

TCM - EP #109 Keith Mercurio: Eliminating Workplace Uncertainty Using the Ethical Influence Model

Mitch Simon: Welcome to another episode of Team Anywhere where CEOs, leaders, and experts at building teams,

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: companies,

Mitch Simon: organizations,

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: and amazing cultures share how to lead from anywhere in the world. I'm your co-host on the East Coast, Ginny Bianco-Mathis.

Mitch Simon: And I'm your co-host on the West Coast, Mitch Simon. And we invite you to join us to Team Anywhere.

We are currently in a time of tremendous uncertainty yet our employees want certainty. They want it from our leaders. So how do leaders deal with uncertainty? On the other hand, is there really a great leader out there who knows with certainty what the future holds? On today's podcast, we speak with Keith Mercurio, the Founder of Ethical Influence Global, speaker, trainer, and transformational coach to over 600 businesses and 20,000 executives over the last eight years. His commitment to developing powerful and authentic leaders, as well as his insights and tools will help us all deal with uncertainty as we Team Anywhere.

Hello and welcome to another episode of Team Anywhere. I'm your co-host Mitch Simon on the West Coast. And on the East Coast in Coco Beach, Florida is our illustrious co-host Doctor Virginia Bianco Mathis. And well, first of all, how are you doing today, Ginny?

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: I'm wonderful. Thank you.

Mitch Simon: Wonderful as well. And why don't you introduce today's guest?

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Well, I'm gonna just only partially introduce, Keith Mercurio because part of his whole gestalt is introducing himself. And so, he's a leadership expert and we'll just start with that.

Keith Mercurio: Thank you. And let me just start by saying that to be introduced with the language of gestalt is a beautiful. One of my favorite terms, it was taught to me by one of my mentors, Dan Friesen. And the premise of gestalt is a really beautiful concept. So, thank you for that.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: okay.

Keith Mercurio: Yeah. This idea that we are, you know, that more than just our parts, right?

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yes.

Keith Mercurio: That the whole is greater than some of our parts. Yeah.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: And that's how I see you. And I think our viewers will see you. You have all these pieces, wonderful pieces. So, we'll go from there. Tell us, who are you? What are you about, what do you do?

Keith Mercurio: Well, at this point in my career, I have the privilege of leading and coaching leadership teams. And so, I work both in the coaching segment and the way I define coaching as typically either one-on-one or in small groups.

And the content in coaching is provided by the people being coached. So, they bring topics of challenges or successes to the table and then we dive in and otherwise I do a lot of training as well. And leadership training is when I provide the content and overall this all lives under the umbrella of Ethical Influence Global which is my company. And the premise of ethical influence is the framework in which I do all of my coaching, training, and speaking.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yeah. That's wonderful. And, well, give us a little more, what did you do before as you evolved into what you are today?

Keith Mercurio: Absolutely. Well, I think the story of evolution probably starts most of all with me, you know, I dropped outta college and then I became a plumber.

I worked as a plumber for many years and then through that transition, we joined this trades organization that was teaching business development, leadership, sales, and influence and within the first five minutes of watching his name was Dave Boda on stage again, another one of my mentors along the way, I said, that's what I want to do with my life.

And I then became the director of training for that organization which had over 600 companies. And I developed training programs for them and, and spent years studying under Cindy Pelski for, developing my facilitation skills. And then the masters, I was put alongside the greatest leadership thinkers of our time and had an eight year run with that organization, which was called Nexstar and then headed out on my own about three years ago. And so, it's been a fabulous journey I very humbly acknowledged when people ask me about my background, I say I'm uniquely unqualified and yet, surprisingly effective in my work.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Exactly. That's that is so true. Okay. That is wonderful. So let me begin where we normally begin with a lot of folks and that is, we all have this experience of COVID, perhaps one of the biggest social phenomenons and work phenomenons in history. What have you learned through this and what have you seen with the leaders that you're working with because of it?

Keith Mercurio: So, the piece that really jumps to the top of my mind as you ask that question is, *I learned to be wrong early and often*. The thing that I witnessed through COVID that was astonishing was the degree to which people all of us myself included early, dug into our original positions.

