



# Keystone Partners

**Recorded Message:** The Hennessy Report from Keystone Partners. A free flowing conversation with leaders in the HR community talking about themselves, the industry and their work. Brought to you in cooperation with NEHRA, the Northeast Human Resources Association.

**Dave Hennessy:** Welcome to The Hennessy Report. I'm Dave Hennessy. Today's guest is Robert Glazer, the founder and CEO of Acceleration Partners. Interesting about Bob's organization, he created this company with no headquarters. And he describes on this podcast how he made a very cohesive organization with nobody working in the same office. Bob was once very cynical about corporate values, value statements. And he's really reversed his view on that over the years, and has actually made Acceleration Partners' values the cornerstone of the organization and the work that he does. In fact, Bob writes extensively on values and entrepreneurship and culture. And Bob was recently ranked on Glassdoor's list of top CEOs for small and mid-size company with a second ranking.

Next up on the podcast is the CHRO of Log Me In, Jo Deal. And now we bring you our discussion with Bob Glazer.

Bob, it's good to have you on the podcast.

**Bob Glazer:** Thanks Dave. Good to be here.

**Dave:** So Eric Anderson, common friend of ours introduced the two of us. You're the second guest that Eric's brought to the podcast. Of course, he brought his founder and boss Bill Cummings to the podcast, so thank you Eric.

**Bob:** And I spoke with Bill this week, so it's all...

**Dave:** Oh, that's right. In fact, he's going to be on your podcast as well.

**Bob:** Yeah, we just recorded it this week.

**Dave:** And your podcast is called Elevate, I believe.

**Bob:** Yeah.

**Dave:** You have had great guests on your podcast. Dan Pink wrote *Drive*, fascinating book about performance. Aron Ain of Kronos, and I had Aron Ain's chief people officer talking about unlimited vacation. I imagine that would have come up on yours as well. And Kim Scott, *Radical Candor*. So, fantastic. How are you enjoying the podcast experience, by the way?

**Bob:** It's good. I learn something new on each. And even like Kim's episode has really become like something that all of our managers listen to and read the book. So, it's been great both internally and externally.

**Dave:** Yeah, for me too. The podcast ... One of the things that I've really appreciated in all of my guests ... of course, they all are so successful and talented. What I've learned is that the common theme is



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courage that they have to act on what they know is right, the right thing to do for their organization, for everybody that they touch and communicate with. So, it's a...

**Bob:** Yeah, you don't get credit for just having it in your head.

**Dave:** Right. These are people of action.

Do you have more time in your day than most people? How do you get all of the what you have going on done?

**Bob:** I don't. I think we all have a finite amount of ... Believe it or not, I think I'm probably better now at what I say yes to and what I say no to, but also what part of something that I need to do. Like I'm a very good writer in terms of getting a thought out that's original. I'm a very poor editor. It would take me three hours to edit the three paragraphs that I wrote. So, you know, I have someone on my team that does that so that I can do the part that I do well.

**Dave:** Get the main idea.

**Bob:** Yeah. And then they can edit it and find all the things that I spelled wrong or, you know, "conjoined" incorrectly.

**Dave:** So, you found a way to make yourself efficient.

**Bob:** Yes. I have a lot of people behind me on my team and I think it's more of a metaphor I think of just organization in general, of like, what's your unique ability, what do you do well, what can other people help support you with and keep kind of moving in that direction? Cause I don't ... I don't have any more time...

**Dave:** No. You definitely don't.

**Bob:** ...than anyone else.

**Dave:** We'll talk about some of those things.

**Bob:** But also, if you focus on those things, those are the things that time sort of stands still for you on. Like it's much easier to do the stuff that's fun and natural than the stuff that you just don't like to do. And if you ever do one of these exercises in the company that kind of elevate and delegate, you find that like what person A likes to do, person B hates. And you find all these ways to move stuff around.

**Dave:** Do you do that in your organizations?

**Bob:** Yeah.

**Dave:** You find ways to move...



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**Bob:** Yeah. We've done it. And there's a exercise that came out of the traction system, the entrepreneurial operating system. It's called kind of delegate and elevate. And there these quadrants around: I like to do it, I'm good at it; I don't like to do, I'm good at it. And within a team when everyone does it, it's amazing. So, what everyone assumes that what they don't like to do...

