

Announcer:

The Art of Leadership Network.

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 number 495 of the podcast. It's Carey here. I hope our time together today helps you thrive in life and leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thank you so much for tuning in and as we approach 500 episodes, well, we got some big changes. Well, I guess they're big. They're not that big on the show, same content, just a bit of a different delivery. And if you've been with us on this first part of the journey, can you leave us a rating and review? I would so appreciate that and would mean a lot to us. So wherever you're listening to this, just do that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Today, we're going to talk to the 10-year COO for Donald Miller's Business Made Simple, Tim Schurrer. And we're going to talk about The Secret Society of Success. And today's episode is brought to you by Gloop. They would love to partner with you in the, hegetsuspartners.com campaign. It's the largest faith campaign in history. If you want more and how your church can get involved, go to hegetsuspartners.com/carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And by Brushfire. Join the 30,000 plus events that use Brushfire every year and get a \$500 credit toward your first event by going to brushfire.com/carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, Tim Schurrer has worked at Apple, at their retail department for Blake Mycoskie over at Toms, and then for a decade was the COO of Business Made Simple. He evolved from, if you've followed the journey with Donald Miller, Don Rowe books, and then he started Storyline, which became StoryBrand which became Business Made Simple. And we've had Don on the podcast before, but it's amazing to get Tim's perspective on this.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And so we're going to talk about what he learned working with Donald Miller, what he learned from Apple, with Toms Shoes, and also when to burn the ships, why the abundance mentality that you may need as a leader wins out, and the right thing to do in leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, Tim has spent almost a decade of his career launching two brands, StoryBrand and Business Made Simple, as COO along Donald Miller. And before that he worked at Toms and at Apple Inc. He is the host

of the Build a Winning Team podcast where he offers listeners actionable advice as he interviews some of the top leaders in business. He lives in Nashville with his wife and their kids.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think you're going to enjoy this conversation, and we want to thank our partners because we bring you people that we really vouch for and believe in and one of them is Gloop. I've been working with them for a number of years.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And there's an incredible story. You maybe heard my interview years ago with Scott Beck and Pat Gelsinger who are both involved at Gloop. And you know what? There's a bunch of kingdom minded investors who have started this initiative called He Gets Us.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You may have seen it. They've got a national ad campaign that's changing perceptions of Jesus. And if you're wondering like, "Okay, well, what's this all about? Is it a good thing? Or how can I get involved?" Well, I'm telling you can get involved and there's never been a campaign like this. HeGetsUs the campaign and it's on YouTube, it's on social, it's on TV, it's on radio, it's backed by months of in depth research and was created to help people meet and relate to the real Jesus of the Bible. Not some stereotype. It's got a budget in excess of \$100 million and that makes it the largest faith campaign in history.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What makes us really different though is how people who respond to the campaign get connected with local churches with early success like 31 million views on YouTube, 600,000 social media interactions, plus nearly half a million people visiting the He Gets Us website. You're going to want to get your church plugged in.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So here's how you do it. When you sign up to become a church partner at hegetsuspartners.com/carey here is what you'll get, coaching and certifications that empower your leaders and volunteers, Bible studies and conversation guides, and info on how your church can connect with people who respond and they'll respond by wanting to connect with the local church. They're literally millions of people who are looking for answers like the one your church has to offer. So go to hegetsuspartners.com/carey to learn more and get your church involved today.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And today's episode is brought to you by Brushfire. Events are back. Let's hear it for events and let Brushfire help you launch yours. Brushfire offers an all in one event management platform that gives you the features you need for a reasonable price whether you need seamless ticketing and registration custom event pages, virtual event solutions, and attendee app for your event or anything in between, Brushfire will help you put on your picture perfect event. Best of all, the platform is super easy to use for everybody. You don't need to be a tech wiz to launch your events in minutes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Brushfire has built hundreds of partnerships with churches and ministries around the world since 2003 and their team is waiting to help you make your next event a success. Join the 30,000 plus events that use Brushfire every year. Podcast listeners, you get a \$500 credit toward your first event. Get your exclusive deal today by going to brushfire.com/carey. That's brushfire.com/carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And now my conversation with Tim Schurrer.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, Tim, welcome to the podcast. It's great to have you and great to connect with you.

Tim Schurrer:

Thanks so much. I'm pumped to be here. This is going to be fun.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. So I want to start here. You've worked with some amazing leaders over your relatively short life. You worked at Apple, Toms Shoes, Blake Mycoskie, and then building StoryBrand which became Business Made Simple so that's with Donald Miller. Don's been a guest on this podcast. Those are some really interesting leaders to work with Steve Jobs, Blake Mycoskie, and Donald Miller. Tell us what that was like and what you learned from such interesting bosses.

Tim Schurrer:

Yeah. I just feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with and in those cultures and environments that those leaders had created.

Tim Schurrer:

Toms, I'll start there. So I worked with Toms and was traveling all over the country helping put together what were called Style Your Sole party. So you take this canvas shoe and paint it, and it was just so fun. So I got to really be out and about helping just one person at a time help a child in need. The whole one for one model is amazing.

Tim Schurrer:

So here you've got a guy like Blake that is showing me that in leading a business, creating a company, this idea of giving and serving others, that was at the foundation of the entire company.

