

# Take a Step Back, Embrace the Unknown and Listen to Your Hyb...

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, work, michael, seaver, team, leader, behaviors, mitch, book, pandemic, core values, authentically, life, questions, connect, daily habits, learned, share, person, co host

## SPEAKERS

Ginny Bianco-Mathis, Mitch Simon, Michael Seaver

- M** Mitch Simon 00:10  
Welcome to another episode of team anywhere where CEOs, leaders and experts at building teams, companies, organizations, and amazing cultures
- G** Ginny Bianco-Mathis 00:22  
share how to lead from anywhere in the world. I'm your co host on the East Coast, Jim Bianco Mathis,
- M** Mitch Simon 00:28  
and I'm your co host on the West Coast, Mitch Simon. And we invite you to join us team anywhere. The pandemic has demonstrated that people are more capable of change than they ever imagined. Additionally, the pandemic has given many of us the time to find out what we truly value and what makes us unique. Michael Seaver, author, speaker and founder of Seaver consulting encourages us to use this time for teams and employees to come together to build more authentic and sustainable solutions. Right now is not the time to pretend we have the solutions. Now is the time to focus on our own uniqueness, our resiliency, and our core values to successfully team anywhere.

G Ginny Bianco-Mathis 01:24

Welcome to another episode of team anywhere. I'm your co host, Ginny Bianco Mathis on the east coast. And I'm here with my wonderful co host Mitch Simon on the west coast. Today we are excited to have a very distinguished guest Michael Seaver. And Michael's an award winning executive coach keynote speaker podcast host is on through his company, Seaver consulting. Michael, you don't utilize can't read today,

M Mitch Simon 01:56

Michael realizes

G Ginny Bianco-Mathis 01:57

Yes, is is a unique methodology. It's a very candu methodology to inspire leaders towards living authentically, and engaging their employees towards personal and organizational success. Michael has a new book out called ready. I know a practical guide for awakening to what's within and finding work life integration there. Okay, I could see it. And we'll let other folks know where they can get it later in the podcast. Welcome, Michael. Thank you, Jenny. Thank you, Mitch, for having me. I'm so grateful for you both. Thank you. Well, we're going to start with what we've been asking a lot of folks, is how you navigated the last, you know, 18 months in two years, what have you learned?

M Michael Seaver 02:50

Wow, an immense amount, right. So it started with confusion. Right back in March of 2020, my daily habits were up in the gym that I would go to was closed. So I had to transition and do some hiking. And that was great, because it gave me some time in nature to call my emotions a little bit. And I learned some new breathing techniques. And I learned some new ways to reconnect with Mother Earth, which was great. And then shortly after that move to a place of acceptance, right, I got to this place of believing that the pandemic was going to take a while. And that it would alter society, just not knowing how so in a weird way, I re engaged the game of golf. And that was a really interesting learning vehicle. So taking the time to slow down and accomplish a little bit less physically and more emotionally was another key learning for me. So then, after we got I think maybe towards the fall of 2020, I started to think about integration. And I started to think about, okay, what was this all going to mean for me, and so I had to overcome a big fear in working on and writing I know. And I realized how therapeutic it was to tell the highs and the lows of my life's journey. And the key thing that came out of that, for me was that I learned that others were feeling the exact same way. It may be both of you do too, right.

It's just kind of fun to be able to know that some of the things that we're going through, we're not going through alone. And then as you mentioned, Ginny January 1 of this year published the actual book of significant praise, which was great, it was nice to have my life's work validated. But what I learned that was really, really key is that all of the hardship that I went through in the first 38 years of my life had purpose. And that was really meaningful for me to connect those dots. And so now we're at this place where I feel really ready to pay it forward and to do some other stuff connected to the book. And I think the key thing that has come out of it really recently for me and meditation and just talking to other people around the world, is that my mission in life is actually far bigger than I thought that it was even a year ago. Right So yes, a really unusual 18 months, but many unexpected learnings and blessings inside that

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 04:48

for sure. And and you took advantage of it in terms of a different dimensions, right your spiritual dimensions, your headspace, and then you wrote a book no The rest of your SAT there God, Jay, what is this gonna? Know? That's terrific, Michael, thank you. And that really does come out in your book. And so let's talk about it a little bit. Why did you write it? And what are you know, the two or three key highlights there?