**Dave:** Everybody doesn't like...

**Bob:** ... I also don't like to do. And the other person much prefers that, you know, repetitive, clear task versus the creative something task.

**Dave:** Wow. That is fascinating.

**Bob:** They end up being able to shift stuff around real effectively.

**Dave:** Do you do that regularly or is it every...

**Bob:** We don't do it as a company. It's a tool that teams can use in terms of...

**Dave:** Okay. Right.

**Bob:** ...but we do that with some coaches. I mean, I think that we look at it, you know, at least once or two ... like what should I stop doing?

**Dave:** Right. Right.

**Bob:** It's a good exercise.

**Dave:** Before we talk about Acceleration Partners and your other initiatives, maybe for our listeners, just a little bit about you, how'd you get down this path that you find yourself on early on? What got you down?

**Bob:** It wasn't straight. I always say it always looks different in the rear view mirror than getting there. I was always focused on company growth. I started working in strategy consulting out of college, then worked at sort of an incubator venture. Thought I wanted to be more on the investment growth side of companies. Even when we started Acceleration Partners, it was kind of helping companies get their stories straight, raise capital, kind of initial growth.

**Dave:** Right.

**Bob:** And I came to realize pretty soon, cause I worked mostly with a lot of consumer businesses, that customer acquisition was sort of the be all and end all for consumer businesses. It wasn't about did he have the better product, did you have the better thing. It was just who can get customers more effectively? And that's sort of how I got into the affiliate world and the performance world, which is really about kind of going to partners, telling them what a customer is worth to you, and then working



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on a performance basis with them rather than making huge bets on advertising. It's really sort of digitizing business development...

**Dave:** I see.

**Bob:** ...and partnerships in a way that makes them scalable.

**Dave:** Excellent. I want to talk about your business. I think, you know, you do some very interesting things in the way you approach goal setting. And I was wondering if you could just talk about that, how you set organizational goals and individual goals inside your organization.

**Bob:** Sure. I mean, it starts sort of at the top. My framework of what I think makes a great company culture is that there's a clear vision of where we want to go. And we, every three years, or now every three years, write a kind of plan, a visual document that says here's what the company is going to look like in three years, The values would stay consistent. And then the goals, which sort of fills in that gap, which is how are we going to get to the vision while staying in service of our values? And we sort of reverse engineer how we want to get there. And that becomes the goals from the top down. They're fully transparent, they're shared with everyone in the organization. My numbers are public, my quarterly tasks are public, my weekly things that I've committed to are public. It's all in the software. And it's great because it creates accountability across the board. So, you know, there's a lot of writing and a lot of...

I'll always love sports analogies in business that no one would want to go to a game if they didn't know the score, they didn't know who was winning, and all this stuff. I think the problem with a lot of companies is just they're going this way one day, that way the other day. Everyone's ... for better or for worse, everyone's really clear at Acceleration Partners where we're going, what the goals are, where we want to be that quarter, where we want to be in six months, 12 months. And that also allows them to sort of self-select out of that, if they don't feel like that's something that they want to do or that they want to be held accountable to those goals.

**Dave:** You talked about values. And I think you've written that you used to be cynical about values.

**Bob:** Very cynical.

**Dave:** Can you talk about that, why you were cynical and how you're views changed over time?

**Bob:** Building the company and as we were growing, you know, one of my favorite business ... Everyone always says like who's your favorite business person who you could meet? And unfortunately, he just died. So, I'm not going to meet him, but Herb Kelleher...

**Dave:** Southwest Airlines, sure.

**Bob:** ...Southwest...because they just built this airline doing the absolute opposite of when everyone else did. And I was at a conference and a guy was talking about how he had interviewed Herb. And he put



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this stat out that from like 1980 to 2000 Southwest made more money than the entire US airline industry combined...

**Dave:** I remember hearing about that.

**Bob:** ...in terms of profit. And he went to Herb. And he says, "Herb. So, what was the differentiator? What was the strategy with everything?" And all he said was, "Culture." Right? And so when I really started to look at what great companies ... like what Southwest was doing, what ... you know, they had these things but they were really, they were operationalize them and they had a lim ... and I'm a very values based person. So it sort of got me rethinking, well, you know, if we're going to do this, we're really going to do it. And these are going to be real values. And here is how we're going to use them, you know, in every part of the business.

