

Speaker 1:

[inaudible 00:00:00] for now than ever before. [inaudible 00:00:04] natural leaders. It's time to step out, take control of your business and decide to be your very best as a leader right now.

Mike Paton:

This is Mike Paton with today's episode of the Lead Now podcast. And today I'm super excited to introduce David Reiling. David is the CEO and chairman of Sunrise Banks and the author of the book Fintech For Good. Under David's leadership, Sunrise Banks has become the first bank in Minnesota to be certified as a Community Development Financial Institution or CDFI, a Certified B-Corp, and a member of the Global Alliance for Banking on Values. David advocates for FinTech in the community banking sphere and highlights its benefits for customers and businesses within our ever-changing digital landscape. David, thank you for being here. Welcome to the show.

David Reiling:

Mike, great to be with you today, been looking forward to this.

Mike Paton:

Yeah. Great. So I'd just like to start with you giving a little two minute history of Sunrise Banks, where you've been, where you are, where you're going, let the listener understand your organization a little bit.

David Reiling:

Sure. Hang on. Because this isn't probably your traditional banking story, but it really started for me as a teller is where my interest in banking came and the summer that I was a teller, the bank I was in got robbed twice. And I thought that was super exciting. And from a teller line perspective, you can see what happens usually in the entire branch. And I thought the president of the bank at that time was an idiot. He just didn't know what was going on. I was quick in that space to say, "This is what I want to do." I totally understand this. I love money. And I love talking to all these different people and it's just exciting. So there was kind of an [inaudible 00:01:53] basis right there where my mind was. And go to college, start a business in college, sell it.

I ended up actually being a banker in South Central Los Angeles. So this is the bank robbery capital of the world. So my early years in banking defined by bank robberies, it's a matter of fact though. The first two weeks I was a trainee at a bank called First Interstate Bank. The bank got robbed three times. And so I just thought this was the normal course of business for banks. I go on, I had a great experience in Los Angeles in the urban core in South Central. Learned a lot about gangs and crime and cops and how to navigate in urban core and so that was kind of the foundation. Moved back to Minnesota to buy a bank with my father, which happened to be in the Frogtown neighborhood of Minneapolis and St. Paul. So an immigrant community, but nowhere near the level of issues of South Central LA. And well people in this community thought it was dangerous. I was like, "This is nothing compared to what I know."

So it was really at the very beginning of turning this bank around, which was about to fail a shared valued proposition. If the community succeeds, the bank will succeed. If the community fails, the bank will fail. And so we were hopeful at the time that even if the bank failed, what we bought it for in the real estate value, we could get part of our money back. So that was kind of the basis of where we're at. But it was really this mission, if you will, that it was ingrained in, if our community does do well, we

do well. If they fail, we fail. And so that was really the basis of the mission of the bank. And it so happened that at that time, the Hmong, Southeast Asians, Lawasians were the immigrant group in this Frogtown community.

And just so happened that my Italian grandmother was an immigrant, lived in this community. I knew it well. And so I had an empathy, if you will. I had really, what I would call an empathy advantage for immigrants. And that was the basis of engaging with them, helping them get access to money, capital and the financial service system so they can buy houses and cars and businesses and really be successful. So the bank could be successful. So it, again, in that community engagement standpoint, we just innovated one way shape or form and partnered with whoever we could to share risk and make money available to people that generally would be underserved or left out of that financial system. And we did really well on that. So in essence, we became a Hmong bank. So 35% of our staff we're Hmong, about 45% of our clients were Hmong.

And again, their success was our success and we just kept growing together. It happened that my father owned two other small community banks in town. He asked me to run those because he saw this kind of success that was happening. And we really, at that time, you had mentioned a certification called that CDFI, that Community Development Financial Institution, that's really where that started to solidify. And we really started to be unique in our business proposition, in the Twin Cities because we were the only bank ever to have that certification. And we still kind of hold that today. So now I start running multiple banks. We put this mission in place of really it's a do well, do good mission. And the bank started growing and running three separate chartered banks and two separate holding companies. Eventually we merged it all together to one holding company and one national bank charter. The bank today is about a billion foreign total assets, starting with the one bank at about 14 million on a good day.