How dangerous was this? Was it really dangerous? Are masks important? Do we need to wear them? Is distancing making a difference? How is it being spread? And what I think we watched was the human element of the need to be right. And I actually have a keynote on this topic. And in the keynote, *I described that the number one affliction and addiction, ailing humankind is the need to be right*.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yes.

Keith Mercurio: That it costs human beings, more progress, more happiness, more relationships, more success and more marriages than any other need that we tend to seek. And so, what I watched during COVID was, countless people who just staked their claim early and refused to move off their spot as information became available and I think that was really being spurred on by the need to be right.

And what I discovered in my work and in the leaders that I was coaching was they were doing the best they could with the information they currently had. And they consistently, and I too did the best I could to consistently reserve the right to be wrong. And to quickly change our position on whatever it was, as new information became available.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yes.

Keith Mercurio: And I think that this is a skill that is so underrated, but it actually it's one of our core values at Ethical Influences, *be wrong early and often*.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Love it. I like how you've characterized it as a skill. You have to note it and then say, this is gonna be part of how I go about leading now. As opposed to, oh, you have, I have to be right.

Keith Mercurio: Well, and I, you know, I've watched this for years with leaders, but leaders really seem to—I think so many people become leaders or get to leadership positions because they were high achievers and a big part of what you'll see with high achievers is a competitiveness and a tendency to, you know, have the right answer or do the right thing.

And when I start coaching leaders, we work on how quickly they're able to acknowledge that they're wrong. And in fact, what we typically do is we start to move out of that original framework of right and wrong. *Because that need is so intense, to be right, or to make someone else wrong. It makes it a really inflexible and static position and so what we ask leaders to do is reframe it.*

Is it effective or ineffective?

Mitch Simon: Right.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Excellent.

Keith Mercurio: And as soon as we make that shift to effective or ineffective, you find that people are much more willing to reapproach it because there's no need to admit that they're wrong.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yes.

Keith Mercurio: They can just go, is it working for you? and they say, no, I go, okay, well then and this is one of the great lines from Dr. Mike Mandel. *Anything other than what you've been doing is more likely to give you a different result.*

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yes, totally. And then—

Mitch Simon: I have a question.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yeah, go ahead.

Mitch Simon: What I noticed was that when we were going through the pandemic, there was one company I'm working with about a 400 employees is the employees wanted the certainty. They're almost like, pushing for their leader to be right to know the future when, of course nobody knows the future. And I was wondering, how you work with your leaders to deal with that, to say, well, you know, yes, it is, magnanimous and effective to not insist that you're right. And on the other hand, you have all these people that you have lead and they're looking for that rightness or certainty. So, what might you say to that?

Keith Mercurio: That's a great very nuanced question and a great point to explore. So, I'll use this specific example of Brad and Sarah Casebier. They were running a company down in Austin, Texas Radiant Plumbing and Cooling. Okay. And so, these were technicians that were going into people's houses. So, when this thing first hit, their first reaction at their very first blush, they weren't concerned about it. I still remember the first conversation we had on the topic and they rated their concern level at a 2 out of 10 as far as COVID was concerned. And 24 hours of research later came back and they said, we've completely flipped.

And we're going remote immediately. And they started to make all of these extraordinary decisions to make a difference. But what was so important about their ability to do that and to have, *and introduce the uncertainty to their organization was they had trained their people to live in uncertainty.*

And so, what great leadership teams will embrace the unknown except being comfortable, being uncomfortable and make that part of the fabric of the culture. And when a team can recognize that we're being transparent with you, we're telling you everything that we know.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yes. That's important.

Keith Mercurio: We're not hiding anything from you. In fact, we're leaning into the known dangers. *We're leaning into the likely fears that you also share, and we're gonna acknowledge those and expose them. And we're not gonna try to talk you out of them.*

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yes.

Keith Mercurio: In that transparency, there's a level of humility and honesty that I think allows people to be okay in the uncertainty. *What I think fatigues people is when they feel like something's being kept from them and that's an uncertainty. People cannot exist in for an extended period of time.*

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Keith, I love that phrase. What fatigues people it's so true, all that wasted energy.

Keith Mercurio: The other piece of this is because you just reminded me of this Ginny, when you'd nailed down fatigue, because the other fatigue that occurs is when we change our minds too often as organizations, as leaders. And so, you know, this is the art part of leadership, whereas there's not necessarily a science to this, but there has to be a tendency to an awareness to balance.