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Michael Seaver 05:19

Yeah, thank you it. I really thought about this from the lens of self discovery. And I mentioned that just a second ago, and I think it bears repeating is that for years, I was really longing to understand why the first 38 years of my life were so full of hardship and challenge. And I just couldn't really understand. So I wanted to go through a process with a partner of understanding just self discovery. Number two is that I had met with a number of counselors and energy healers and Reiki masters and executive coaches and other people that were surrounding me. And they all said that I should write a book. So I was trying to take this information from the universe and find some patterns or themes. And that was really, really helpful. That was a big why. And then I started to pay a lot of attention to the different societal patterns that were really changing, right, moving from what astrologists would call the age of Pisces into what we're in now, which is called the Age of Aquarius. So in this really decentralized, very whole Socratic very work from home gig economy, I saw these things shifting the same way that YouTube both are saying, Well, how do I get ahead of it? How can I help people through it? And naturally, I'm really introverted and really task oriented. So I had to hire a writing coach who was very people oriented, very extroverted, to help me tell my story, right. So why I wrote the book was really about helping me understand my own hardship. It was about how do I tell my story in a way that I'm not comfortable doing? And how can I provide a guide for other people

to tell their story, too. So there are a couple of key things, I think, in the book that were really land with people, chapter four is really about five puzzle pieces that can come together to define someone's life's mission. So I really want people to focus in on chapter four, because that's kind of the meat of what I do as an executive coach. But then chapter nine, kind of the closing, if you will, of the text is really about how to be a coach, regardless of where your team is physically, spiritually, emotionally, mentally, learning and development. Right? How do we get people to really join together meaningfully?

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 07:17

level? Yeah, that's terrific, which then leads right into our next question, which is, given what you just shared? Why does that have even? And how does it relate even more meaning for us today for leaders and their teams today? Because it's pretty evident, it's going to be hybrid, or virtual, some, you know, some face to face, but usually a mix. So given what you are trying to share? How does this relate to what leaders and teams then should be concentrating on?

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Michael Seaver 07:51

Yeah, it really came back to me. And it struck me a number of times that 2020, and even the beginning of 2021, taught us we are far more capable of change that we may have believed. And I really want people to feel safe in that in their heart and in their soul, is that virtually overnight, we went from working in an office, we went from commuting, sometimes 30 to 60 minutes to get to work to now all of a sudden, we're now doing many things from our own home from homeschooling to work to kind of our personal exercising things. So what I really wanted people to get out of the book, and Jenny and I are kind of dorks for this is the old William bridges model of transition is is that I wanted the book to be how do you end and let go of some old habit? How do you put yourself into a couple, maybe two to three month neutral zone of emotions, if you will, to kind of experiment and try? And then how do you really move to that place of planned, purposeful aligned action. And that's really what I want people to get from the book. So the book is really about finding personal clarity in a really efficient way to make sure that you're showing up as the most authentic self to those people around you, so that they then feel safe to do the very same for themselves. Right. I think that's really important because you think about daily habits prior to the pandemic, only 20% of the American workforce was working from home. And then almost overnight, that number went to 71%. Right? So rapid transformation. And prior to the pandemic, we normally had about 85 interruptions in the workplace, right being in an office, then all of a sudden you go home. And now you're almost double that family stuff just happening around the house trying to get interesting. I think about the number of interruptions that we wouldn't have. So I wanted people to feel

safe to change their daily habits, right. There's ways that we navigate meetings, the things that we used to do maybe to drive to some location to have a happy hour like we can't do those things anymore the way that we used to. So when we think about those types of interruptions, we might have gotten in an office or we might get different ones at home, we're still getting a lot of interruptions. So I wanted to help people feel safe to design some new meeting rituals and new things to really connect people at a very emotional level. So maybe it's a virtual book club, maybe it's a Netflix club, there's any number of things that we can do to still find a way to communicate with those folks around us. So, really, it's about how do we take aligned action? How do we integrate this new way of being knowing that we've navigated a lot more change than we thought we were capable of, and we can continue to do it more in the how do we create that safe place for others to bring their life experiences into the workplace in person or virtual?

**G** Ginny Bianco-Mathis 10:29

Yeah. All right. So let's get to some of the little nitty gritty. Let's say I come to you, I said, Hey, Michael, I know you know, this stuff. I need some help on how do I start working with my team, we're going to be hybrid, some are coming in a few days a week, some will never be coming in. And I want to ensure that we have not just the connection we used to have, I want to have a much better connection. I want to have a better understanding of who and what we're about. Yeah. In our culture. I love that. Yeah. Well, what are your recommendations?

**M** Mitch Simon 11:11

Do we have all day to be able to record we have all day? Yeah. podcast, 24 hour podcast.