And that was also a key inflection point in the business where we sort of set that three year plan. We consolidated the values down to from 6 to 3, and sort of said, "Hey look, this is where we're going. This is actually what we value. We've been through kind of the first, the fifth inning. We know what works and doesn't work. And so if you want to sign up for this, great. If not, it's probably a good time to exit right."

**Dave:** Southwest Airlines. One of the things that I think about when I think about their culture is that the internal culture, the what it was like to work there, was also consistent in their marketing, how they went to the consumer with the fun ads and the silliness and, you know, that's also what it was like to be there as well. So, I thought that was ... yeah.

**Bob:** Yeah. I mean, they're very pure on that. I generally ... like I operate under the strict definition that core values are internal, that they are the ... that marketing slogans and core values, I think a lot of companies mix them and they get in trouble. Southwest did it well. But you see a lot of fashion companies, you know ... To me, a core value is something I need to be able to sit down with you and say, "Hey, you didn't do a great job of ... "

It needs to be something that you can objectively have a discussion around. But the example I give is ... So, United Airlines, right, they have these core values and these things written. But when United had a problem with a passenger, they called the police and threw them off the plane. Right? And there's story after story. There's a story two years ago of ... and I think Southwest, it's like warrior spirit, and service the customer, and there's great stories in the Southwest biography of Southwest employees taking people home at, you know, snowed in airports and letting them sleep on their couch.

And then, I don't know if you heard the story, but two years ago there was a woman who got pulled off a plane right when it was about to take off. And it turns out they had found out her son was in a coma. And so they stopped the plane on the runway, pulled her back, put her on another, rerouted her bags, sent someone to make sure if they were okay. And there was no like rule book that said how to do this, right? But these...

**Dave:** Empower their employees.



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**Bob:** Yeah. These are the actual values versus United's employees, you know, in the same situation, called the police and...

**Dave:** The rules. Yeah.

**Bob:** ... drag something off the plane.

**Dave:** Right.

**Bob:** So both of them had nice things written on the wall. One company, it's just wall art. And the other, it's actually how they expect their people to behave.

**Dave:** How do you make it so it's not wall art inside Acceleration Partners?

**Bob:** Yeah, it's just ... it's just they permeate everything. So we hire on the core values, we do core value shout outs on the call. It's even wired into this tool. When you do a shout out online, you pick one of the core values. We actually have the annual core value awards where you win the core value award at the end of the year. It's just it's part of the vernacular. Our decision to move on from people is mostly usually a core value decision. This person just doesn't own it. They just can't. They don't meet our standard of own it. When we promote people, we talk about how they lived one or more of the core values. When I do the cultural onboarding, I tell stories about the core values, so it just...

**Dave:** It's everywhere.

**Bob:** It is really everywhere. People need to know what they are. You know? Even like the Ritz Carlton, it's got ... They talk about people pull out the card and read. I don't believe that. Like I think you should have three. And if you can't remember at least the names of them, then they're not really helpful in terms of making decisions today.

**Dave:** That's great.

**Bob:** If you want people to perform at a higher level, you know, it can't just be all about work. They need to have a high level of all aspects of their lives. So speak about culture. I talk about how do you create the combination of a healthy and high performance culture? I think there's a lot of healthy cultures that have very little expectations, maybe a family business feeling. And then there's kind of, you know, Amazon, Apple, which is a lot of performance, but a lot of churn and churn and burn.

**Dave:** Sure.

**Bob:** I think people think it's one or the other. And I can tell you, we have a very ... In fact, the people that don't work out at our company probably focus a little too much on the healthy and the supportive and that stuff, and not that we are a very fast paced metric performance oriented business. So, when you don't meet your goals for six quarters in a row, I'm supporting you. I want to. But eventually it's like, "Dave, this is not..."



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**Dave:** Right.

**Bob:** "...it's not working." So ... And you know, we start that discussion.

**Dave:** That's great. I mean, you touched on performance. I know you're not a believer in annual performance appraisals. What is it in place at your organization, Acceleration Partners? What do you do to make sure that managers are having those regular discussions about performance and what does it look like inside your organization? We did talk about it a bit earlier.

