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm glad we decided to turn on record and pick it up from there. So you've had a pretty fascinating leadership trajectory. You were quarterback in a D1 school. You went to the corporate field, you became a podcaster, author, speaker. You just launched your first course. That's not an automatic career path, so do you want to tell us a little bit about that?

Ryan Hawk:

My sole focus earlier in my life was in athletics, Carey. That's what I really lived to do is play football, I played quarterback. I was fortunate to start as a freshman in my high school team at Centerville High School with a great, rich tradition. And those four years afforded me the opportunity to earn a scholarship. So I played in college, and initially went to Miami University. I happened to go there at the exact same time as another really good quarterback named Ben Roethlisberger. And so Ben and I battled it out for two years. I think you could probably guess how that competition went.

Ryan Hawk:

And once the late great Terry Hooppner told me that I would either have to change positions or be okay being Ben's backup, I elected to transfer to Ohio University where then I went and was able to use my final two years of eligibility and play, be elected captain. And that kind of was part of my leadership journey. To fast forward a bit, after I had earned my MBA in the corporate world, I worked at a company called LexisNexis, which I know you and your wife know well based on you're being a lawyer.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Any lawyer listening would know that company.

Ryan Hawk:

I was in sales selling to lawyers. So selling to a lot of professional negotiators.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You did a good job, I don't know any lawyer who doesn't use it.

Ryan Hawk:

After I earned my MBA, Carey, I wanted to go back to school or at a minimum I wanted to continue to educate myself. And so what I elected to do instead of going back to school again was to form my own leadership PhD. And that is what the Learning Leader Show, my podcast is all about. And that was five years ago. And so everything that has happened since has been because of the podcast, because of the show, all of the opportunities, which then gave me the opportunity to leave corporate America. And now that's what I do full time as we were talking about prior to recording, which is doing the podcast, keynote speaking, running leadership circles, as well as some one-on-one engagements. And now online teaching similar to what you do.

Ryan Hawk:

So it's pretty cool, man. It's pretty wild to see how things come together because if you told me to map my five year plan five years ago, I don't know if any of this would be on it. And now that's why it's hard to do those exercises because you just never know.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What year did you graduate, finished up football at college, Ryan?

Ryan Hawk:

I graduated from OU, Ohio University in 2005.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So yeah, that's it a few years in corporate and then away you go.

Ryan Hawk:

I played briefly football afterwards in the Arena Football League and the Canadian Football League. I was still working for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, very briefly though. They got rid of me when they realized I wasn't as good as their other guys, but had a brief shot. So I was doing that for two years. And then after that football was done for good.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you were in steel town and followed up Roethlisberger went to Pittsburgh, right?

Ryan Hawk:

That's exactly right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know very little bit of football, but I know that.

Ryan Hawk:

He's still there. Yeah, he's still there doing it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

My brother-in-law is a huge Steelers fan, so shout out to Roeth. They're great team. Steel town, well, used to be steel town. So I want to talk to you about your network because it's impressive. I said, a lot of people have podcasts, but it's not every day that I end up subscribing to a guest show. But you have a very impressive line up, John Maxwell, Jim Collins, who is extremely, he just doesn't do these. Talk about how you built that network from a guy who really didn't have the connections. I mean, I'm sure you can get athletes, but the path from football to Jim Collins is not direct.

Ryan Hawk:

I couldn't get athletes either. I think at the start of it, my first job, I was a new business cold calling inside salesperson. So I was making 70, 80 calls a day as well as figuring out creative ways to email attorneys to get them to respond in order to just have the opportunity to hit my sales quota. And so I really focused on the art of writing a cold email. And at the beginning of my show, probably for the first year to 18 months since I had absolutely no platform and no name, and nobody had heard of anything I've done, I had to use some of those skills I developed from my first job at LexisNexis to write compelling cold emails to convince somebody who had no clue who I was to come on the show.

Ryan Hawk:

And as you know, Carey, as you build up, you start getting kind of more prominent people. And then other prominent people see that some of their friends have been on your show and they're more willing to do it. In the case of Jim Collins, I started emailing him and his team at the very beginning. And it took roughly probably 80 emails, nine phone calls, multiple times him saying no, ignoring me until eventually he had seen that I had done enough to say, "Okay, it's time for me to do this." And I asked him why. And he said, he just kind of admired the persistence and also had listened to a few shows and likes the style and then decided to do it. And so that then leads to the next one and the next one, and the next one.

And as you go and hopefully do a good job, you continue to get those prominent people that want to come and talk to you. Now it's certainly much, much easier than it was five years ago.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I got to break that down. Did you say 80 emails?

Ryan Hawk:

Oh, probably more. I use Outlook so I can actually see all of the sent. I save all of those in a podcast cold email folder so I can see all of them because I wanted to be timely with it and not overburden him and his team. Seth Godin was the same way, and countless others were the same way.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Drop a few other names there.