**M** Michael Seaver 11:20

I'm kidding. The thing that struck me, and I'm going to use one of my clients, who is a principal of an accounting firm, as an example. And it what really struck me was as to how quickly we have moved from the kind of command and control leadership style that Jack Welch and Steve Jobs made so popular back in the 70s 80s 90s. And now we've moved to this place of align and empower, right, so this one person, this principle of this accounting firm, he is very much the extrovert, very task oriented, Heidi on the disc profile type A, just the type of person that expected all of those new people around him to behave exactly the way that he did. Right. So which, well, it taught him some important lessons, but definitely hard in the beginning. But he was asked to launch a new department, which is great. So the thing that ended up happening for this particular individual is that very rapidly, we realized that his leadership style was not going to gel with this team. So they

had these folks some in the office, some that were working virtually. But regardless of where they were, he was still experiencing incredible turnover on his team, he was still having problems with the team and actually himself missing goals. And the way that their structure was worked out is that his compensation was actually lower that year, because of some of the things that he missed. So he had a big incentive to make a shift. So I sat down with him, and this is for everybody to really pay close attention to is that everything in life is connected really powerfully. So what I asked him to be very specific about was what were the detrimental behaviors that were happening today. Right, according to his team, according to HR, according to anybody. So we got very clear on what the detrimental behaviors were. And then I asked him to explain the origin story of those behaviors. Where did he learned them? Right, because we had to go back to the origin of where he learned them to figure out how we were going to get rid of them. So what was what were the detrimental behaviors today? Where did he learned them? And why? And then what are we going to do to connect those behaviors to his lower performance. So we identified them, went back into his history to see where he learned them and why they weren't beneficial, and then connected them to the behaviors that he was having today, right, and the outcomes of his behaviors. So after we did that, we did a disk communications training for his entire team, which many people have probably done, but just communication to make sure everybody is very clear on what everybody style is and how they can communicate more openly. We had them go around the table and set very defined expectations for what they wanted of one another and from him as the leader. So what are the two or three things you expect of him as a new leader, right in that environment. And I think well, I'll share a little bit more about this in a minute. But we also had each person on the team do a core values activity, so they knew very clear who they were. So then I also encouraged him because he feared sharing part of the story I said I want you to authentically in each meeting, share the highs and lows of your journey. And that was a struggle for him. So in, in designing a training for the entire team to know communication styles or core values that got everybody on the same page. We then talked about expectations of each other and of the leader. And then we were very clear on what everybody's core values were right. that mattered immensely. So as we're doing that, he started to have some small wins, and I want everybody to also have those small wins for yourself. So we decided to find new ways to reward his staff and we actually rewarded him to he set a goal that he was going to complete an iron man and he did and as a result of that, he bought himself a new pickup truck. Correct. But he did a lot of hard work, right and not only Physically in Ironman training, but also really emotionally as a leader inside, so we wanted to reward him. And so we taught him how to slow down and kind of trust the process. Because if you know thyself, and you then start to share openly with others, you can use that same process to help others know themselves more deeply. Right. So that individual level,

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 15:19

totally, Michael, and I call that getting to level three. I'm sure you all have dealt with teams where they're only ready for level one, which is okay, let's do a little Myers Briggs a level sharing, you know, your introvert, your extrovert, and what does this mean for us, but it's only level one, level two might be a 360, where you are on a three out of a five, right? So that little bit, but if they're ready for level three, which is what you described, the CEO, the leader saying, Here is my stripes, here's what I bought, stop and or want to get better at. Right? And they hear that. And oh, by the way, I'm now inviting you and making it safe for you to say the same thing. That's the level of emotion where change begins to happen.

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Michael Seaver 16:18

Yeah, I completely agree. And I don't know how you feel about this yourself, Mitch. But when we think about regardless of where a person is, if they have an opportunity to openly express themselves, have their opinion heard and genuinely be feel valued for that, it matters immensely.