Like, at what point do we share new information and change direction so that we don't create fatigue.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yeah.

Keith Mercurio: You know, and that's a matter of I think some really honest assessment self-reflection looking at what's effective and what's ineffective and asking yourself if we did or didn't tell these people this information. And something were to happen. Especially with COVID where it was like literally life and death in the early stages of it. We could, we truly, you know, be proud of the way that we served and led this team.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: I love that. Can we be proud of what we're saying and doing. That's wonderful. And what about this notion. So, what can I rely on my leaders? And I think what we have found it's as leaders, you still have the obligation to provide a direction—

Keith Mercurio: that's right

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: of here's what we're trying to do. Here's where we are going now. But we cannot give you this explicit right, wrong, left, right. We have to discover that together.

Keith Mercurio: Yeah. And specifically, because I think there's a greater lesson in this than just what we did with COVID, but you know, these were plumbers and electricians, trades folks, customer service reps, dispatchers, etc.

This was my wife's suggestion, who at the time was a medical student, getting her doctorate in anesthesia. And we're trying to figure out safety protocols. And she said, you know, the number one reason that people fail to follow protocols, safety protocols is because they don't understand why they're important.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yeah.

Keith Mercurio: It's not that they don't know how to do it. And you know, the phrase that I never knew was donning and doffing, you know, PPE like Personal Protective Equipment. So donning is putting it on and doffing is taking it off.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Oh.

Keith Mercurio: Yeah. So, there were all these new things that we were learning about, like how to make sure that we were keeping these technicians safe and giving them choice and autonomy and all this.

So, what we ended up doing was we put together a quiz. With three known journals. I think one was Harvard at the time one was Johns Hopkins and one was the CDC, which I'm sure. You know, the credibility there by the way, which is a phenomenal example of how to lose people's faith is exactly how the CDC handled and communicated on all of this.

It's a lesson in lapsed leadership. And I don't mean their decisions. I mean their communication. It's not a political statement. This is a matter of like how they communicated. We can explore that, but the reality was that, we put these journals together and had the

employees study them and then teach each other and we put a 20-question quiz together about how is it spread? Why is this important? How long does it at the time live on surfaces, all these different things. And we treated them like medical students.

Mitch Simon: Mm-hmm

Keith Mercurio: and we had an EMT that was in there to help us that day. And he said your employees are better educated on what was at the time Coronavirus wasn't even COVID 19. Our team of EMTs at the—

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Look what you did. Oh my gosh. This is a team, common term intervention technique of interaction, where as you said, you treated them as part of the solution. You gave it to them in the quiz form. You

know, what comes to mind, those classic team exercises, Mitch and Keith. You know, you're on an island and you have to get off and here's the quiz. Do you need a flashlight? Do you need this? And the talking about it led to the richness of the education. I love that.

Keith Mercurio: And Ginny, this comes straight from. Cindy Pautzke and she was, an incredible teacher. She had a company called Power of the Pink Lines, and she taught adult facilitation methodology. And in it, you know, what was really clear is that, when we tell people what to do, they retain about 5% to 10% of that information.

But when we turn them into teachers they'll retain anywhere from 90% to 95% of the content. And so, everything that I do from a training standpoint is designed around participant centered methodology, where we turn the participant into the teacher and they become responsible for the content. And from a leadership standpoint, I just can't express how important this is because anyone that's listening to this has had the experience of saying, I have told them that this many times.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: And even worse, I sent out the email six times,

Keith Mercurio: Oh my God, please stop. By the way, nobody more likely to have not read that email than me.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: I wanna move on because you did reference it, to your ethical influence model.

Keith Mercurio: Hmm.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Now it has, four quadrants, so could you not only tell us about it please, or, help us think it through and how did it evolve to.

Keith Mercurio: I think this is a great place for us to spend some time too, because as I was thinking about like, what do I really hope for your listeners to walk away from this conversation with that's applicable and meaningful? I think the four quadrants will lead us there. And I can kind of share that as we go, but ***the four quadrants are, they're awareness of self, influence of self, awareness of others, and influence of others.***

And these may sound familiar to anybody that's essentially studied emotional intelligence. They're fundamentally drawn from that—

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: or the Johari window, right?