**Bob:** Again, you won't be surprised, but it's aligned. It's like everything else. So we use something called the five five five, which also came out of the traction EOS system, because it's all about alignment. So we do quarterly check-ins. We're also, you know, we don't ... Not everyone's on an annual cycle. So, we do merit based raises. We do promote when ready. So it's not like everything happens at the end of the year. It's just also a long time, particularly if you want to go over a developmental thing with someone like to wait nine months. So we were just like ... We are a real-time feedback. Address it when you see it. Have the discussion. Even the check-in is too far to wait. The check-in should be more of like a recalibration, but it's too far to wait to give feedback. If there's a disastrous situation in like a client presentation, like talk about it the next day so you don't have that again.

The worst thing is that we sit down in four months like, "Let me tell you about all the things you pissed me off five months ago."

**Dave:** Yeah, in December.

**Bob:** It just sounds very vindictive. So our check-in is totally aligned. So we would sit down and we go over three buckets of things. How are you doing, aligned to the core values? And which is the kind of best and worst, like needs some improvement? How are you doing related to the five responsibilities, core responsibilities, of your job, which were actually the same things that were listed when you applied for the job, in the job req saying here are the five sort of core performance metrics for the job? And then the last one is the quarterly. So what are the ... We use the rocks or quarterly goals. How are you doing on the quarterly goals that you said that we do? So again, that stuff is all aligned. So the core values are up on the board, that the metrics of your job are up on the board, and the quarterly things that everyone said that they were going to do are up on the board. So we're just reviewing you against those things.

**Dave:** Right. When you have quarterly metrics and everybody's trying to hit those, does that limit the ability to set stretch goals because there's so much focus on these shorter term goals?

**Bob:** No. Because the ... We want to be 80/20. If you're hitting 100% of the goals, then you're probably teaching for the test a little bit. So we want people generally to be hitting about 80% of the quarterly. There's two separate things. There's rocks, which are like things that move the business forward each quarter. And then there's kind of metrics, which are the ongoing things, right? So like client service always has to retain employees. Sales always has to sell. So, they're different. But in general, the way we build our quarterly objectives and goals is to reverse engineer from our one year goal, which is to reverse engineer from our three year vision. So, they're kind of just down payments on the bigger thing.



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And they're all designed to support that. So rather than just ... It's not really a short term thing. It's a down payment on a long term thing.

**Dave:** I see. I see. You're a founder, a CEO, yet you're spending ... Most of the time, you're writing and thinking all about culture. It seems like a lot of your time is focused on culture and organizational dynamics. Do you think this is the new trend of what it means to be a CEO in the years coming?

**Bob:** I think there's more highlighting on it. I think if you talk to a lot of the great sort of leaders of past generations, I mean, that's what they did. They maybe didn't use the word culture as much. But when you talk to real leadership experts, they say, "Look, the leader of an organization should be focused on building new leaders, should be focused on, you know, the culture, should be focused on the strategy and the vision for where the organization is going." I think those have always been the important things that a leader should do. But it takes getting to a certain size and scale to be able to do that. But then they oftentimes just can't get out of the weeds. In fact, I think I could hire much better people to do the other stuff to execute on those areas.

I don't know that a lot of other people could, you know, do that piece. So, back to the earlier discussion about kind of unique ability, right? I mean, you can hire great operators and ... different than hiring someone who can come up with a vision for the organization for the next three years. You know, that typically lives with the founder or the CEO or someone who's thinking in longer time horizon. So, I'm really thinking ... I joke around. I named a great number two President Matt Wolfe who really runs the day to day. You know, Matt runs the 2019 business. I'm focused on the 2021 business.

**Dave:** Got it. Do I understand it right, Bob? That you don't have a physical headquarters, that your staff is totally dispersed and working remotely or do you have a...

**Bob:** We do not. Our Ops team is all here and we use flex spaces. But we do not have an office. And it actually...

**Dave:** There's no headquarters.

**Bob:** ...there is no headquarters.

**Dave:** Wow. So tell me about this. How is this possible? How do you run your business on a day to day basis where people aren't present? And how do you like monitor what everybody's doing? And like ... can you just talk about that?