And so it's really interesting how the bank has evolved. We really used our local marketplace as kind of the incubator and innovator for different ways for people to get access to the financial services system. So today Sunrise really has two business models. One you might think of from a traditional community bank, we have six branches and a headquarters building. And we focus in on small business for jobs, affordable housing. We bank a lot in nonprofits because of the values and mission alignment. But we also have a production office in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, which houses our national products and our FinTech business. And so this really partnering with financial technology companies who have some type of good in them, meaning they're going to help people build their savings, build their credit history, stay at a payday lending, get access to loans for the first time. But these businesses are really scale businesses. They're national in scope, in some cases they're international.

And as we start to see more and more technology companies cross border. And so that business, while the mission remains the same in both, that's a highly scalable business, a very intense one in terms of the technical skills that are needed, but also it's the mission consistency at the end of the day, both in our place-based local business, as well as the people business on a national that's kind of our True North.

Mike Paton:

Got it. What a story. And it started with you getting robbed at the bank you were a teller at, being exciting.

David Reiling:

Exactly.

Mike Paton:

Very interesting story. One of the things I've come to understand about you is your mission isn't for the mission's sake, that you recognize a parallel as a leader between having a strong mission and achieving business results. Talk about how you develop that mindset and what you've learned.

David Reiling:

Yeah. That mindset maybe comes from a very authentic place as to who I am. And maybe if there's a discovery of myself over time, maybe it Socrates and in know thy self. And so I've always had this curiosity of really understanding myself better. And from my mindset, I always thought if you consider your customer, treating your customer well, and with respect, as well as your employees and your community, I really looked at it as a business as a component of a citizen of a community. And again, the better the citizen, the better the community. And it's really in that framework, I think of doing well and doing good was just, I don't know if it's ingrained in my head. And I think it has some roots quite frankly, in my father and upbringing, when I just thought it was the best way to do business. And it was a very successful way to do business.

So if I had to give you more or maybe analytical listeners a way to think about this, a lot of businesses think of their mission as a negative to the actual margin of the business, the profitability. So it's a mission minus, it's a minus sign between the mission and margin. And then really the corporate philosophy of corporate social responsibility. In a lot of cases, what you'd find there is that a business has its core business. It does what it does. And on the side, they kind of do this good as an afterthoughts, kind of this plus the mission a little bit is going to be a formula. And you see a lot of greenwashing in that, there are really [inaudible 00:08:38] and the most social or whatever it may be.

Mike Paton:

Almost as a necessary evil of-

David Reiling:

Exactly.

Mike Paton:

-Price of having to run a business. Right?

David Reiling:

Precisely, it's a cost. Sunrise, the mission multiplies the margin, the more good we do, the more business we get, more and more partnerships we attract, the more opportunities come to us. There's just got to be some universal law that the more good you do, it comes back to you. And sometimes it takes a bit of courage or faith that that's going to happen, but it happens to us all the time. And so it's in that business framework that our mission really drives the money, the business, the profitability.

Mike Paton:

Yeah. It's interesting David, take us back to the early days where it was so crystal clear to you that if the Hmong community failed, that had been underserved for many, many years, your bank would fail. And it feels to me like that's where this connection was strengthened if not formed, that the clarity that your business depended on the success of the people you were serving, how did that develop? How does it

inform the decisions you and your team make every day? And how would other leaders be more in tune to that reality? Because as you say, in many organizations, it doesn't feel like they are.

David Reiling:

Yeah, it's interesting. Again, I talked about that little bit of an empathy advantage, and I think that advantage coming out with spending time with my Italian grandmother. I mean, I played stickball in this neighborhood with the kids who were immigrants at the time and were just low income kids and we were just kids, right? So we have literally not a baseball bat but a stick and a tennis ball. And that's what we were playing, but we're just kids playing. And I don't know, I think it was in that space that I got to just understand the fabric of who their parents were and what the neighborhood was like. Besides I think it just made me a little tougher. I would say I'm the youngest of four. So my parents were a little more moderate income at this time. My dad had owned his own business, his own real estate company.