Ryan Hawk:

A lot of them were very similar in the fact that it just had to regularly ... And there are people that I'm currently doing that with still that have not said yes yet. So my whole process is no just means not yet. I will never stop trying. If I'm very curious about someone and their story, then I'll do whatever it takes persistence-wise to continue to follow up. And I've learned from the best sales professionals in the world that I've either worked around or that have worked on my teams that following up, persistence, not getting down when somebody says no, those are things that you have to have in order to do this longterm. I think at least successfully, especially if you don't have a name. And that's the case that I certainly at least started in and in some cases I'm still in depending on the person.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So I'd love to rewind and go back to your LexisNexis days where you cut your teeth and learned these skills because I'm familiar with lawyers spend a lot even though that was just a year of my life in law school. I'm often in those circles and I know the mindset, lawyers are like, "Get away from me." They're not easy to get into. So how did you learn to really open up those doors? Because that is a tough job if you're cold calling all day long. Can you walk us through some strategies that failed and then some strategies that worked.

Ryan Hawk:

So strategies that failed would be something called bag diving, which my dad has written about in his book. He's a published author as well. And he's led thousands of people, sales forces as well. Bag diving would be just spewing a bunch of products, want to buy, want to buy, want to buy, want to buy. Just throwing a bunch of garbage at the client at the prospect they say no, and you're just grabbing your bag for the next one, the next one. It's a metaphoric term, but you know what I'm saying? So, hey, you don't want that. Okay. You want this? No. You want this? No. You want this? So don't do that obviously.

Ryan Hawk:

Sales is about listening. Sales is about understanding pain points. Sales is about figuring out current state, figuring out desired state, seeing how big that gap is, and then showing how your solution could help fill that gap. So, in our case, since we know the legal field so well, I was a new business rep, meaning they did not have my product. They had usually our competitor, which you probably also had,

which is called Westlaw. And so I was then learning about their Westlaw subscription and I would have to understand what they liked or did not like about that. So I'd build that gap of current state, what do you wish you had? What could that be?

Ryan Hawk:

And then figure out, okay, is that wishlist something that I could provide for them? And in a lot of cases, it's me being a good listener, asking good followup questions, and then eventually sharing the solution to their problem, which is a product that I could sell them. So that's what I think ... We could talk about sales for hours and hours, but I think that's what I tried to do on a regular basis if I could even get them to have the phone call with me. So I would do that in written form, I'd do that in speaking form. And I think the more repetitions I got, the better I got.

Ryan Hawk:

And because I was able to do well enough at that, it gave me the opportunity to then eventually apply and get leadership roles leading my own teams at LexisNexis. Because usually if you're one of the higher performers, it gets you in the door to interview for the leadership role. And that's what happened in my case.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's really impressive. I don't find it boring at all because really leadership is the art of persuasion. Most of us who listen to this podcast, we're trying to persuade somebody about some things. So that's really interesting. And it reminds me a little bit of Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, which everybody makes fun of the title. But at the end of the day, I think that was a mid-20th century book, early 20th century. It's a fantastic book, and it's a similar thing that sales is listening. How did you get in the door? Because that's a really good approach once you're in the door. But when you're cold calling, what were some of the keys to getting someone who said no? Because there's people here trying to raise money and they've been told no over and over again, and they just quit. There've been people who are trying to hire and they've been told no, and they've quit. So I'd love to know how you got in that door.

Ryan Hawk:

This is where I've really focused on email and why learning some of those skills helped me in the podcasting space. So I think I would spend an insane amount of time of researching the people that I was emailing. And I would try to personalize those emails as much as possible. And so the basic formulas for anybody I would say to get someone to ... All I wanted was them to respond back, to maybe agree to a phone call with me. And now in the podcasting space to agree to think about being a guest on my show. So it's sharing, first of all, some honest flattery. Something kind about them with specificity. So that shows that I've taken the time to learn about them. I like you because of X.

Ryan Hawk:

Carey I like you because you're the combination of a pastor, attorney, and podcaster and course creator. And you've written books, and they have impacted me in this way, whatever. Maybe it shows at least at minimum I've read your bio, I have an understanding of what you do. And maybe take it a step further as to why that's impacted me in a positive way. Then I will shoot for some sort of uncommon commonality. If it was you and me, Carey, we're both podcasters, we both care about leadership, we both care about helping people, something along those lines.

Ryan Hawk:

And then I will share, either I will usually share some credibility about what I'm doing. So if it was my podcast, in this case, I will share some of the historical things that have happened, some of the numbers, some of the past guests, some of the things that Inc Magazine or Forbes has written about me or my show. And then now we have a direct ask in bold, "I'd love for you to be a guest on my show or I'd love to have a conversation about you being guest on my show." And they write back. When it comes to at Lexis, I was sharing something about other people I've helped, how them working with me has made their life better. And I would share some of that. So that's some of that credibility building.

Ryan Hawk:

And then some of the details about how my offering is better than perhaps what they're currently using because I'd have an understanding of that based on my research. And then I would ask for a call or ask for a followup. Also the good thing to know is that when you are cold calling or cold emailing, success is like one in a lot. So you're going to fail almost every single time, and you have to be okay with that. You have to be willing to keep at it day after day. And a lot of people are saying, "Wait, cold emailing, cold calling. No, thanks. I'd rather do something else." And I get it, I get it. But I would say though, I am so grateful that that was my first real job out of when I got done playing football because it taught me ...