Tim Schurrer:

And what's interesting as you think about even how Toms got started, now they've given away 95 million pairs of shoes. They've made a massive splash. But Blake didn't get there trying to get there. He got there valuing one life at a time and just letting that be enough. And there's this cultural pressure if we're building businesses, leading teams that we need to have more fans, more customers, more revenue, right? It's almost just this focus and emphasis on more and more and more. And the model that I learned from Blake is very different from that. It's one life at a time, let that be enough.

Tim Schurrer:

So Blake goes to Argentina to, in a lot of ways, just take a break. He had done a couple different businesses and this is before the days of Toms. So he's in Argentina, comes across this village of kids, they didn't have shoes and had this idea that what if we actually could get a pair of shoes to these kids which because they didn't have shoes, they couldn't go to school. What a simple solution to a problem.

Tim Schurrer:

He had this hope that by the following Christmas he could come back and sell shoes to people in America and then give a pair of shoes away to these kids, 250 pair.

Tim Schurrer:

Toms started with this idea of how can we just get shoes for this little village? Well, the rest is history, but the point being, he didn't get there by trying to totally disrupt the business landscape with a new business model of one for one, he didn't get there by trying to create the fastest growing shoe company in the world, all those things happened, but he got there by really focusing on one life at a time. I just love that part of Blake's story.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What did you do at Apple?

Tim Schurrer:

Yeah, so I worked on the retail side.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay.

Tim Schurrer:

Yeah, yeah. What's cool about that is I was a huge fan of Apple and of the company and the products. And similar to Toms, I just have always wanted to be a part of things that I was really passionate about. And to me, a job has never been a... I mean, yes, the money is a part of it, but it's more I've wanted to work in environments where I just can't wait to be a part of the thing that we're doing. And Steve Jobs created that environment, that brand. And so I wanted to do whatever I could to be a part of that.

Tim Schurrer:

And at the time, I'm working at Apple, I heard Steve Jobs say, "The joy is in the journey." And I'm like, "Huh." It's interesting because now here, you've got this guy who has achieved success at the highest level actually preaching from that place, "The joy is in the journey." What if we can fall in love with the work itself, whether or not people ever know all of the work that has gone into that. And that idea breeds excellence.

Tim Schurrer:

And so there is a culture of excellence at Apple and they talked about excellence is the price of admission. It's not this thing that we strive for, it's just expected. And if you ever go into an Apple store, poke your head under the tables and just look at how well the cables are managed, even that is done with excellence.

Tim Schurrer:

So the same is true inside of a computer. It's beautiful. If you ever have an opportunity to open up an Apple and look inside. Don't do it unless you have a broken Mac or something.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Don't try this at home.

Tim Schurrer:

Don't unscrew anything.

Tim Schurrer:

But this whole culture around excellence and enjoying the journey and showing up and doing the work, not necessarily for the validation, but just the love of the work, and that is something that even though I was several steps away from Steve Jobs, that influence has shaped everything that I did. And even building the team and the culture at StoryBrand with Don. I pulled that directly from what I learned from Steve Jobs at Apple.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Did you work at the retail store-

Tim Schurrer:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... or did you work at Cupertino?

Tim Schurrer:

Yeah, I was in the retail store.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So at the retail store.

Tim Schurrer:

So a couple years in Chicago-

Carey Nieuwhof:

What did they-

Tim Schurrer:

... and then a year in Nashville.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So tell me what they trained you with. Because I don't think I've ever had anyone on this podcast who's worked at an Apple retail store or at least who talked about it because that is a very distinct culture. So what were some things you picked up along the way?

Tim Schurrer:

Well, it's interesting. Apple hires for people, the people skills, not the skillset. So they figure if we get the right people in the door, we can teach them whatever we need to teach them. And you've likely experienced this in an Apple retail store that they're just relational. They look people in the eye, they just have really engaging conversations with whoever comes in. That's because they're looking for those kinds of people and then they teach the skillset second.

Tim Schurrer:

So that was a big part of it, but also this massive emphasis around the customer experience. You and I have both, we've had miserable customer experiences I'm sure-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, yeah. I've had my share.

Tim Schurrer:

... I don't even have to ask for details. But that is just when you're able to see things from the Apple perspective, doing everything they could to create an incredible experience, what that looks like is really it's this posture of serving others, thinking of someone else, putting yourself in their shoes.

Tim Schurrer:

And so what I love about how they trained all of us was they had this little tactic that they called reset the clock. If you've ever been to an Apple store, sometimes you have to wait to talk to somebody. And if you've ever been to a restaurant and they say, "Okay, what's the wait? It's 45 minutes." You're like, "Okay." But if no one ever checks in with you again, that 45 minutes feels like an hour and a half.

Tim Schurrer:

And so Apple, because they're thinking of the customer, they're acting with them in mind, do this reset the clock. So if they're doing their jobs well, the host, the person who's often checking you in will come back to you every five to 10 minutes and just say, "Hey, I see you. You're still on the list. You're good. You're exactly where you need to be. I got you." That 45 minutes doesn't feel like 45 minutes because they're acting with the customer in mind and they do that relentlessly across the entire business.

Tim Schurrer:

And that's a thing that they train. It was customer service training first and foremost, for sure.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So people first, technology second.

Tim Schurrer:

That's right. Yeah. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Huh. So how did you end up working for almost a decade with Donald Miller as his COO at StoryBrand which eventually became Business Made Simple? How'd you make the transition from Toms to Donald Miller?