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Mitch Simon 16:33

You know, what I love Michael, is I'm looking, I'm looking at these two big ideas that you shared one, which is, you know, we're far more capable of change, and we believe. And the other one is, you mentioned this about aligned action, and alignment and empowerment. And it made me think a little bit about, as I'm thinking about this, that one of the one of the challenges that that a lot of the going back to work, whether it be hybrid, whether we're pulling people back, and you know, five days a week, for those who are going to go that model is it seems like the you know, for the most part, getting in the car or getting an A in, in the subway, and spending, you know, one or two hours on the way to work, and then one or two hours on the way home, and barely having time for your family. That was, I would say most likely an inauthentic way to be right. Because most people would say, I really care about my family. But when you looked at their lives, they were not leading that. And a lot of them say, look, I just don't have the choice. And I totally get that I understand that. Now what's happening is people want to go back to work, and they're saying, Okay, well, it's not five. So it's three, which it's hard to believe that threes authentic fives not authentic. It sounds like what you're saying is, is okay, people were way more capable of change. We're also more capable of dealing with the unknown. So as we plan our back to work, or not back to work, or hybrid or virtual strategy, maybe what we should do, which is hard, is to really figure out who we are as individuals and who we are as a community or this team, and spend some time there before we just come up with the solution. I don't know what your what you think about that.

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Michael Seaver 18:30

I agree. And thank you for saying that. Mitch, it's when we think about. And I'll give you another example of from this particular team, but at the kind of team level, because I completely agree with what you're saying is that if we just repeat behaviors that might have existed in 2019, we're really not advancing that that much. And so let me offer you an example here that that may or may not kind of connect the dots. So for the same firm, they were really trying to make the transition from focused on billable hours to how do we actually focus on just results driven? Right, big shift, right, tremendous shift to make mentally. And so we started talking about why would we only hire people within a 45 minute drive of the office, right? What were we doing in terms of limiting the talent pool possibilities, all of that fun stuff. And so what we ended up doing was creating a document, we call that succeeding together. And what it was was a series of five questions. And then on the backside was three zones, a fear zone, a learning zone and a growth zone. And so the questions we're really heavily focused in on as a leader, what questions might you ask, have a direct report or somebody on your team or appear regardless of where they're located, to be really heavily focused on what it is that they're feeling and who they are? Right? So what are right so what are the physical actions they're taking? How is it that they're feeling on a scale of one to 10? What are they doing possibly to bring balance to themselves day to day so we can kind of socialize those things inside the organization. Questions or comments that we can make to move the person to from fear to learning or learning to growth. So, James, that James, the gentleman, I'm referencing his boss, who was the managing principal of the organization, he designed a spreadsheet of all of his direct reports and a couple of the other people in the firm. And he would, every single week, pick two or three people and kind of work through a cycle of reaching out and talking to all of them individually for 15 to 30 minutes, right. So massive give of time, but really wildly important, because now he had questions and very specific things, he could sense not only from their body language, but also from their tone of voice and the things that they were writing themselves. So what that did was he could track their feelings, he could track important life events, he could track action items, he could track over a period of time, behaviors, emotion and consistency, if you will. And they have offices in three different states, but they also have employees across 10 different states, right, we wanted to find a way to safely bring those life experiences into work, and regardless virtual or in person. And so that that simple activity of either James or the managing principal, reaching out asking a series of questions really authentically, but then being able to assess that person's state, if you will, and then tracking the information that they got back in a very ethical integrity driven way, was absolutely critical, because now they saw them as humans, not employees, but humans.

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Mitch Simon 21:31

Yeah, well, what I like here is that is that for many of us, we don't really know what's best for us in terms of this whole new, you know, working paradigm. And, you know, definitely, you know, like, I was saying, like four hours a day in traffic, not great. Probably, you know, being alone and ever seen another human being, again, not great. But with if I am open to change, and you know, then I should be open to discovery. And then it could be that, you know, I need to be in the office twice every other week. And Joanie over there needs to be in the office three days every week. And, and and frankly, if if everyone is really engaged where they are, that's going to be the best solution. But we don't know what the solution is, until we try it. And then like you're saying, Michael, is to measure it as we go along.

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 22:27

And I love the communities of practice, hey, give it a try. Come on up. Right, let's all get on zoom, use zoom, you're here, you're in front of me. Yeah, let's give it a try and that people are sharing, right, then the human spirit, you can't help.

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Michael Seaver 22:44

I completely agree. And that's the thing is that you're right, with this particular organization, there was a version to this, because at scale, they're introverted. They're task oriented, right. They like the peace and safety of the past, I get it. But as soon as they started to connect some of the dots for themselves and recognize and understand that if they were able to share more about their own journey, and then get reciprocal information back from others, that the relationships actually deepened, and they were actually becoming more engaged and more productive when they were working with clients. So it took a few months to get to that place. And that's okay. I'm just really proud of the fact that they did.

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 23:20

Oh, I do too.