Keith Mercurio: Yeah. So again, nothing unique here other than the fact that the inside of each one is some counterintuitive, you know, ways of looking at these maybe known topics. And by the way, really good skill for us to learn is *anytime that we hear something ah, I already know that what we have done is we've shut down any non-conscious awareness of what could be learned.* So, it's similar to the I'm already right about this.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yes.

Keith Mercurio: I already know it is one of the things we should really look out for as learners. Is that, that is a dangerous phrase that shuts down learning. Shuts down curiosity. Says there's nothing new here. Anyway, just a side note as it relates to this and other topics. So, in quadrant one, you know, the premises **awareness of self**, and what we focus on there is understanding what fundamentally creates our own state at any given point in time. And so, the way we describe this, you know, your emotional, physical, and mental state, right? *Your mood if you will, creates the lens through which you're experiencing the world around you.* So, as the most simple example, you know, if you're tired, you may react very differently to circumstances than if you're well-rested.

If you're anxious, you'll react different to the very same circumstances than you would if you were calm. So, everyone can relate to this. So, within that premise, what we do is we deconstruct the three cornerstones that create our state at any given point in time. This is familiar if you know Tony Robbins work, he talks about these *three cornerstones focus, language, and physiology.* And so, what *we focus on, we find what we focus on grows bigger, what we focus on, we become.*

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yes.

Keith Mercurio: And in this concept, it's a piece of science, which is the reticular activating system. And this is a mechanism in the mind that is processing the 11 million bits of data that the non-conscious is absorbing. And has to filter it down to the 50 bits of data per second, that the conscious mind can handle. All right. So, the way most people will experience this, the classic example, almost any adult can relate to is the last time that they shopped for a car. So, they suddenly became fixated on a particular car that they wanted to buy.

And they got really dialed in on the, make, the model, the color, the package, everything about it. They bought that car and then something almost magical happens for the next month on the road, everywhere they go. But they see that car—

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: that's right—

Keith Mercurio: everywhere. Now this is how the reticular activating system works. And so, when we become fixated on a point of focus, we are now summoning the non conscious to bring it into view. And so, this is how people become so stuck on being right because once we've formulated a belief or an opinion about ourself, about the world or about others, we're now charging the reticular activating system with finding information to support that belief. And this is what creates confirmation bias.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: For the leader and for the whole team.

Keith Mercurio: For anybody, for humans, period.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Right.

Keith Mercurio: This is across the board. This is why we find evidence that supports our existing beliefs all the time. Hence why the flip to like what can I be wrong about is so powerful.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yeah.

Keith Mercurio: Because it turns that on its head and charges it unconscious with a new task.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: And I guess that is the kind of thing you try to do with the leader and the team to help them build this new muscle.

Keith Mercurio: Exactly. And so, you know, what's funny is that, you know, *people always wanna start with the 4th quadrant, which is how do I get other people to do what I want them to do?* Unfortunately like all things we have to start with, first of all, how are you showing up and why? And so, we teach leaders, this concept of three cornerstones of state, and we teach 'em to use their language, both internal and external, you know, what they think and what they say to shift their focus, you know, away from what's wrong to what's possible away from what's bad to what can be available and it's not disingenuous stuff. We work within reality here.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Do you actually help them with language then?

Keith Mercurio: A hundred percent. And so, that's where quadrant two comes into place is now that they know how they're— oh, and by the way, the third cornerstone, I wanna mention this because one of your last guests the woman who spoke about the energy leadership.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yes.

Keith Mercurio: So, she talked about how, you know, by changing your energy, you can change your perception.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yes.

Keith Mercurio: That's what the physiology piece is. You know, Tony Robbins said that motion creates emotion. And so by shifting any one of those three cornerstones, our focus, you know what we're focused on our language, how we're speaking to ourselves or to others, or even our physiology, we can shift our state in an instant. And that's what quadrant two is about. *And in quadrant two, that's where we teach leaders to rewrite their I-Am-Statements about how they show up as the best possible leader that they can be.*

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Now, when you help them through with that, you know, how difficult is that? And think of a leader you've worked with that, it was a challenge.