Tim Schurrer:

Yeah, so I was doing the Toms thing for a season and then my wife and I got married and we moved to Chicago because she went to grad school at Northwestern. So at the time, I had been out on the road a lot and for that first season of marriage, I just didn't want to have to be gone to make money. That just wasn't going to be a win. Success did not look like me being gone.

Tim Schurrer:

And so I realized, "Okay, let me find a job that can be local." I applied at two places, Whole Foods and Apple. I was, "I just wanted to work with a great company," and ended up getting the job at Apple and had aspirations to actually run an Apple store.

Tim Schurrer:

But what's interesting is I just saw my desires changing in that season. And I've always paid attention to that, those desires changing. And there's actually this verse in Psalms which I think has just been very top of mind for me for a lot of years, Psalm 37:4, "Delight in the Lord, He will give you the desires of your heart." So I feel like for us to pay attention to the desires I feel like is God's way of helping us navigate decisions that we should make.

Tim Schurrer:

So here I was in love with Apple and I just started to see the nights and the weekends and the holidays that was just getting harder and harder. And so I knew... This was a really great season, what a career experience, but I knew that actually that was not going to be my long term thing and started on the side managing a musician and an author and loved that work because I got to really bring my ability to manage projects and details and really coming alongside a visionary and supporting them to help them get things done. Love that part of it.

Tim Schurrer:

So I really thought I was going to eventually build up this artist management business and then step into that fully and have the opportunity to leave Apple.

Tim Schurrer:

And I actually had a friend who was speaking at one of Don's conferences that we used to do back in the day called Storyline and one of the guys I was working with asked to speak at Don's event. And so built a relationship with Don through that whole process and come to find out at this specific event Don was looking for somebody to hire and really start a company with.

Tim Schurrer:

And so it was a lot of just luck, ordained. I have no idea, but-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Good placement.

Tim Schurrer:

... I ended up starting with Don and left Apple and then over time ended up having to stop working with the other author and the other musicians because we just started hiring team members and my job was getting more and more... More was required of me in that season.

Tim Schurrer:

And so ended up going full in, all in with Don and worked with him up until February of this year and spent almost 10 years coming alongside him as his right hand and really the... He's such a visionary and had an incredible experience. To me, it was a dream job to work with him for as many years as I did.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, that was a bit of a rocket ride too because Don's been fairly public with the growth of his company. But you went from zero, like inception to... If it's public, please share it. If not, don't. But what revenue wise story is Business Made Simple?

Tim Schurrer:

The business grew right at the beginning, it was like \$250,000 a year and up to 16-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Don gets to pay his mortgage and so do you.

Tim Schurrer:

16 and a half million over that period of time.

Tim Schurrer:

So you're right. A lot of growth. And also with that, the revenue, but also... And this is what I love about working with Don. And it's one of the key tenets of StoryBrand which is your brand is not the hero. Your customer is the hero. So serve them and help them win. That's just the environment that I've been working in for 10 years, setting somebody else up to win.

Tim Schurrer:

And what's beautiful is if you think about your business that way, some really great things can happen. And so I feel like a lot of the success that we had in our business came because we were relentless about solving problems for our customers and in the end, we ended up having the opportunity to win.

Tim Schurrer:

So I think about the revenue just really was the ripple effect of us focusing on adding value, solving problems, and we had the opportunity to touch a lot of lives in that time which is really fun.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How did you land on that? How did you end up? You were there from the inception. How did you decide it wasn't about growing a business but it was about coming alongside your customer is the hero?

Tim Schurrer:

Yeah. That whole framework really was created by Don and really it was my job to free up space to let him go be creative and then he brings me something beautiful like a StoryBrand framework.

Tim Schurrer:

I think a lot of it though is, and Don really operates this way, it's this mindset of abundance not of scarcity because I think scarcity mindset has you thinking, "Oh my gosh. We got to do whatever we can to generate revenue." And what I saw Don doing is making investment after investment with the belief that this will come back around. So we gave so many things away for free that people would and should have likely paid hundreds if not thousands of dollars for.

Tim Schurrer:

The number of free resources that we gave out, whether it's through a podcast, whether it's through a video series, PDFs, we gave so much content away, really great content, that we could have sold, but we just knew that if you deliver value, that's a really great starting point.

Tim Schurrer:

And so that I think is... You start to operate that way, you give and give and give and then to see the revenue respond in the way that you would hope it to? I think it just creates some momentum and gives you courage to do more and more of that.

Tim Schurrer:

So much to the point to where we were selling an online course, the original StoryBrand online course was \$1500 and Don blew that whole model up and said, "What if instead of selling one course for 1500 we could sell a suite of courses for \$275 a year?" So completely change the model and gave people even more value for their money. Just... I feel like that really is a byproduct of that abundance mindset and just offering value and that being a pathway to success in your business, but really just helping people win was a starting point.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So Tim let's break that down because that's a similar pivot we've made in my company as well with The Art of Leadership Academy. And totally transparent, we've been watching what's happening in Business Made Simple. And you're right, 99% of what we do here is free. Nobody's ever paid a dime to listen to this podcast. I've got a website with over a thousand articles with a lot of my really good content on there or at least the best that I'm able to produce, it's available for free. But we started developing courses and that created the ability for me to build a team, to serve leaders better, to do the free stuff.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But we went from a pay per course model and our courses were priced around the three, four, \$500 level, not 1500. And we've done it all now \$397 a year for The Art of Leadership Academy. That's it. You get everything.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What was the thinking behind that? Because that took me a little while to get there but I want to dissect your approach and as COO, you would've led the organization through that along with Don. What's the thinking and how does that even work economically?