And so they would pick on me a bit as being an outsider and a rich kid and so forth, but it was engagement and having kind of earned the respect of those kids at the time. And so again, these are just kind of good, hardworking folks. And if you really understood who they were, you knew the financial system as I had come to know it then wasn't a place where people of modest means we're going to get a fair deal. And I thought that was baloney. I mean, they just were not getting a fair deal. The little guy gets screwed. And so that just kind of me off to put it bluntly. I just didn't think it was fair. As a matter of fact, at the bottom in the pyramid, what I really saw was there's a huge business opportunity here. If you just had some understanding and some empathy of who these people are, they want to repay the loan just as much as the wealthy person does.

So I really saw a business opportunity as well as a social opportunity to do well and do good at the same time. And I couldn't think of why you wouldn't want to do that. What a nice thing to do, what a great way to be successful.

Mike Paton:

Cool.

David Reiling:

I'll give you one other aspect because this is part of maybe the know thyself piece of it. If you ever read an obituary, I've never read an obituary that said, "Oh, he was a great guy. He was a billionaire period." right? Never. It never comes up if you go to funeral, oh, he was super wealthy, no. He loved his kids, he was good to the community, he was a wonderful person. Might've been wealthy, it never comes up. So is money the true test of happiness or the value in life? I think there's more than maximizing shareholder value. I put it in the context of my employees, that it's a double paycheck. You get a financial paycheck to support your family and everything else, but you get an emotional paycheck to kind of fill your soul and that you feel like your work is worthwhile and meaningful. That is a good place to be.

Mike Paton:

Right. And at the same time, I've heard you espouse to your team that the business needs to be successful in order to continue fueling the continued good work. So talk about that mindset. And how do you focus on both business results to drive mission work and mission work driving business results? How does that work for you?

David Reiling:

Great. Yeah. I get put in this box or stereotype or bias a lot and they're like, "Well, you're a mission bank, so you don't really perform well. You're kind of the do gooder. You're kind of worse than a wimp when it comes to leadership and management." And I'm like, not so much. It's really easy, in my opinion, to only think about the shareholder. Things are black and white. How easy is that? If you want to do well and do good, you have to live in the grey. You have to make decisions that aren't perfect. You don't have a clarity of, this is the only thing that we report to. And so it's in that space where you can't be a wimp and run a, quote-unquote social enterprise that's a for-profit, you have got to run a good solid business, metric business ingrained in your mission, that's integrated and deliver on both sides.

You've got to deliver on the money side and you got to deliver on the mission side. And so it's harder. It takes more work. It takes more thinking and it takes a bit more sense of rolling up your sleeves and getting, I'll say dirty in some cases, but having adult conversations and ethical conversations that don't have clear answers. And so it's in that moment where you got to go, how do we balance it? And in some cases you make a decision that, you know we got to make money on this deal. This is where we got to price it, or we can't do it. Or you're like, that's all right, we should just try to break even because the good that happens in this community will benefit so many people. And you can look at value in several different ways. And so that's the space, but you cannot be a wimp and run a social enterprise that's for-profit you got to be able to do both.

Mike Paton:

Yeah. And I've observed that with your team examining complex issues from every single angle, it does take longer. And it does require you to step outside your sort of natural bent and think about the other angles to nearly every strategic decision you make. So kudos for leading that effort well. I think we're going to probably come back to great result and having a great purpose in a minute. But I want to go back to the earliest time in your life when you remembered seeing someone lead or seeing leadership capabilities displayed and how that resonated with you and what you learned and what you decided about yourself as a result of that discovery. What's the first person you saw lead in your life.

David Reiling:

Yeah. That one is pretty clear to me actually. And it was my father. And I remember the time being a young kid and going into his little office in our house. And my dad had a title that he was the King of the slide rule. Now I'm taking people back in time. They may not know what a slide rule is, but it's this little white ruler where the middle slid out and you could calculate payments. Of course, as a kid I would take and I would slide it out and pretend it was a gun, so playing around the room. So I went into his office, I asked him, "What are you working on dad?" He said, "Well, I'm trying to save a building." And I'm like, "What do you mean save a building?" He goes, "Well, there's this building in downtown St. Paul called the Dorothy Day Center. People go there and get hot meals and they're homeless."