Ryan Hawk:

My first real job was really hard, and it also taught me so many skills that I've continued to use for the rest of my career and I will continue to use. So I always tell people, and I know I'm biased, but I would say, what should I do when I get done with college? I'd say, "Get a job in sales, it's really hard." And you'll learn skills that will transfer to other parts of your career that will be very useful. So if you're not really sure, and you're not going to go be a doctor or something like that, get a job in sales and see if you can hang there because it'll help you regardless of what you choose to do next.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How did you keep yourself encouraged? How did you adopt that mindset? Because a lot of people would say the difference between an effective sales person and an ineffective one is the ineffective one stops on the third call, the effective one goes to the 10th or perhaps the 80th. How did you keep yourself in the game and not just go home defeated every day after a whole sea of nos?

Ryan Hawk:

I had some occasional success and that created momentum, and that created confidence, and I just kept at it. And also my mindset, I was not a talented enough football player to probably get a scholarship. And so I was fortunate to have incredible coaching in high school. They taught me the value of a work ethic of persistence, of resilience, of never, ever quitting. And I used that, what I learned from these incredible coaches that I applied to the football field, I applied the exact same mentality in the selling world. Additionally, at that time, there were stack rankings every day on our activity and on our performance. Yes, it sounds horrible. But for someone who is coming straight from the football field, who was in a very competitive environment where I lost a big competition, the first one that I really wanted to win, which is Ben and I. My mindset was geared for that, I was ready to go. I loved it, in fact. And I was very motivated to finish in that number one spot.

Ryan Hawk:

Now, I don't know if that's healthy to be in a situation like that longterm. But at least for the time being, it really was helpful for me. Former athlete, still hyper competitive, still loved the scoreboard, all of that. That was good for me to be in a setting like that. And it certainly drove part of my work ethic to keep going, to get through the nos, to think of it as not yet and just go. And then once some of the success hit, then I really felt and thought, okay, it was a low salary, high variable compensation job. So you can make a ton of money if you crushed it. And so that started happening to me at a young age too, which is like, this is pretty cool. I don't mind this part either. This is kind of the scoreboard here at a young age when I'm still immature. I thought that was useful for me to do at that time of my life.

Carey Nieuwhof:

If I'm nerding out, let me know, but I just find this fascinating and I've never had this conversation.

Ryan Hawk:

I love it. I don't always get to talk about this, so I appreciate it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, this is great, Ryan. So these are clearly not cut and paste emails. You're doing research, it probably takes you 30 to 90 minutes to research and write one of these emails. So it's not easy to do and you get no response, no response, no response. How do you change that from the first email to number 80? Is it just you resend that first one saying, "Hey, maybe you didn't see this," or you rewrite or do they get shorter or longer? I'm really, really curious. This is fascinating.

Ryan Hawk:

So I will update them based on what's going on with them and what's going on with me. If they have new things happening, new books, new things they're trying to promote. I will update them as well as I'll update the credibility part. Maybe Forbes has written a new article about my show, I will share that. Maybe I will share some of the growth in the show. I will give updates on every single time. So people may think it's crazy, but I mean, it's hard to get these guests to come on in a lot of cases when you're not fully established. So that's the reason though. I like that, I like that it's hard. And because that gives me an opportunity to make it happen when others are like, "Screw it, I don't want to do that anymore."

Ryan Hawk:

I think the heart is what makes it good. My whole thing of people when they send me emails, and I ask for this on my show, just be specific about it. Don't cut and paste emails, be specific. And if you don't have time to do that, then don't send the email. My whole mentality with everything. When I wrote a book, when I had a podcast, when I give a speech, if you're going to do it, then do it, go 100% or 0. I'm not real big on saying, "Let's just try it out, we'll just see what," ... I like experimentation. But I think if I'm going to experiment, I'm going to experiment 100%. I'm not just going to, "I'm not sure." It's either all go or not go at all. And I think whether it's a cold email, whether it's writing a book, giving a speech, doing a podcast, that's really my mentality towards the actions that I choose to take.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because I know Collins is notoriously difficult to get, he barely ever grants interviews. And I listened to your interview with him among others. It's clear, he did a lot of research on you. He started by asking you questions. So you get an audience, so to speak. And I'm thinking about all the leaders listening to this. It's like, "I finally landed Jim Collins," whoever that Jim Collins is in your world. By the way, if you

haven't clued in, author of Good to Great, et cetera, et cetera, one of the most prolific and well-respected business authors of this generation who really just doesn't have to do anything. I mean, he granted an interview last year to Tim Ferriss, which was amazing. It sounds like he went long with yours and he said when his next book comes out, he's going to connect with you. If I remember that correctly. He wanted to follow you with interest.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Same thing with Maxwell, Maxwell made a really fascinating connection with you and your brother. He knew your brother. So all this is happening, but how do you decide in that moment what you were going to talk to Jim Collins about?