Tim Schurrer:

Yeah. So one of the early examples of this was when we were running our Storyline conferences. So this was back pre StoryBrand and we were helping people learn to live a better story. And so it just felt like the attendance wasn't growing. And so sometimes problems, challenges allow us to think creatively about how we could approach this a little bit differently.

Tim Schurrer:

So here you have... It's a good size conference but not ever getting more than 1,000 people at a time which a lot of different definitions-

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's pretty good. Sign me up.

Tim Schurrer:

But we decided what if we created a pay what you want model? And so we started doing... And I think we set a minimum of \$50 pretty much just to cover materials so people could literally go in and register for a general admission ticket, pay what you want. If you want to put 50 bucks, you can pay 50 bucks. And we created a tier two and a tier three for people.

Tim Schurrer:

But what we found was the average was right about what we used to sell tickets for. But we all of a sudden went from a thousand person conference to a 2000-person conference then to a 2400 person conference. So we started seeing this growth.

Tim Schurrer:

So I think for us revenue and all of that has been a byproduct of, but it's not necessarily always been the primary driver for, the strategy decisions that we've made. So I think, and Don believes this too, it's really about impact and the ability to influence people's and shape people's lives and businesses. And so it's been great because the revenue has actually continued to grow but it really was just a byproduct of how can we impact more and more people. That's the focus.

Tim Schurrer:

Blake Mycoskie wasn't thinking, "Oh my gosh, I can make so much money with this idea." He just wanted to help people get shoes and the results followed. And I just feel like we've taken a very similar model and just continued to... I don't know if rewarded is the right word but just been rewarded for that.

Tim Schurrer:

And so when you do it and it works, it makes you want to do it more. And isn't it great that the thing that we were being rewarded for was generosity and adding value and having affordable pricing around the products that we were offering. It's just pretty cool when those things actually can work together.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What were some inflection points for the company? Because you went from Storyline to StoryBrand to Business Made Simple. But when you think... So one of them was pay as you go, that got you to the next level. What were some other inflection points on this decade long ride over at Business Made Simple? What were some other things that you're looking back going, "Man, that was such a great decision?"

Tim Schurrer:

We went from even before that Christian memoirist. You have a guy just writing books for a faith-based audience to pivot to a business career. That was one of the first ones. So what that caused us to do was actually give up a lot of revenue and Don stopped speaking at churches. That's a pretty big decision to go all in-

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a big deal.

Tim Schurrer:

... on this idea of really impacting the business community.

Tim Schurrer:

So there have been some decisions that we've made to leave money on the table. Even now here you have this conference we were talking about, Storyline 2000, 2400 people at the largest event, we killed it because we saw that we were confusing people. They'd say, "Oh, Don, we love the Storyline framework for my business." It's like, "No, no, no. It's the StoryBrand framework for your business. It's the Storyline conference for your life plan."

Tim Schurrer:

So we were causing confusion and we have just learned that clarity is as important as anything. So if we were confusing... Don says this all the time, "If you confuse, you lose." So we made decisions to leave money on the table. The Storyline conference goes away so that we can be really clear and focused on StoryBrand. So that was another big thing. Christian memoirist to a conference, killing conference and Storyline to really focusing on business leaders.

Tim Schurrer:

Some of the motivation in that was just following passion. So Don has just got really excited about helping business leaders apply the same techniques and frameworks that we were using to grow our business. So seeing some of the success and the growth and the results that we had, if we actually just taught more people to do some of that in their businesses, that all of a sudden started just giving Don a bunch of energy.

Tim Schurrer:

And so as a creator, it's so important to be excited and connected to the work that you're doing. And I'm not saying he was bored with memoirs but he says, "After you've written your seventh memoir, I think we got it."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah. I had that conversation with him, Tim, and it was interesting, but here's... I want to drill down on that because a lot of people would say it's hard to cut because I remember when Don did that flip and I actually asked him, "How is Blue Like Jazz Don the same Don as a Business Made Simple Don?" And he goes, "Sometimes, Betsy," his wife, "asked me that question too." And he explained it. We'll link to that in the show notes which is great. It was a wonderful conversation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But I think a lot of people listening would say, "Okay, that's great Tim. But what I would've done is I would have kept speaking at the churches and then gone in on business." You cut. It's like, "I'm not doing church events anymore. I'm going to focus on StoryBrand and I'm going to quit business and churches that way and not do the Blue Like Jazz speaking tour anymore." So why did you burn the ships?

Tim Schurrer:

It really is just clarity. And I think another phrase that we use a lot is opportunity cost.

Tim Schurrer:

What's the opportunity cost of investing our teams, energy, and resources and creating things over here when we could be doing that same thing over here on the StoryBrand side. What's the opportunity cost of not burning the ships. So everyone needs to make that decision for themselves.

Tim Schurrer:

We did an event in 2014 and we were like, "All right, this is going to be the last one." And then we got back and just had the greatest time and we're like, "We got to do one more." So we had a year of really struggling through that decision then finally, 2015, we were like, "All right, it's the last one. We know that this is the right decision. We're going to make a bet on ourselves and on this idea that there is an opportunity cost if we don't make this decision now."