And so I was trying to comprehend what homeless? They don't have a place to live? He says, "No, they live on the street." And it was winter. And I'm looking out his window and it's January and it's freezing like, geez, that doesn't sound very good. And I'm like, "What are you trying to do?" And he's like, "I'm trying to save the building. It's in foreclosure." Now my dad has a great real estate strategic mind. And so he was figuring out how to buy the building, lease it, sell it back to Dorothy Day in a contract for deed in which they could afford and ultimately have them own the building and save it. Because he knew in the back of his mind, if they lost the building, they would never get the zoning again in which to do it.

So again, this is what I find out later in my kid mind what he says, "I'm trying to save the building. So these people can get a hot meal every day." And I'm like, "Well, why are you doing this?" He says, "Well, some buildings are just buildings, but some buildings stand for something." And so that just stuck with me. It's where I think you find someone who has a set of technical skills, but they're using it for a bigger purpose. And you could just see the joy in his mind in terms of trying to figure this out and putting the leadership together and his buddies together to get them enough money to buy it and make this work and make the math work. And so I think it was in that context where was maybe the first example of, for something that's bigger than I am for someone who's in a worse position, I can help.

And I'm doing this because nobody else will. And I have the technological capabilities and the leadership in order to do it. And so that moment to me was, wow, he has a passion. He's got... There's something here. You could just see the focus and the joy in his mind in doing this. That to me, no one said he had to do it. didn't have to, but he did it. So I don't know in that space where nobody is looking where yet[inaudible 00:17:44], that leadership capability, I think that authenticity of integrity is what sticks me today.

Mike Paton:

Did you set out to be a leader as a result of your closeness with your father, or did you set out with a purpose and find that leading was necessary along the way?

David Reiling:

Gosh, I would say the example of my father probably put me in a place where maybe I took it on naturally, but as I look back in my life, whether it's sports teams or other things, I always found myself in a leadership role. I can almost not think of a time that I wasn't. And so it's a place where I'm comfortable with responsibility. The intense moments are great. I like being at bat when it's the ninth inning and there's two outs and the bases are loaded and it's a full count. I want to be the guy. So it was maybe an in that type of energy. And maybe the reason why I like bank robberies is they're exciting. I mean, they're intense moments. And so it's in that space where I feel the calmest and most competent, secure in myself.

Mike Paton:

Yeah. So whether your father or somebody else, tell me about the best leader you've ever seen, or the qualities of great leaders that you try and emulate.

David Reiling:

Yeah, the best and worst leader question is always an interesting to me. I think in my assessment of the best leaders, I kind of analyze them and I picked different things out of leaders. And even the worst leaders have a leadership style. In a lot of cases, I'll go there first to the negative. I find that the worst leaders have one leadership style, nothing else. They're a hammer and everything's a nail. And it doesn't matter the situation or the environment they're swinging the hammer at the nail. They hit it sometimes, they miss and hit their thumb or the other. It's really not a well-developed leadership style. You might be intelligent, but you might lack emotional intelligence or situational intelligence. It's that piece of it where I think leaders really fall down. The best leaders, I would say, are ones in which they can look at the broad spectrum, bring their authentic self to the place.

And even in those cases, when they said, "I'm not the person for this job or this leadership role right now, because this is what I see. And here's my skillset." You need someone like this. That honesty

is where I think real leaders shine. They're authentic in that space. I think other leaders really are ones, especially when it comes to people, they are servant leaders. And they're looking to get the best out of their team, which they know in the end, a team is going to accomplish far more than some rugged individual who thinks they're a leader doing it themselves. It might work for a while or to a certain point, but to be able to develop a really good team and coach them, anything is possible, anything is possible. And so I think it's in that space that I see really good leaders can really lead and inspire people, but do so from a place of authenticity of who they are and knowing what they're good at. And what they're not.