Keith Mercurio: Well, there's two major roadblocks that leaders run into with their I-Am-Statements. We start out really simple. Like it's a simple template, it's three adjectives. I am a blank, blank, blank leader.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Okay.

Keith Mercurio: And their job is to fill them in. But there's two challenges people have. One is, you know, let's say they come up with something like I am a confident, inspired, and a thoughtful leader. And they come up with a phrase like that, but then they get stuck and they go, but I'm not that way all the time. So, it doesn't feel honest for me to say this. *And what I explain to people is none of us are that way all the time. What you need to search for is what are the ways you're being when you're at your best.*

And then the premise behind this I-Am-Statement is that you are summoning the best version of you—

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: there, you go—

Keith Mercurio: to the table for the task at hand.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: And so, Keith, well, I have found, and in fact, we talked about it at another podcast, the good leaders, the folks that have focused on this that are continually on the path to get better and better with it, then a middle stage might be I noticed, right now I'm not acting from that point.

Keith Mercurio: That's right.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: And they will even then say that to the team. I went off into a rabbit hole there, let me start over. And now they put themselves in their better place.

Keith Mercurio: A hundred percent. And I just had this experience the other day. I led an offsite a few weeks ago and one of the team members, he was frustrated with something I had shared was kind of getting, a bit aggressive by I think by most measures and so on. And I really reacted. I reacted impatiently.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: You got hooked.

Keith Mercurio: I got hooked. Yeah, exactly. That's somebody who's done some deep work, if not, a lot of therapy so that's a perfect language, Ginny. So, I got hooked, and so, you know, it was about three minutes of a multi-day off—

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: but it was like six hours. Was it?

Keith Mercurio: Well, it was that. But then afterwards, you know, a couple team members, and again, I praised them for this. They brought it to my attention and I reflected on it and I said, you know what? You guys are right. That wasn't my best stuff. And I grabbed some time on the phone and I apologized to this guy and he proceeded to say, you know what? That was really bothering me. And he'd spent weeks frustrated with me because of the way that I'd approached it. And it was just an instant, it was an amazing experience.

And it cleared the deck and brought us back to it. And that's the part of like, you know, and I'm not a naturally humble person. I have to work at humility, I mean that's the type of stuff with intentionality. And self-awareness willingness to admit, you know, it's a lot of the tools we've already talked about that I'm in that moment, at least I was able to process and utilize.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: And it's a great story for you to share with other leaders who feeling challenged, you know, with this, as you said, you're not it a hundred percent.

Keith Mercurio: Yeah. And Ginny, that's so good because the thing I keep discovering is— I love what you just pointed out there. People are enthusiastic to learn alongside my learning. They're much less enthusiastic to learn from my teaching.

Mitch Simon: Share with us what that means.

Keith Mercurio: Yeah. So when I share a story like, Hey, I effed this up last week. People are welcomed into learning alongside me, like why have I done something like that? *But when I'm coming from a place of, well, what you really need to do is, and what you ought to think about is, and what you should be thinking is this that's teaching.* And I don't mean to take away from the beauty of teaching, but like when it's me knowing better then versus when I'm inviting people in and saying, this is what I'm learning. And so, that's why there's this need for the constant self-development, because it provides me with current examples of what I'm learning.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Totally. I love it. So let's move to the fourth quadrant. So, you are helping them, guiding them through the stories and even sharing the quadrants themselves. So, now influencing others.

Keith Mercurio: Would you allow me to be a little bit protective of this because we didn't quite finish two and three.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Go ahead.

Keith Mercurio: But typical Ginny, you're dragging me immediately to **influence of others**, like everyone that wants to get there. To conclude the other challenge that leaders have with the *I-Am-Statement is they want to be things like inspiring or motivational and what I teach them in this, or what I share with them in this is you can't decide how you're gonna be for others. You can only decide how you're gonna be.*

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: True.

Keith Mercurio: *And so, instead of being inspirational or inspiring, choose to be inspired. Instead of being motivational choose to be motivated.* Those are the

only things that you can truly unequivocally declare and summon. You can't declare how you're gonna show up for someone else.