Tim Schurrer:

And there's never a good time to do it. There's never a good time to leave tens of... Or hundreds of thousands of dollars off the table. There's never a good time to lose that revenue. But we just decide, "Here we go." And been really happy with what's happened. It's been a very fun progression and journey because it went really well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How did you learn to be a COO?

Tim Schurrer:

I didn't really ever learn. You just figure it out one day at a time.

Tim Schurrer:

What I do know though is I found... There was a time in my life when I wanted to be the next John Mayer. I was going to be famous. I was going to stand on stages. People were going to know my name and spoiler alert, that didn't happen.

Tim Schurrer:

So there's this story, I'll tell you and I'll get back to that musician journey. But in Apollo 11, a lot of people are familiar with Apollo 11, you've got Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, one small step for man one giant leap for mankind. But what a lot of people don't know, there's actually a third astronaut on that mission. His name's Michael Collins.

Tim Schurrer:

So here you've got Michael Collins, the guy Ubers Neil and Buzz to the moon, drops them off, and then they do the various tasks that they need to do on the moon surface while he stays back in the command module and orbits the moon something like 26 times until the guys are ready to be picked up and brought back to Earth.

Tim Schurrer:

And what would make this a miserable story is if Michael gets back, sits down with the press and would say something like, "Well, it sure would've been nice to actually walk on the moon." Acted like a victim, tried to take the spotlight away from the mission as a whole, but that's not at all what happened. He gets back, sits down with the press, and talks about how content he was to have had one of those three seats.

Tim Schurrer:

And for so many of us, we're told that to be successful we have to step into the spotlight, climb the ladder, be the boss. But as I actually hear those messages and then I think back to my own career journey, I actually found that the meaning and fulfillment that I was looking for in my life and career came when I stopped trying to be John Mayer and started being the right hand man to Don. So I actually have learned to be content in the seat that I had.

Tim Schurrer:

Sometimes, success looks like just playing our role. And if I were to try to be Don, the whole thing falls apart. What made it successful was I was just doing my part. Don says, "Tim, I hired you because of my liabilities."

Carey Nieuwhof:

What do you mean by that?

Tim Schurrer:

That's what a great te... His skillset and my skillset really complemented one another. He had big vision but I had this operations, attention to detail, love for assembling a team, and collaborating with them every day. He loved to create and go off by himself and do his thing while I got to run the business.

Tim Schurrer:

"I hired you because of my liabilities." The things that he didn't feel like he did well, he found in me. My ability to step in and do that part is what made the thing work. But we needed the vision. We needed him in his sweet spot, too.

Tim Schurrer:

So I think the point is there's so many people that talk about success as this climb, the ladder rise to the top, but actually think for a lot of people, what if you being the best in your role is exactly what the organization needs and just to lean into that because it's almost like we're measuring our success and our contentment against this definition that maybe just doesn't even feel true for us.

Tim Schurrer:

So when I'd hear that, it just didn't feel true. My success, the growth that I found in my personal career actually happened when I went in the opposite direction. So how did I learn how to be a COO? It just happened over time and really just continuing to lean into what it is that I brought to the table and finding contentment there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think you and Don had a great relationship from what I understand of it, but there's often tension between a visionary which Don would be, or I would be, and an operator as Les McKeown uses those categories. Somebody comes in and does the tactical, does the execution. So in the church world, that senior pastor, executive pastor often in the business world, it's CEO, COO. What were some of the tension points, if any, that you and Don had and how did you overcome them?

Tim Schurrer:

Yeah, the guy loves to go fast.

Carey Nieuwhof:

He does.

Tim Schurrer:

He's moving. He is moving.

Tim Schurrer:

And I think so often I would drive him crazy when I'm like, "Let's just think about this for... Can we just slow on down?" And he's like, "Let's go ship it. Here we go."

Tim Schurrer:

And so I think we had a really good balance between his drive and my perfection. And there are some moments when me as an operator, I have to say, "Tim, is this a hill to die on?" Because there's some days Don just needs a 'yes man.' He just needs somebody to be like, "Cool. Let's figure it out. Here we go." He needs that sometimes. But there's also times that he needed to lean into my desire to slow things down. I don't think that you ever really perfect that, you just learn to live in the tension between those things.

Tim Schurrer:

So we don't solve it. You acknowledge what is going on, what's at play, and then just allow those things to work in each and every moment because there's not a one size fits all to every decision. Fast is not always best. Slow is not always best. But for that particular thing, you have to really land on what feels right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. That's a really delicate interplay and it doesn't always work well. How did Don to the extent that you can speak for him, how did he not try to turn you into that rubber stamp he wanted? And how did you learn to not turn him into you? In other words, just always be the, "No, slow down," "No, wait, wait, wait, wait a minute," "No, you haven't thought this through," because that is a very real tension on so many teams. So how did you learn to respect and hear each other?

Tim Schurrer:

Yeah, I think if I were to ever try to... He is just always going to be the visionary, dreaming up new idea, just constantly throwing stuff into the pot. And if I try to shut that down, I actually shut down the greatest part of him.