Ryan Hawk:

Well, I don't decide in the moment most of the time. I had a pretty sizeable outline that I then condensed prior to that conversation to say, what are the key points or potential stories that I want to talk about? What are the questions? I have a few anchor questions, but the bulk of my show is based upon just like you, Carey, it's based upon me being a good listener and asking good questions, even better follow up questions. That's really my process. So to do that, you have to be an active listener, again, like you are in order to go deeper into maybe different places that person has never gone before. In Jim's case he doesn't do many. So there wasn't a lot of examples to listen to. But I just followed the things I was most curious about. And to get him to not only talk about his time with Peter Drucker, which was a goal of mine and on my outline. But to hear him use Peter Drucker's accent and say the flap, like he hit me with a bamboo stick. I'll never forget it.

Ryan Hawk:

And so that was a mission accomplished part of that one because Peter Drucker is a legend. Anyone in this space, executive or whatever, he is the guy, the godfather of this stuff. And to hear Jim Collins who was another one of the godfathers talk about their interactions, I know it was quite rare. And so I have goals and things I want to get to, and I want actual real stories not just the high level zoomed out. But the moment they're sitting in the car and he thwapped them in the head with a bamboo stick to say it's about being effective and being useful for other people. That's the stuff I really try to get to.

Ryan Hawk:

So I'm always conjuring up ways, how can I get them in that moment? How can I get them sharing that? You could tell he started to enjoy himself. And that's a goal of mine because if they're enjoying themselves, they're being introspective and reflective. The good stuff will come out and then my listeners will benefit. I'll enjoy it, Jim will enjoy it. And then we build a real relationship. And I think one of the coolest parts, as you could probably attest to Carey, is that when you can build an actual, genuine relationship with your guests where you become friends. And so that's happened a lot where I then have had multiple dinners and traveled to the cities of these people. As well as, sometimes the same thing with your listeners.

Ryan Hawk:

So podcast is like building a really cool community where you can reach out to your heroes, sometimes befriend them, have them live up to these lofty expectations. It's quite cool that aspect of it that I really love. And it also seems to help gather the type of people that I want to be around when it comes to not only the guests, but the listeners of the show too.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, that's interesting. I can attest to that. Sometimes you get to interview your heroes, and I worked for a couple of years to set up an interview with a guy named Gordon MacDonald, who you may or may not know, a legend in many circles, especially if you're over 40. If you're under 40, most church leaders would never know him. But I found out he did email friendships, and we've developed an email friendship. I mean, he's 80. And my wife and I are traveling there this summer, not for another interview, but just to hang out for a day with him and his wife. And that is just gold, that is such a privilege. I'd love to know how you care for your listeners. And I'm really thrilled. So many leaders, it's a temptation, Ryan, to become totally self-absorbed or to get lost in that world. I try to take care of my leaders, the listeners, I'd love to know how you do that.

Ryan Hawk:

I encourage them to reach out to me, email. I don't hide the email, people can email me directly. And they can text to opt in to what I do as well too. And for the most part, I think leaders need to be proactive, but leaders also need to be responsive. And so when somebody needs you or they have a real specific question, sometimes I'll notice if they wrote me an email with a question and their phone number happens to be in there. I'll just call them without even responding to the email. Just out of the blue, I'll call them. Or if they ask for a call, I'll do it. I do block time every single week, time for people who have taken the time to send me a specific thoughtful email and I write them back or I will call them.

Ryan Hawk:

And I think that has developed some really cool relationships with people that have gone on to still be friends, colleagues to this day. So you just never know, you never know. And sometimes if you talk from a business perspective, sometimes it works out in that regard too. I never go into it though thinking this is for business reasons. It's always to nurture and to be grateful for the people who invest their time because that's the most valuable resource they have. It's always to say thank you and to try to be helpful for the people who ... Because I'm a believer, Carey, and I know you are too of your audience grows literally one person at a time, one at a time and never forget that. And I think the founders of Airbnb said this first, but I believe in it that I think in order to scale, you have to do things that don't scale.

Ryan Hawk:

And so calling listeners, emailing them back, being responsive, not an assistant or anybody, but me actually doing it, that then creates an actual relationship. And that person then is probably going to continue to listen, they're probably going to tell their friends. And word of mouth marketing is the absolute best form, a genuine referral, no money exchanges hands, nothing like that. Just a genuine referral. That's how the show steadily grows. And business-wise for me when the show grows, everything else does too. And so that's really my focus is on always taking care of, nurturing, being there for the people who invest their time with me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think that's a really good point because for a lot of us, my audience from what I know about them, some people are leading very small things where that's not that difficult and that's awesome. But for some, they're leading very large things. And it's like, "I don't know everyone's name." And some are leading in a church or a large organization, they have hundreds, thousands who are part. And you can build that wall as a leader where nobody gets to see you, nobody gets to spend time with you. And

honestly, it's a daily tension for us with just the content being accessed about a million and a half times a month. It's like, we just get overwhelmed sometimes.

Ryan Hawk:

How do you do it?

Carey Nieuwhof:

What's that?