**Bob:** Well, so go back to ... right. We have the vision, the values, the goals. So the outcomes are clear. And we're performance marketing business. So success is very clear for our clients if we're achieving it. I try to explain it a little to people who have the same dumbfounded look that you have. 'Cause I think it's a little bit like the Navy SEALs in that, you know, the organization has its mantra, it's training, it's code and its values. But people operate in these units of eight. And that's probably, you know, 90% of their experience. So we have these client services teams. We focus on the leaders of those teams. That's a lot of people's day to day. That's who they're talking to every day, the clients are talking to every day. You know, it started because we couldn't get the talent in our industry.



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Then, we started to get the talent, but the clients were everywhere. And we said, "We're in client services. It really doesn't ..." But we have this flexible culture and people, you know, wanting to work in a different way. But also from a business standpoint, if we have this monolithic office, people don't want to come to us. We'd be much better off going to our clients. You know, this week, we actually had client teams out everywhere and meeting with all the clients, going to New York to meet with all the clients. So, there's actually a lot of in-person that happens.

**Dave:** But usually in smaller groups.

**Bob:** In smaller groups. And then the glue that we bring it together...

**Dave:** Yeah. That's what I was curious about.

**Bob:** ... is we do this AP summit every year. It is five intense days of kind of more leadership, culture, social interaction. And I would argue that I think we tend to build deeper relationships at that than passing someone in the water cooler. So that's the type of stuff that we do. We also ... I've tried to write around this cause I think that it's a really different approach and it hasn't got as much visibility of some of the other stuff. But we settle on this hybrid approach. Even though we're remote, we hire in what's called hubs. So we pick cities and we hire in them, because actually it's really hard to hire everywhere. Job Markets and job boards and all that stuff are geographically based.

We actually want to interview people in person in the last round. We want eyes on them. So by having these hubs, even though everyone doesn't go in the office, they get together socially. We move this all company meeting. We go to one of the hubs. Our president will do three hub meetings across the US, or four in a week, and literally sit down with the entire company.

**Dave:** And just bring...

**Bob:** Couple of people who aren't in hubs fly to one of the hubs. So he can touch and have a discussion with everyone. So we really think this hybrid model has worked. And far as being remote, I would tell everyone it forces us to be better at everything. Look, I've been at companies, probably you've been at companies, my first job, my onboarding was like, "Oh you're here. We should probably get you a laptop." You know, that doesn't work remotely. We know that like onboarding is one of the hardest things. So we have people's first two weeks scripted out, every hour of what they're doing.

**Dave:** It forces you to do ... be more disciplined.

**Bob:** Yeah. The package shows up on day one. Their computer gets set up. They get their welcome call. They go into their first classroom training. They do their shadowing. We don't leave anything to chance.

**Dave:** Right.

**Bob:** So it actually forces us to be like world class on a lot of these projects.



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**Dave:** That's amazing. That's really unique. That's awesome. I want to talk a little bit about Friday Forward. Can you tell us about how you came up with the Friday Forward idea, first of all?

**Bob:** It started because I had been to a leadership program. And the focus there by one of the speakers was really on sort of change your morning, change your life. And you should get up early. And I even learned about The Miracle Morning and Hal Elrod's book, which has turned into this massive movement ... And there's some principles about getting up early, reading something positive, writing, focusing on your intent for the day, kind of starting on offense. So I came back, I really started to do that. I ... The reading positive stuff wasn't resonating with me.

**Dave:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Bob:** So I, you know, I had these folders with sort of articles that I had liked and quotes that I had liked, and stories that people were sending. So I decided to just start this email called Friday Inspiration and we had 40 people probably at the time. They're all spread out. So then I would just take a subject that wasn't about our business and I would kind of dive into it about getting better, improvement, kind of on our theme of holistic improvement in people and just write about it. So I started writing, I think it was called Friday. I changed the name a few times. I really didn't think anyone was reading it. You know, maybe month or two in, I'd start getting some notes like, "I really like these, I sent it to my mom. I sent it to my dad." Like I just ... I got some indications that people were reading it.