Tim Schurrer:

So I think part of it is just this awareness of this is his magic. This is it. So if I try to squash that, I am not actually setting our team up for success. But I also think that what happened was he saw me slow things down and actually started to see, "Oh, here's Tim's motivation in doing this." And I had to also earn trust by being right on a few of those.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. That's a good point.

Tim Schurrer:

You're not going to get that longer leash if you're not right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a really good point, yeah.

Tim Schurrer:

So much of it was he saw me do that and then we still won and he started to realize this can be great. There are moments when I do need to let him do his thing.

Tim Schurrer:

Here's a really great example of what I'm talking about. So often I was the one directing him on set. I'm listening for the details as he's presenting a course or whatever. And so early on, if I'd stop him, maybe there'd be a little frustration, right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Tim Schurrer:

But then he sees the end product and he's so thankful that I stopped him because he saw this is better. And so he trained himself and has said this publicly that... It's almost his mindset shifted from we are on the same team here. This isn't Tim versus Don. We are trying to do whatever we can to create the best possible product. And I think for all of us, a lot of this can just be an ego thing.

Tim Schurrer:

And what I love about Don is there is no vo... If there is a void in leadership, he is going to lead and point us in a particular direction. But if somebody brought a counterpoint to his idea or his point, he is always willing to listen, but you better bring a better version. If you're not making it better, you're not going to win and it's not winning. That is really the most important thing. But he was always willing to have some of that humility to allow other people's ideas to be pushed forward if they presented it in a way that really made sense.

Tim Schurrer:

I really did love that about him. If I brought an idea and I'm like, "I think this is better to do it this other way." He's like, "Actually, you're right." So I appreciated that so much.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you've got a new book it's called The Secret Society of Success: Stop Chasing the Spotlight and Learn to Enjoy Your Work and Life Again. Tim, let's break down the spotlight mindset. What is it? And what's wrong with it?

Tim Schurrer:

So I define the spotlight mindset as this unhealthy desire for attention and recognition. And there's so much about the spotlight mindset. That's just human. We want to be seen. We want to feel like we matter. And so much of that, the way that we feel like can matter is by people seeing us and recognizing us and knowing the contribution that we had made. But if the spotlight mindset isn't kept in check, it can lead us down some pretty destructive paths.

Tim Schurrer:

So there's a few symptoms that I'd love to share with you-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah, let's break it down.

Tim Schurrer:

... about what the spotlight mindset is because I feel like it will help us to identify this in our own lives. And I heard a guy named Tom House say, "Problem identification is half of the solution." It's like we got to know what we're operating from before we can then know how important it is to really solve it.

Tim Schurrer:

So here's a few. Striving is actually a symptom of the spotlight mindset. Do you struggle to find contentment in your life? Does it lead you on this restless pursuit for more? The spotlight mindset tells us there is no amount of revenue that will ever satisfy us. It's more, more, and more. That is always the goal. So maybe its that, that's problematic for us.

Tim Schurrer:

Comparison. Do you wish you were someone else or wonder how your success stacks up against others? Are you willing to knock others down to win or get ahead? Are you jealous in a way that gets in your

way? So many of us measure our success against others. Are you only happy if your company is more "successful" than your neighbors? That comparison... C.S. Lewis says, "Comparison is the thief of joy." And he's right.

Tim Schurrer:

So here's another one. Damaged relationships. Somebody that I've actually been pretty inspired by, I'm sure you know, Michael Hyatt. So Michael Hyatt in one of his recent books talks about a particular failure story in his own life from his past. He was given the opportunity to run a division at a book publishing company and at the time, the division he was given the opportunity to run was ranked 14th out of 14 on all significant metrics. Team, morale, revenue, all that. So he tells the then CEO, "Give me three years, I'm going to turn this thing around."

Tim Schurrer:

So in fact, in only 18 months, he turned the thing around. That division was now at the top, revenue, team, morale. It couldn't be higher. Michael gets a bonus check that he says was larger than his annual salary and he couldn't wait to get home, tell his wife about it. She was his biggest fan. He knew she would be thrilled. So he gets home, excited, sits down, and talk to her and she says, "We need to talk." And with tears in her eyes, she says, "Your five daughters need you now more than ever before and in fact, I feel like a single parent."

Tim Schurrer:

So here Michael was having all the success that he could imagine on the career side, but relationships with the people that mattered most to him was suffering. So fortunately, Michael's able to identify this and now...

Tim Schurrer:

One of his more recent books is called Win at Work and Succeed at Life. It's this idea of the devil win he calls it. So he now views success very differently. It's winning in both of these things that is success. But the spotlight mindset will trip us up and it will cause us to believe that success in business perhaps is maybe the only thing that matters, but those relationships can really get to us.

Tim Schurrer:

Those are just a few of the symptoms, but it really comes down to that spotlight mindset, that unhealthy desire of attention and for... Sorry, the unhealthy desire for attention and recognition, it really can trip us up and it's the thing we need to be aware of because something as simple as our definition of success really shapes our behaviors and the way that we view situations and really, it influences our actions. So we need to be aware of it so that we can actually start to choose another path.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What is your definition of success?

Tim Schurrer:

So I now define success as learning to live in the way of the Secret Society. There's this group of people that really have been influential for me. It's stories that I've just cumulated over time that are just

showing me a different way that success can look. And at the foundation, the common denominator for people in the Secret Society is really this posture of service, of helping others win.