Ryan Hawk:

How do you do it? How do you stay close-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Selectively. I always said I would always answer my email personally. I remember there was a day a couple of years ago we got a thousand emails in an afternoon. And I'm like, "Okay, I die now. Even my team can't keep up." So I have two amazing people who answer the public inbox, and they don't pretend to be me. They're them, Sarah and Lauren currently are doing it. And they do a great job. And then occasionally I've started this more because I realized it's a really good practice. I'll just randomly call people. And it's not fair, it's not fair because I called you but I didn't call the other guy or I called the other guy, but I didn't call you. But I think it's so easy to lose touch. I've a phone call in my Asana list right now that I'm going to make probably tomorrow to some guy who's just like if there was ever. And unfortunately there's 15 people that probably got a no, but everybody gets acknowledged.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And so I've scaled a system with staff, and that cost money. I pay two people to basically respond on my behalf. We are able to do that financially in my organization, but it's complicated. And I know a lot of leaders I know, and I struggle with this as a pastor too. It's extremely difficult to get to that point. And you don't want to be elitist where, "Of course, I'm going to take Jim Collins's call, but I'm not going to take Jim from Kentucky, I'm not going to take his call." I'd just love to know any other filters or rules that you have in that area. That's how I have done it, not perfectly.

Ryan Hawk:

I love it. I'm with you because they're random. So there are people who are probably listening like, "Wait, what do you mean? I've emailed you five times and I never got a response." I try my best when possible. Sometimes are better than others where I'm more there. Getting a thousand and afternoon is certainly the point where you put your hands up saying, how can we best manage this?

Carey Nieuwhof:

I got to buy a new computer, I'll just start over again with fresh accounts.

Ryan Hawk:

Yeah, exactly. I love it, I love it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's really good. You've got a new book, which is a great book for those of you watching, it's called Welcome to Management and I've read a lot of leadership books. You've got a unique angle on this, and you raise a really good point. It's been encapsulated in other places as the Peter Principle. And I think you referenced that where you get promoted to your level of incompetence. In other words, the great sales guy who's crushing it at LexisNexis becomes the sales manager. And what made you a great sales person is not necessarily making you a great manager. So can you walk us through why not all top performers make excellent leaders, just make that clear for us?

Ryan Hawk:

This skillset is just completely different. You go from having to focus on the performance of you as an individual to the performance of, in my case, a team of 15 very different personalities, different people with different motivations, and different purposes, and different processes. And that is dramatically different than just focusing on yourself. In fact, you certainly have to lead yourself first. But in this case, you have to truly get to understand the dynamics of each of those people that you are leading and then help them lift their levels of performance, answer their questions, understand the way that they are. There's a lot of psychology, there's a lot of EQ involved. You have to be a good listener. There's so many different skills that don't fully apply just to you being worried about yourself as a top performer as opposed to that of perhaps 15 others.

Ryan Hawk:

So it is entirely different. The reason I wrote about this particular time in your career is because when I made that leap, I unfortunately was not very good at the job for a while. And so I had to learn a lot from mentors, through making mistakes, and then eventually launching my podcast and learning from great leaders throughout the world of how to do that better. The goal of this is to help prepare the top individual performer who's going to make that leap at some point in their career, as well as the people who are in those leadership positions that perhaps have not had great training. And Carey leading into writing the book, I was doing an immense amount of research with people who had made this leap in a variety of companies throughout North America.

Ryan Hawk:

And I would ask, what was the training like when you made that first job? And the responses would be like laughing emojis and eye rolls and things like that saying there may have been... Yeah, right, like figure it out. I was lucky to have an incredible boss, but I wasn't the only person that reported to him. He had a lot of different things going on. So I still had to stumble through and make mistakes. So my goal is you get promoted, big congratulations, smack on the back and you hand them this book and say this could be a manual for you to help you be better at not making the same mistakes that I did when you're a new manager.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's been a slow journey for me too. And I know my early instincts were just to say, "What do you mean? Just like work harder, you'll figure it out." And people don't respond to that. You break things down into leading yourself, building the team, and leading your team. Can you run us through some of the key things a leader needs to do to lead him or herself well, Ryan?

Ryan Hawk:

I find that self-awareness may be an underrated skill to develop. And so one of the ways to lead yourself is to get a true understanding of self. Some of the things that I would do in order to have a better understanding of me and regularly holding a mirror up to my actions and my behaviors is to surround myself with the proper who. And that's a big thing that I learned as you heard Jim Collins and I talk about. The why is important, the what is important, but you are who will be the single greatest determining factor in your long-term success. So who are the people that you have on that mentor board of advisors, your personal MBA, your Mentor Board of Advisors?

Ryan Hawk:

Who are those people that can be very honest with you that you admire, respect? Perhaps they have accomplished what you'd like to do. Who are those people for you that you can regularly go to with questions, with ideas, that you can receive coaching from them to say, "This is how I handled a meeting," or, "maybe could you sit in on my meeting and give me feedback afterwards? Or, "could you even sit down on a one-on-one to see how I do it, to look at my process, to prepare to do that?" And then have your one-on-one meetings with them where you can say, "All right, let's get specific about specific things that I'm actually doing, how am I doing? Please, I need brutal honesty from you. How am I doing that?"

Ryan Hawk:

Getting that feedback is the goal. That is such a gift to get that because that's how you develop self-awareness, introspection. You can reflect on that and then work to improve. So that's a big part of how you can lead yourself.