I was at an event with a bunch of other CEOs and I said to them ... and it was again, it was never ... maybe it would mention our company, but it was never about our company. And I said, "You know, I've been doing this. And I'm getting great reaction when people, it's been a good engagement tool. I strongly recommend doing something like this with your team." And some of them said, "Well, can you give me an idea of like what it looks like."

I'm all, "Well, I'll send you mine. I mean, you can forward mine or you can do your own." So some people did their own and one guy still has had his own for three years. Others just started forwarding it. And then they'd write me feedback and say, "Oh, the company loved this. Or I shared it." And it's like, I wonder if other people would like this. So, I added a few other friends and families, other CEOs to it. This was still like "bcc."

**Dave:** Right.

**Bob:** And so, then people started kind of asking me...

**Dave:** Until you got to the maximum where you couldn't fit any more.

**Bob:** ...if they could be added. And then I said, "Well, I probably need like a newsletter system, but I really don't want it to look like a newsletter." So I just went into the newsletter system and I took the whitest plainest template that I could take that just kind of looked like the thing, and I set it up. And then once I did that, I was like, "All right, let me just ... I'll add a few more people and see." And then I made it so people can sign up. People started signing up. They started at forwarding it cause when they



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forwarded it, they could sign up. And then they'd start asking me about old ones, and I put up the website just to be an archive. And then, it just started kind of going around the world from there.

**Dave:** Right. What are some of the ones that ... any one or two that jump out to you that you're the proudest of or that you feel like got forwarded the most, to use the term?

**Bob:** Yeah, I always look ... I judge by sort of engagement, which is how many ... I hear from people all over the world every week, usually like 25 - 100. And the more people I hear from, the more it sort of resonated with them. So there are a few, the one on The Miracle Morning, and just getting up early and being an early riser has been a huge one. I actually heard it from a ton of people on the love and hate one a few weeks ago. Some of the other ones ...

So, the one that I wrote as a Friday Forward, which then got syndicated to LinkedIn and became ... was a top 10 articles globally in December, and then, *Inc* picked it up and *Thrive* picked it up, was about ... It was called the BS of Busy. And when I wrote it, I wouldn't ... I can't actually predict which ones will resonate, but it was like just stop telling people you're busy. It's kind of a ... that's such a catchall and it just doesn't really ... it shouldn't be a badge of honor. And that's up to like a half a million people now across all the things. So I ... if you'd asked me to predict if that was the one, I couldn't have. Something about that one just resonated every time it was re-posted.

**Dave:** What advice would you give to Bob Glazer 25 years old? Like if you could write a letter of professional or career advice and get it back to you when you were 25, what would you write?

**Bob:** I would write to just act on my convictions. I think I always had strong convictions and value. I think I was probably a little too conservative or sort of conservative entrepreneur, not willing to sort of bet on myself as much, even though I had really strong convictions. I think the biggest flip for me was when I just started, you know, acting on those things where I ... you know, it's easy to say it really strongly, but then not do it or hedge or stay at that job that, you know, you don't respect the guy or woman or whoever it is. So that would be the biggest is just to do it earlier, whatever I wanted to do, and sort of act. I mean, a lot of Friday Forward and a lot of the incredible thing that's come out of them the last couple of years is just acting, writing it, do it, like don't know what's going to happen but it leads to an interesting road.

**Dave:** That's great. Keystone produces this podcast in cooperation with NEHRA, The Northeast Human Resources Association. And every podcast, we have a question that comes from NEHRA YP and the Young Professionals group. So we have Sarah Dumont who is on the Young Professionals committee, right here, as the producer of the podcast.

**Sarah Dumont:** Bob, the NEHRA YP question today is how can a company help a veteran with strong leadership skills assimilate to a corporate culture?

**Bob:** So, that's a great question and I think that it's a huge talent pool that companies aren't tapping into, particularly if you're looking for leadership and discipline and really those types of things. I have ... Everyone I've worked with comes out of that background, I just love and respect, you know, how focused they are. I think the key there is to really work on ... I think, like anything, is to work on finding



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the right opportunities. I think a lot of times, around some of these initiatives, you're trying to take a round peg and put it in a square hole. I found like people, a lot of veterans, particularly in the military background, they are amazing in operational roles and systems roles and things that are really good for them. So, I'd be really putting on a focus on trying to find the roles that match up best to those skills and making introductions in in those areas.