Quadrant three is **awareness of others**. And the thing that we focus on there. And this can be, you know, 10 minutes in a keynote, or literally, you know, three to six months of ongoing coaching depending on the format is learning when we ask questions to really ask. And when we listen to really listen and because what we end up typically doing is we ask questions from a place of, you know, being right, making others wrong, trying to like, anytime that you'll hear leaders talk about things like, well, you gotta create buy-in.

You gotta make people think that it's their idea. These are manipulative phrases and this can trigger a lot of people because they might have literally just come out of a meeting where they use that language. But you know, if you say you gotta make somebody feel heard that is indicative of a misguided intent.

Yeah. What about just making sure that somebody is heard. Let them feel what they're gonna feel your job. The only thing you can do is to genuinely work, to hear that person. Yeah. To really listen to what they're saying from a place of curiosity. Again, that was something that came up in that wonderful podcast coming from a place of curiosity versus skepticism or doubt or challenging someone—

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: or acting—

Keith Mercurio: right—

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: acting a role.

Keith Mercurio: And so, this is what turns, you know, leading questions into truly open-ended questions. Like if you're asking questions that start with, well, wouldn't you agree? Or don't you think it's true that, right. That's not a question. That's an opinion with a question mark at the end of it.

So, genuine questions where we learned to say, look, I have some thoughts on this, but before I share mine, what are you feeling? What are you thinking? What are two things that are important to you about this?

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Oh, there you go. Oh, I love it. God, please take me to the fourth quadrant.

Keith Mercurio: You've got it. So, as we move into quadrant for this idea of **influence of others**, this is the rub. This is where this whole thing comes full circle. And it's, you opened with a German term gestalt. I'll open this segment with a German quote from Johann Goethe. See man, as he is, and he'll remain that, which he is. See man, as he ought to be and could be, he becomes that, which he ought to be.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Totally.

Keith Mercurio: And so the premise here is that when we label something, we give it a job to do. So, the moment that I call something a door, its job is what to open and close. The minute fails to do that job. I call it a broken door. All right. And this is what starts to happen with our team members, with people in our lives.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: We start to label them in ways that see them as less than as limited as failing as broken. And we start to relate to them as such. Totally. We see them coming down the hallway with these label signs all over them.

Keith Mercurio: That's right. And it's the only way as a human being that we can experience anything, we label it. We experience life through language and that's how we create our relationship with it. But we act as though that thing comes pre-labeled based on how it's being, not realizing we are the one with the agency to label. And so, you know, this is the final piece is, you know, my dad was a public school teacher, an English teacher for 35 years. Yeah. I'm like the reverse American. I'm the only kid who didn't finish college.

And so, you know, my dad, 35 years, a teacher. And I would come to meet many of the students of his along the way through my baseball career. And these kids said out loud that they liked me because I was Mr. Mercurio's son. That's how much students loved my dad. Now here's the thing. I was on the other end of that for 35 plus year or whatever, 20, probably 20 of years of his career.

And my dad never once complained about a student. Never once. See, he saw people for their best. As a result, they showed up at their best. Now leaders need not mistake this. My dad didn't give everybody A's.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Right.

Keith Mercurio: Okay. He had the highest of standards and he believed that each and every one of those kids could live into those standards. And that he was serving them and honoring them by believing in that ability and by maintaining those standards and helping them find their own pathway to them.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: You're called into an organization. For what reason? They say, well, I'm gonna talk to this guy. And then what steps do you go through? We know you have these quadrants, you're talking about language. You have them go through some exercises. It's a combination of coaching, some training, the leader and the team together. What's the methodology there?

Keith Mercurio: So, the methodology I learned over the years, as far as, like, how do I consult with a business? When I consult with a business, it's a combination of immersion training on a quarterly basis, two to three days of full immersion. And it's in the immersion work that we focus on transformation. So, identity and belief transformation.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Oh, I like that identity and belief.

Keith Mercurio: Yeah. The most fundamental belief of all are the I-Ams and I-Am-Nots of our lives.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Right.

Keith Mercurio: And so you'll notice again, when we go back to the premise where we write an I-Am-Statement. That what we're doing is we're summoning a state, which is a transient version of our identity. We have many I-Ams that are true about us. So, what we wanna do is summon the I-Ams that serve us and serve others as leaders.