Carey Nieuwhof:

A lot of leaders resist that. They're like, "Tell me a little bit, but I don't really want to know the whole story." And honestly, those of us who are married, we resist it in our marriage. It's never our fault, it's always someone else's fault. It's kind of a variation of a question I asked you earlier, but how did you receive that kind of criticism without getting defeated? Because I know a lot of leaders who are very sensitive to that and they just kind of shut down and then they're like, "Yeah, I'm not going to hear that anymore."

Ryan Hawk:

I think this is where my athletic background is very helpful. So I've had coaches in my life since I started playing sports, and I've been very lucky to have good coaches. And so I've seen the impact they could have on me. And I was taught, my parents raised us to be coachable kids, to be respectful of those coaches. And so I've always seen coaches ... And again, I may be privileged and lucky because again, I've had great coaches. I've always seen them as people who were there to help me. And so when someone had the combination of the guts to share tough news with me as well as share something that could help me, I've been grateful. I know that's not always the case with everybody, I know part of it is because of my upbringing and because of what's been kind of drilled in our minds that these people are here to help you, listen to them, heed their advice, try to do what they're asking you to do. That I've taken that from the field and put it into the business world.

Ryan Hawk:

Certainly, I will say though, I am selective on who I choose to get that coaching from. I do need to have a high level of respect, trust, and confidence in what they've been able to do. That's why I look for actual

practitioners, people who have actually done what I want to do. That's important to me that I could ask based on their experience and the things that they've learned from their mentors in their life.

Carey Nieuwhof:

A lot of leaders in my experience do not have that, I like how you said it, MBA, what's that stand for?

Ryan Hawk:

A Mentor Board of Advisors.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I put one together, I had elders for years and they were fantastic. And when I stopped being the lead pastor five years ago, I put a personal board together. I actually the week we're recording this met with them on Monday in Atlanta. And just really great people who love me, who understand what I do, even though one or two are younger than me are ahead of me in some areas of life and who give me honest feedback. A lot of leaders are alone. I get those emails, I'm sure you do. It's like, "Hey, what should I do? Should I leave my job?" I'm like, "I don't know. I don't know Adam, I don't know how to answer that." There are some leaders listening right now, Ryan, who are like, "I need to know how to put that board together." Any suggestions for them?

Ryan Hawk:

Well, I think it's wise of you that it's not just the old sage, getting the old person with sage wise advice that it can be people from all different ages and experiences. So for me, what it is who are people that have accomplished some things that I want to do? So in the space of book writing, I have a few of the mentors that have written incredible books that I've been lucky that they play a role for writing books. When it comes to speaking, there's a few different people. When it comes to podcasting, there may be a few different ones there. When it comes to leading a team, there are a few different ones there. So mine get pretty specific based upon what they are. Dare I say, I view them as world class. Even if they're not famous or anything, but I think they're excellent at that specific task. And some of them carry over, some great writers are also great speakers and podcasters maybe, too.

Ryan Hawk:

But I've been fortunate to then reach out to those who are really great at what they do and then try to build an actual relationship with them. I'm not always able to give as much as they are, but there are times where there are ways that you can give too and not just receive. And I try to get creative and figure out ways to do that. One tip, one thing I did early in my career as an example of that, when I felt like I had almost nothing to give was when I met with the more experienced wise person who had a senior level title that maybe I was going for that earlier in my career when I cared about that a lot. I would follow up, I would ask to meet with them.

Ryan Hawk:

And if they were gracious enough to do that, I would take very detailed diligent notes and I would follow up those meetings with a very set, "Hey, here's what I've learned. I'm very grateful that you shared. Here is what I'm going to put into action based upon what you said. Thank you again. And by the way, I would imagine given what you've accomplished and everything that you do, that you probably mentor other people too. Go ahead and click forward on this email and try to help other people as well at the same time." So I'm not the only one going to benefit from this one-hour meeting, maybe I can be a

multiplier like Liz Wiseman has said. This is the way that I can multiply that hour for you because instead of just spending it on me, maybe you could spend it on eight people so that one hour became eight hours. And that could also save them time, and it documents their thoughts.

Ryan Hawk:

And sometimes that's useful for a leader as well because we all like to have a kind of detailed outline of what we're thinking and not everybody takes the time to write it down. So if you do it for them and you're helping other people, you're a multiplier and you've done a task for them that they could use that for future meetings. And I found that as a way to be helpful, and mentors seem to like that. So I still do that to this day regardless of everything. And it seems to be helpful and people like it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want to affirm that I have been in meetings before where you give away your time and people are like, "Yeah, I don't really have any questions, I just wanted to get together." And then I go, "Okay, I guess we're hanging out." I hope leaders are taking notes. And of course we've got transcripts in the show notes and everything too, but this is really, really good. All right. Communication, really, really important. It's pretty clear that you work on communication. What do you mean by that? Public and private communication? Why is communication so critical, and Ryan, what skills do you think young leaders need to develop?