**Dave:** All right, Bob. Now, we have the lighter part of the podcast here, so just some silly questions. What's a book that changed your life?

**Bob:** It's funny. I was talking about this last night. And when people ask me this, I always say the same thing. It was a book they called ... Well, there are a bunch that changed my life, but book they called *Mistakes Were Made But Not By Me*. And it is sort of the definitive book on cognitive dissonance. And I would say that cognitive dissonance is this incredibly powerful force that just affects everything that we do, most of our bad decisions, a lot of our relationships. And when you understand it and you see it everywhere, it's extremely powerful. And I think that that book has been as helpful as any book that I ever read.

**Dave:** Is there anything that comes to mind that ... something that happened that really crystallizes that book for you? Like something in your...

**Bob:** So, I was reading that book when my wife and I were trying to decide ... so part of cognitive dissonance is there ... I mean, the definition is holding two different beliefs at the same time.

**Dave:** That can't possibly be true.

**Bob:** Correct. And most people make bad mistakes because not willing to sort of look at why they're doing something, why they're saying it, why they hold this kind of belief. And they're really just justifying their own decisions rather than looking at things objectively. And I remember at the time my wife and I were trying to decide on a summer camp for my daughter, so this is a while ago. So she was probably about seven or eight. And I was listening to my wife and, you know, we're looking at single sex or coed or Maine or Massachusetts. And anything that anyone advocated for was where their kids went or what they had done. So, no one in this discussion was when someone was saying, "Well, Chloe is this kind of kid and so she'd do well in this type of environment." They were literally justifying their own decision by making...

**Dave:** I want to validate my decision. It was great.

**Bob:** And we do that a lot. We validate our own decisions by making the same recommendation versus ... Even amongst my kids, they're really different. Like I would choose ... I'm always really impressed actually with parents who sent this one to private school and this one to public school. And they're very articulate around, "Well he was just a different kid and he didn't need that" versus like everyone's just on the same program or...

**Dave:** This is the best one.



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**Bob:** ...this is what we do. Everyone goes to XX Prep. Even if that's the worst possible thing for that kid. Because again, that's just what we do. You're just validating the decision that a previous generation did or...

**Dave:** That's a really good example. Could you share something interesting about you that we wouldn't find online, like we wouldn't find on LinkedIn or on your website? Something. An interesting fact or ... something about your life.

**Bob:** Well, a couple of things. I have kind of obsession with home renovation and improvement. So I've ... My wife and I had a grand compromise. So 10 years ago we built a house and I ... We were not going to live through projects anymore, but we had lived and renovated an apartment, then we lived and renovated through a house. Then we built a house, then I created a basement. But then, you know, having kids and building a business slowed me down. But I ... That is something I'd like to do more of though as I have the time. It's fun to ... It's similar for me. It's like taking something and improving it versus ... and finding some value in it that no one else saw.

**Dave:** That's great. If you could go to dinner with any living person, who would it be and why?

**Bob:** He's just recently not living. So can I ... I'll answer that. But yeah, I would've loved to have dinner with Herb Kelleher. I just, you know, so impressed what he did. I love when people ... you know, there's a lot of money and a lot of success that's made being in the right time on a bubble. But he operated ... It was what someone says, you know, one of the worst businesses like airlines...

**Dave:** Nobody made money in it forever. Right.

**Bob:** ... with a value prop that was low cost and just did it better than everyone and made more money. And so you gotta be doing something that's fundamentally different to do that. There was no airplane bubble wave to ride. I read his biography, I read his stories, and he was just uniquely his own person. I would've loved to just chat with him and learn about...

**Dave:** Kind of your business idol in a way. Right?

**Bob:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Dave:** Great. Bob, it's been really great having you on the podcast.

**Bob:** Thanks, Dave. It's been great to be here.

**Recorded Message:** Thank you for listening to The Hennessy Report from Keystone Partners. Be sure to subscribe to listen to all of our conversations with leaders in HR. Go to [keystonepartners.com](http://keystonepartners.com) and click on the podcast button.



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