So, the belief transformation is critical, the identity transformation's critical, but then what I found over the years, because I would do all these immersion trainings and they'd be sort of, you know, what people would refer to as these life altering, life changing events. But then they'd go back into environments in which they weren't really being supportive.

And so, two other elements came out of—

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: that stood outta them.

Keith Mercurio: Yeah, really truly. They get rung out of all this joy that they brought back and this hope. And so, there were two things that I learned about

that that was where I recognized the need for ongoing coaching. And so I'll coach these leaders every other Monday.

And again, that's where they provide the content. They're coming with the content and we're coaching. And what that does is it reinforces the beliefs while continuing to support the new behaviors of the leader. And then the other key piece is I will not work with a business in which I'm not working with the highest level of leader in the business.

So, many businesses reach out to me and they say, I'd love to bring you in. My team really needs it. And that is the number one flag. And this is a key philosophy because, you know, similar to what I shared earlier about people wanting to learn alongside my learning, same thing goes for leaders.

There's a lid that we create, but it's not a matter of how high or what level we've achieved in our careers or our learning. It's the rate at which the trajectory at which we continue to learn informs the trajectory at which our teams will grow along with us.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Okay.

Keith Mercurio: And so, the moment that we think that we've achieved a particular level, that requires no more development, we lose gravity. We lose gravity to continue to show our team members what it looks like to be humble and learning and growing.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: I love to use that term. They're learning finished.

Keith Mercurio: It's a great term. That's fantastic. So, philosophically those conversations begin and then I explained a couple of things to people at first is that this is not for the faint of heart. This work is not for the faint of heart because once you've uncovered blind spots, you don't get to cover 'em back up again.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yeah. Nice.

Keith Mercurio: And so we don't get to go back. I think even in my own work, I can acknowledge that, you know, sometime people ask me or often ask me if I'm happier as a result of this work. And I would say probably not. In fact, probably quite the opposite. But I do know that I'm having a bigger impact on the world around me than I would've had I remained. And so it's really making that decision, like, is the pursue happiness or is the pursue contribution and joy.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: And that's a choice.

Keith Mercurio: Yeah.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: That's a choice. I remember asking a coach who was helping me through a transition. And then I sat down and I go, why am I the one always to do this? Who's taking care of me? And she said, well, you made the choice.

Keith Mercurio: Yeah.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: And that's what we do. And that's why we do the podcast.

Tell us, How can people get in touch with you?

Keith Mercurio: The easiest way, there's the traditional measures. Find me on LinkedIn, find me on Instagram, find me on Facebook, but *ethicalinfluenceglobal.com* has my content and availability. There'll be a template on there for building out their leadership mantra, their I-Am, and They-Are statement—

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: fantastic—

Keith Mercurio: which is what brought us through the four quadrants. And, you know, there was something that when we were briefing for this. I had shared with you to please not give me any questions or anything in advance. And the reason for that is that my preparation for this was my mantra. To do exactly the work that I do. And my mantra, it's a little bit more involved than the one that I teach because I've been doing it for so many years, but, it's to say, I am an instrument for learning and not the source.

I am kind and patient and committed to seeing these people at and holding them to their very best.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Love it.

Keith Mercurio: And these people are brilliant and courageous and in the perfect place in their lives for our paths to cross.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Ah, I've gotta copy that for sure.

Keith Mercurio: And so, that's my mantra. And when I show up as that person and see others as those types of people, I show up at my best.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Yes.

Keith Mercurio: And I trust that guy, that me at my bet will know exactly what to say. Will have the right answers or whatever you want to call. It will summon the proper stories and bring the right temperament that wants to bring people in. And heck, I don't know, maybe the summon, the best of my gestalt.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: And the others that you're interacting with. Oh, you are so right. Mitch.

Mitch Simon: Well, Keith, thank you so much. That was transformational.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: That was lovely.

Mitch Simon: And, just as someone who loves the work you do and loves doing the same work. And I just have to say, actually I am happier as a result of this work. I think I was dumb and blind, before this work, but, you know, having the tools and the resources for those of us who've done this work, I am happier and I stay happier.

So—

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: that's great—

Mitch Simon: my story sticking to it. Thank you, Ginny. Thank you to our beautiful, wonderful listeners. Please share this podcast with your friends, your colleagues, your family, and we look forward to seeing on the next episode of Team Anywhere.