Tim Schurrer:

And it doesn't matter if you are the CEO or in a supporting role, the Secret Society has little to do with your position or visibility and it has far more to do with how you show up, how you view your career and your life, and really the decisions that you make.

Tim Schurrer:

One of my favorite stories is Tim Cook. Tim Cook is a CEO of Apple, but before that, he was COO under Steve Jobs. So Steve Jobs passes away. The person who had been groomed to take over is Tim Cook. So we're at the release of the Apple Watch which was a pretty big deal for not only Tim but also for Apple because this was the first new product that had been released since Steve had passed. After the big announcement, Tim's being interviewed on national television. David Muir asked him, "Is this the moment for you, the moment of your career at Apple?" And just think how you would respond if you're Tim in that moment.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. That's a hard question.

Tim Schurrer:

Here you've been operating for decades under the radar. People have no idea the contribution that you'd made so you probably want to use it as an opportunity to let people know all that you've done to get to this place, right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Tim Schurrer:

The spotlight mindset tempts us to just take all the credit in that moment, but what's beautiful is how Tim actually responded. Is this the moment for you, the moment of your career at Apple? He says, "Well, it's a moment for Apple. I don't really think about myself that much."

Tim Schurrer:

And there's a plaque that sat on Ronald Reagan's desk when he was president and it says, "There is no limit to what a man can do or where he can go if he doesn't mind who gets the credit."

Tim Schurrer:

So there is a way that I am choosing to live. How I define success is now more in line with the Tim Cooks of the world. The Secret Society is actually preaching serve others, help someone else win, shine a spotlight on your team. It's more about that than it is me trying to get the spotlight.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. And I think you're comfortable sharing this, but before we started recording, you talked about making that hard decision to leave Business Made Simple. Can you talk about the conversation with you and Don and what he decided to do?

Tim Schurrer:

Yeah. So I had never released a book. This is my first book. The closer I got to the release, the more I realized the time it takes to do it well. But I had a-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, it's no easy-

Tim Schurrer:

... pretty big job with Don and leading a team and I, in no way, wanted to let the work that I was doing with this book have and cause my work as a leader on that team to suffer.

Tim Schurrer:

And so I felt like I was up against what I'd consider a pretty impossible decision, but what I decided to do was I left the dream job to go chase another dream. And when we told the staff about my transition, we set out a 90-day timeline because I really wanted to make sure that everybody was set up for success before I pivoted out. Don told the team, "Hey, you've made my dreams come true. I want us to do everything that we can to make your dream come true."

Tim Schurrer:

It's one thing to say that but it's another thing to act on that. And what's been remarkable, and I've not really told many people this, but Don actually is paying me for six months after I transitioned out of the company.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's so generous.

Tim Schurrer:

I leave-

Carey Nieuwhof:

... and you left voluntarily.

Tim Schurrer:

I left and he's paying me for six months because he's really walking the talk. He's like, "You've made my dreams come true. I want to do whatever I can to make your dream come true." And so it's just been so beautiful for me to step into this new career as a writer. I just launched a podcast this past week called Build a Winning Team and I'm just all of this work that I'm doing there's no way I could be doing all of that while also executing my job at Business Made Simple and StoryBrand to the level that I would be comfortable with.

Tim Schurrer:

And so to then feel the comfortability to just step into it without that urgency of I have to make money on day one. I mean, what a gift.

Tim Schurrer:

So I just really credit Don a lot for responding in that way. And a lot of people who'd be in that position, it'd be really easy for there to be some resentment and almost him making me feel guilty about leaving and I'm sure he could have said some things that it would've been pretty hard, but he had responded not at all with any of that guilt or that you're leaving me and abandoning us. None of that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

None of that.

Tim Schurrer:

But you can imagine how leaders could say something like that to somebody who had been with them from the very beginning, he actually went the opposite direction and he's just really been championing me.

Tim Schurrer:

And so it's been really fun to step into some of this. I'm actually a guest on the StoryBrand pod... Or the Business Made Simple podcast. He's going to be a guest on my podcast.

Tim Schurrer:

So this idea of helping others win, we talked about this earlier in the conversation, but the whole StoryBrand framework is around, "Be the guy, not the hero, help others win." Well, here, you've got a guy that's been living that out and now, it's no surprise that that's exactly how he's responding to me and really setting me up to win.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's really interesting, Tim, because it's very easy to imagine all of us listening to your story in your shoes and say, "Well, that would be the best boss ever," because what you shared earlier is like, yeah, he even said, "Maybe there's something we're not talking about here. Is it time for you to go out on your own?" He even gave you the idea and the blessing because you want to try to figure out how to make it all work which is extremely generous and then to pay you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, of course, if you're in your shoes, you're going to be like, "Man, Don's on my favorites list on my phone. He's getting a Christmas card every year. He's one of my favorite people."

Carey Nieuwhof:

But it's also very easy for us as the boss to understand why you might not do that, why you might say, "Well, you're leaving you're out on your own," or be resentful and he chose not to do it. So it's a beautiful case study in the tension, the paradox of leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But I want to tie it into this and this is my final question. This seems to go back to abundance mentality which seems to be at the heart of The Secret Society of Success. Talk about for someone who doesn't have an abundance mindset, somebody who falls into the spotlight trap, can you generate... Can you nurture an abundance mindset or do you think once you're scarce you're always scarce? How would you coach someone toward a more abundant, open approach?