Ryan Hawk:

I've learned this, Carey, from my dad at a young age. He always said, "Your job as a leader is to always be vividly clear." And he always focused on that word, "Vivid, vividly clear in your communication with the people you are leading. They need to know exactly what the mission is, why that mission is important. And then even more important, what their specific role is in accomplishing the mission." As your job as a communicator, really develop your written skills. You are going to write emails, you're going to write papers, really develop getting good at being clear and understanding the point behind that. And then when it comes to speaking, he told me again, I've seen the skill of being able to get up in front of a group of people and concisely share the essence of the message of what you're trying to teach.

Ryan Hawk:

That is vital if you care to get promoted, if you care to be a leader. Because if you can do that, you will separate yourself from the rest of the group. Think about, what do leaders do? We run meetings, we write emails. We have one-on-one talks, we give town hall addresses. I mean the bulk of the time a leader should be a thoughtful person, but then they have to be great, great communicators. We can all envision that incredible boss that we've had in our mind or a leader we've worked for or a coach we've played for and think about the ones who were excellent at what they do. And think of other ones who they were not. I guarantee you, these ones in the column that were excellent, they were great communicators, and probably multiple facets.

Ryan Hawk:

So that's why it's such an important skill to develop. And it's one of the reasons why I started my podcast as well because I knew getting the reps, having these types of conversations that you and I are having would just force me to become a better listener and a better speaker. And that certainly I think over time has helped.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So final question for you, you've met just hundreds if not thousands of leaders, some whose names we wouldn't know, and obviously some of the top in the world, like you say, world class leaders. What are some of the common characteristics in success? So as you meet these high capacity leaders, what are some common traits that you're like, "Man, these are just always present, they seem to be just the core characteristics?"

Ryan Hawk:

I would say they are first incredibly thoughtful people. They take time to reflect and analyze why something was successful or why something failed. They think about the perspective of the other person that they're leading on a regular basis, and that creates compassion and empathy. It all starts from being a thoughtful person. And then from that thought, they act with intention. They're very intentional with their behavior. They don't wander around aimlessly just hoping for the best. They've thought it through, they understand all of the perspectives. They've reflected on it, and then they make a decision and they go. And this is just the regular process of how they behave on a daily basis. And I found those are the types of people we want to follow. Those are the types of people where we think, "I should be more like that." Isn't that the type of leader we all want to be? And so I think that combination of thoughtfulness and intentionality are two critical skills to develop for anyone who wants to be an effective leader.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's great. Well, man, we've scratched the surface. The book is called Welcome to Management. And it's not fluff. There's a lot of books that are fluff, this is actually a really, really great primer with much more than we could cover today. And you put an index in it, which is not difficult every day. So it makes it a really good reference book.

Ryan Hawk:

Yeah. Thank you. I appreciate that, Carey. Coming from you, this means a lot, man. I had high expectations coming in obviously, and you somehow it crushed it. So I really appreciate you being such a thoughtful guy yourself. It's cool to talk to you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, it's 100% mutual. People are going to want to follow you online, what is the easiest way to discover all things in sort of your universe?

Ryan Hawk:

My website, learningleader.com, so that has everything. And social RyanHawk12, Ryan Hawk 12. And then if you happen to be listening on your phone and you're not driving, you can text the word LEARNERS with an S, LEARNERS to 44222, and that's how you get ahold of me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And if you are driving, we'll have that in the show notes and the transcripts for free. And last thing is the foreword to your book is by General Stanley McChrystal. If you know who that is, you will be impressed.

Ryan Hawk:

A legendary four star general and a kind, kind sweet man. And I'm so grateful to have built a relationship with him. And he was so generous in his words and taking a significant time to write that foreword. So it's pretty cool, pretty cool.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Ryan, if you'd be open, I'd love to have you back sometime. Thank you so much for your time today.

Ryan Hawk:

Of course, man. Thanks so much, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, was that not challenging and convicting? The thing I love about Ryan is you often hear, "The difference between a good salesperson, and a not so good salesperson is the not so good one quits after one time, the good one last 10 times." But 80 times, are you kidding me? Hey, there are transcripts if you want more. So you can go to careynieuwhof.com/episode350 and we'll have that all there for you. We also have show notes that have all the links to everything we discussed in the episode and some of our partners as well. And thank you for supporting them. We only take products and people that we believe in here, and your support that makes this show possible for free week after week, after week, after week.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, next time we've got Nona Jones coming up on the podcast. And I actually did this interview with Nona, and it was so good. I said, "Hey, can I put this on my podcast?" Because she just drops it straight. And she talks about the best and worst practices churches and organizations use on social media and why online ministry is about a lot more than streaming content. So here's an excerpt.