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Mitch Simon 23:22

Yeah, I'm proud of the the patients involved, the Curiosity involved. And you know, it's as it goes back to the touchy feely is, you know, why should a leader ask how another, let's say direct report is doing well, when it's the right thing. But to its you know, it if we really are open to it, we're getting a lot of good information. And I think that's what we last two

podcasts, really, you know, with Oscar on mentimeter, which is meant to be mentimeter is now being used to just kind of see where everybody is, you know, and then we'll move from there. And I think our other our other podcasts where we were listening to a CEO talk about how we really need to listen to our people, because we don't know where to go. And I do think we're in this over this summer over the next quarter, the end of 2021. I think the answer is to be open to the answer, really, is to have the answer.

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Michael Seaver 24:21

Yep. That's amazing. It's Microsoft made that shift years and years ago from a know it all culture to a learn at all culture. And that was a really hard transition for them to make at scale, right, because they're 70,000 plus employees. But it's kind of the same thing, Mitch, that you're saying is, is that when we take a step back, recognize that we don't have all the answers and we're going to be better together as a team. If we're all leveraging one another's strengths. We understand or learn more about those things if we get into meaningful dialogue with one another.

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 24:50

Yeah, right. Now, you, boy, you touched upon so many things you touched upon Being able to bring together the emotional side, the empathy, the learning, while also showing, that then creates higher productivity. We all learn and change together, we become a better organization. And so both of those things together, I think it's great. You talked about how to do it with the leader role modeling, putting some frameworks together these four questions on a spreadsheet, right? So you need some tools, you need to embrace it, you can't just be this conceptual, hey, we all need to work together, be happy and emotional. Um, and so I want to then just bring you around to what are your major tips going forward for leaders?

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Michael Seaver 25:52

Yeah, when you think about it, I think Mitch just did a really good job of explaining that there's just a lot of uncertainty, and we're probably better off to just not really know what's going on, right not to try to control or expect or predict what the outcome is going to be like, we're just genuinely not going to know. So what I really want people to kind of take a step back and understand is that it's now okay to slow down a little bit. And I believe that society's transformation is far from over. And to support Mitch and his comment, we just don't know what's coming. So I think we're in a much better place, if we slow down a little bit, allow for situations to play themselves out, and stay really focused and committed on our own lives, missions, our own core values, the things that we're attempting to

accomplish for ourselves, our family or those around us. So just slow down a bit. Remember that society is transitioned as quite a ways from over.

**G** Ginny Bianco-Mathis 26:45  
Love it. Love it. So how can people get in touch with you?

**M** Michael Seaver 26:51  
Wow, okay, so my name is Michael s. Seaver. Or if you've watched the office, my middle name is Scott. So I'm also Michael Scott. pains in the 80s. My name is Mike Seaver, also Kirk Cameron. So Michael s. Seaver two s's there in the center. That's the website to go to Michael seaver.com. I spent a fair amount of time on LinkedIn. So please connect with me there. And I'd love to share kind of funny videos of my cat and more of the personal side of who I am on Instagram. So Michael sc for.com, LinkedIn, Instagram. And of course I know who were we just talking about a second ago. It's available print ebook, audio book 40,000 retailers around the world. I think a lot of folks find it on Amazon Barnes and Noble apple. Easy. Yes. So Mike lesabre.com is probably the fastest. But if you want to see the fun side, go to Instagram.

**G** Ginny Bianco-Mathis 27:41  
Alright, so they're cats. They're not lions. The reason? folks in the audience don't know what we're talking about. Michael, it's it sits in front of this wonderful, fantastic portrait of a lion. So I've been staring at it. Mitch, take us home, please.

**M** Mitch Simon 28:01  
Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I'm I'm Michael S. seavers.com. Michael SC comm there's a ton of resources here, online courses, great resources. And he's just a good looking guy. That's what do we say? Right? That's just that's the way it is. All right. Well, anyways, we've this has been fantastic, incredible insights. And really, I just, I'm walking away from you know, we are so we're sort so much more capable of change. And we think that we are, and we should definitely use this time this, you know, this, this kind of timeout to really use this time to find out who we authentically are and who we authentically need. And I do think that by doing this as a team and as a company, it's going to really, let's say tie us together. We might not be physically together again, or for the near future. So with that, thank you so much. Michael Seaver. Thank you so much. My amazing co host, Dr. Jeannie, Bianco maphis. And if you've loved this episode, or any of our episodes, please share them with your friends and your colleagues. And bring them to Team yesterday were calm. It's just it's

been a great, great fun we've had and some really great information. And until next week, we'll see you on our next episode of team anywhere