Tim Schurrer:

So much of survival for us requires us to almost show up and ask what's in it for me. That's natural. But I don't think that's the healthiest version of us.

Tim Schurrer:

I actually heard Andy Stanley speak at an event in Atlanta and he talked about finding our purpose and living lives and careers of meaning. And he said, "These kinds of questions. What's in it for me? Why am I here? These are very normal questions to ask, but they're the wrong questions." He says, "The question we need to ask is, who am I here for?"

Tim Schurrer:

And what I love about that question is it requires us to show up, bring our best, to do our part with excellence, but the whole headspace that we're operating from is that of helping somebody else win, of serving others.

Tim Schurrer:

And I love this so much that I went back to my office and created a eight and a half by eleven sheet of paper and up at the top, I wrote, "Who am I here for?" And beneath it, I put the pictures and the names of every single person on my team because like you there's days when you have a never ending task list, there's meetings on your calendar like crazy. It's on those days when you just want to beeline it to your desk and just get your stuff done.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Get down, get it done.

Tim Schurrer:

And there's a time for that. But I needed that visual because I needed a reminder on those days to actually ask myself, "Tim, who are we here for today?" Because that just little 30 seconds of reflection causes us to have our antenna up for our team members, to have our antenna up and to almost infuse more meaning into the work that you're doing not only with your team but also for your customers because what if the work that you're doing if it's to serve your customers. What a beautiful thing. Who am I here for?

Tim Schurrer:

Is this growth in your business to help you make more money? Money's a really important thing in running a business, but I just don't think that's it. If I ask you to fill in the blank, success is... No one that I'm inspired by has ever said make a lot of money.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No. No.

Tim Schurrer:

Right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's actually often the people who give a lot of money are people who make their life about someone else.

Tim Schurrer:

I think that's it. And if there's a North Star for me as I've been working on this book and really, if there's a visual that I want to have as I step into this next season of my life.

Tim Schurrer:

It's this quote from Albert Schweitzer, he says, "I don't know what your destiny will be. Some of you will perhaps occupy remarkable positions. Perhaps some of you will become famous by your pens or as artists. But I know one thing, the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve."

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's great.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, Tim, the book is called The Secret Society of Success. Where can people find you online these days? Where are you hanging out?

Tim Schurrer:

If you go to secretsocietyfree.com, I actually give people a couple free chapters if they want to get a little snippet of the book and there is where also you can find all the other places about social links and those things.

Tim Schurrer:

But really if there is something that I want people to do is I want to get out of the way as fast as possible because this idea of redefining success is the conversation I'm really wanting to start and push forward. So it makes all the difference in how we show up in our lives. And so I hope that more and more people will learn to live in the way the Secret Society. That would be a massive win for me. So however, I can serve people to make that happen, I'm happy to do it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Tim, thanks for being with us today and thanks for everything you're doing for leaders.

Tim Schurrer:

Oh, man. Thanks so much for having me. So, so fun.

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Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, it was great to hear Tim's version of the story and we will link to my conversation with Donald Miller and everything we talked about in the show notes. You can find those at careynieuwhof.com/episode495.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Next episode, we've got Susan Cain. She's the New York times bestselling author and record setting TED Talk speaker who talks to us about her love of C.S. Lewis, a longing for home everyone feels, what's wrong with the world, set up to reward extrovert, and the beauty of melancholy.

Carey Nieuwhof:

This was really interesting. I put her book on my summer reread list because I loved it so much and we go into some really special places. Here's an excerpt.

Susan Cain:

That deep and existential longing I believe is at the heart of everything that C.S. Lewis talks about. And in his case, he ended up concluding, I think he said, "If we have a hunger that can't be satisfied, if we have a thirst that can't be quenched on this earth, it must be because we belong to another and more godly realm."

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's next time on the podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, make sure you check out the biggest faith campaign in history and get your church involved. Go to hegetsuspartners.com/carey to sign up and join today. It's part of the He Gets Us campaign and your church can partner with them. hegetsuspartners.com/carey and join the 30,000 plus events that use Brushfire every year. You will get a \$500 credit toward your first event by going to brushfire.com/carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Also, coming up on the podcast, we've got Daniel Pink, who is a partner with Susan Cain, Adam Grant, and Malcolm Gladwell, and the Next Big Idea Club that I become very fond of. Albert Tate. Who else have we got? We got Seth Godin coming back. Vanessa Van Edwards, Ramit Sethi, Karyn Gordon, Jackie Hill Perry, Nona Jones, and a whole lot more.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I just want to thank you so much for listening and for sharing this episode. And I want to give you something for free for those of you who listen to the very end and there are a lot of you who do that. Here's what I'd love for you to do. Text the word THRIVE to (833) 777-8558. That's just the word thrive, T-H-R-I-V-E, to (833) 777-8558 and I'll send you my burnout assessment and a thrive calendar as a thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

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These are the actual systems I use so that I can do a podcast, I can blog, I can have time off, I can be a better husband. These are the productivity systems that have saved my life. I'd love to send it your way. So that's thrive to (833) 777-8558. And if you're driving or running or whatever or at the gym, the number is in the episode show notes. You can go to careynieuwhof.com/episode495.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thank you so much for listening, everybody. We're going to do this again next time and I hope our time together today has helped you thrive in life and leadership.

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.