Nona Jones:

For so long we've thought of church as a program. We've thought of it as a place, we've thought of it as a date, time, and location. So even now with this push to reopen church, it's almost as if the last four months have taught us nothing. Like, "We got to open the building because if we don't open the building, what?" I've yet to hear an answer to that question. And so on the plus side, I think people have definitely seen this as an opportunity to become more savvy about digital ministry. I think on the minus side, people have still not yet understood that ministry can and should happen outside of the four walls of the church.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So that's next time on the podcast, also coming up Levi and Jennie Lusko, Albert Tate, Nicole Martin, Henry Cloud, Jo Saxton. Who else? Gordon MacDonald, Chris Hogan. How about the creator of Blue's Clues, Angela Santomero? We got a really fun year coming up in the second half of 2020. So it's time for What I'm Thinking About. And this is a little excerpt where I just take you into what I'm thinking about for those of you who listen to the end, which is actually a surprising number of you. This is just what's on my mind these days. And this segment is brought to you by The Unstuck Group. Check out theunstuckgroup.com/cnlp. Download your free copy of 4 Roles a Senior Pastor Can't Delegate by Tony Morgan, one of the best thinkers in the church today.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Speaking of great thinkers, make sure you subscribe to the Lead to Win podcast with Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller. They share more than four decades of professional experience. Available anywhere you get your podcasts. I have really got a heart church leaders. And What I'm Thinking About is what church leaders are really thinking about in 2020. I'm going to talk about this on a couple of episodes of this podcast. I find that I kind of have a secret thought life as a leader. And sometimes if I can just get it out on paper, the good, the bad and the ugly, it is therapeutic. So there's a few things I want to share with you, see if this doesn't resonate. If you're a church leader or frankly, if you're a business leader, some of this is going to resonate as well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I find for myself, there are things I'm like, "Oh, I shouldn't be thinking that. No, I shouldn't be feeling that way." First of all, I am feeling that way. And secondly, if I say it out loud and I kind of admit it and confess it, it loses power over me. So here's something I think a lot of church leaders are thinking right now and they're afraid to say out loud. "I'm angry at people for not coming back." The long term attendance trends in the church were not particularly encouraging and what churches are discovering as they reopen their facilities is that sometimes the attendance numbers are abysmally low. Now, some of that is social distancing, some of it is whatever. But I know a lot of church leaders, they're just like, "I just can't believe how bad this is."

Carey Nieuwhof:

And you're angry at people who aren't coming back. If you haven't reopened yet, you're probably already mad at people who you think probably won't return. So what do you do with that? I would suggest you feel the emotion, you pray through it, you vent to a friend and then you move on. And here's why, because anger as it simmers just gets worse, and anger is a pretty ineffective evangelism strategy. But I think that's what church leaders are thinking. Here's another thing church leaders are thinking, this one was hard to write because it's true. "I feel best about myself when the room is full." If you really want to be honest about how a lot of church leaders feel, it's like ... I mean, I have it with this podcast. I feel great when we hit a new download level. We just hit 12 million downloads, that makes me feel great.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, what if there were 12 downloads? It's like, well probably you have a product that nobody is being helped by. But I think there is a healthy slash unhealthy tension. Of course you want your church to grow, of course you want to reach more people, of course you want to help more people. But if you tie your identity to that, that can be a problem. But there are moments when I don't check this in my spirit where I just feel best about myself when the room is full. And if the room isn't full, well, then I don't feel good about myself. And I think that's true for a lot of leaders. And so what do you do about it?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Again, acknowledge it, deal with it, surrender it. And you have to be really honest, why do you want to reopen your church? Why do you want so many people to come back? Is it because you really want to help them or is it because you just feel good about yourself when the room is full? Awkward, right? Here's one more. Let's do a couple more, here's one more. "I like the convenience of church online more than I want to admit." This one caught me by surprise. Church has been a whole morning for me my whole life from when I was a kid until March. And then all of a sudden now I'm by the way founding pastor not the lead pastor. So I don't have the responsibilities I used to, but the only time I've really

been in the church building is when I'm doing a series, which has only been for about five or six weeks since March.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What that means is I'm at home like everybody else now on Sunday morning. And Sunday morning went from a five-hour commitment to a 45-minute commitment. And that is just so totally weird. Let's be honest, online is convenient. I had to do some summer shopping and I thought, well, I could go to the malls cause they're reopened now. And I thought, "Well, that's going to be a couple hours and they may not have my size." And literally one morning, 15 minutes, I bought everything I needed for the summer. Done, and they delivered to my door. That's what people are now thinking about church online. And I think there's a part of us as leaders that say, "You know what? I kind of like the convenience of that probably more than I want to admit."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now, I'm going to be committed to church for a long, long time. But as a leader, you got to think, I can understand that online is convenient. And that leads us into the final thought, "I hate the prospect of church online for the future because a lot of us like our rooms full." It's like, yeah, I don't know if people are just going to stay home or they're going to watch church from the deck or they're going to watch church from the ski lodge or wherever they happen to be, is that really participation? So we find ourselves in brand new territory, brand new territory. And as a leader, we email about 70,000 letters every day with a little leadership nugget. And if you would like to get that, you can just go to my website careynieuwhof.com and sign up in one of those little boxes that will pop up or you can find on my site.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then along with 70,000 other leaders, you will get a little nugget of goodness almost on a daily basis, sharing some of the things that I'm sharing with you here in the What I'm Thinking About segment. And we do a lot more than that through emails. So if you want a little daily dose of leadership, that's where you can get it. And hey, that's what I'm thinking about these days. Just being really honest, being really transparent and trying to help us all through this really crazy season. We are back with a fresh episode next time, make sure you don't miss it. And in the meantime, thanks so much for listening and I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

Announcer:

You've been listening to The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. Join us next time for more insights on leadership, change and personal growth to help you lead like never before.