Mike Paton:

You sit in a unique position in that because you're so ingrained in community leadership in the communities surrounding your business offices, I think you see people running communities or leading communities and people running businesses played the game of leading all day long. And so talk to us about the similarities or differences you see between a politician or an informal community leader and a successful business leader. Are there similarities? Are there differences? What do you see?

David Reiling:

Wow, that question... I think there's a lot of similarities between really good business leaders and really good community leaders. They're applying their skill sets and their talents just in slightly different ways. I still think there's a component in those leaders that goes back to who they are in authenticity. If they are truly good people with good communicators and can coach and manage people to be their best, whether you're engaging in a community and trying to inspire this community to do something bigger than themselves, or running a business with a hundred employees in which you need these employees to not only show up every day, but be motivated and accomplish something while the results of these two are different, it is the same, I think, type of leadership authenticity that needs to be brought to the table. You could be a political or a community leader and your talents might be of listening and empathy and really taking in all this data as an input and coming up with a really unique solution.

Or a combination much like if you're a business leader, again, listening to the environment in this situation as to, Oh, this is a new product or service that might be very profitable or beneficial to a consumer. So again, I think skillsets at their core are very similar, but different whether it's a profit or whether it's some type of community outcome you're looking for.

Mike Paton:

Yeah. Let's talk about the inverse of great leadership for a second. And if you could just rattle off the list of attributes or characteristics or behaviors that you think get leaders in trouble, just so we know the before and the before and after picture.

David Reiling:

Gosh, I think that in the worst leader standpoint, it's all about them. It doesn't matter what they say now. They changed their mind later. The only good deal is a deal that's good for them. And if it changes, they will change without hesitation and without remorse or any feeling of how it impacts anybody else. That type of impact is destructive. And it's destructive to people, it's destructive to businesses. And ultimately I think it's destructive to a success of a business or a community. So I think self-centeredness, lack of ethics, but really almost to a sociopathic type of state. And I've seen this in multiple ways. As a matter of fact, the bank that I talked about, that my father and I bought, the gentleman who originally started and own it is exactly what I'm talking about. He did federal prison time twice. So that's the end

result of a bad leader and one who only takes himself into account. And they will [inaudible 00:24:06] other people in the process, to me, that's the worst.

Mike Paton:

So I hope the listener paid attention there. If you find yourself in federal prison for a second time, you should re-examine your leadership principles.

David Reiling:

Yeah.

Mike Paton:

Is that a fair...

David Reiling:

[inaudible 00:24:18]. Yeah.

Mike Paton:

Good to know. I want to talk about the past a little bit, and then I want to talk about the future before we wrap up. So one thing I remarked as you were sharing the story of how Sunrise Banks came to be is that you were a banker in Los Angeles during the Rodney King days. And here you are a community banker in Minneapolis, in the wake of the George Floyd incident. What do you think has changed and what do you think hasn't changed and how can we business people who want to do good in the world have a positive influence on the future based on what you've seen over these last 40 years?

David Reiling:

Yeah. Great question. And a bit of a complicated one. So the Rodney King riots was definitely a very dramatic time for me because I was there. I had never seen a city burn. I had never seen weapons to that degree, even having had worked in South Central LA, I didn't know the racial riff underneath not having been from Los Angeles between the Koreans and the African-Americans, which was part of this underlying problem. I certainly had a window into the police force and seeing behaviors in a police force, some which I would put them in the hero category and others I would put them in the worst. And so having witnessed both of those, I saw the same thing come out again. And so I had a lot of baggage coming into the civil unrest in Minneapolis. And so it reminded me that we really didn't make that much progress at all in the time between the two events. It may be was just festering and building, which I think is really the result of why there was so much civil unrest, not just in Minneapolis, but across the country.

And so I think it's in those spaces where there's definitely learnings to be had. I think the difference this time is it's not localized, the engagement at all levels of not just race, but business, nonprofit, and government, there is an opportunity now in which to really look at some systemic problems and issues and address them. What we're finding is with our engagement, not only with community people, but also with large corporate organizations, how can we help? How can we be a part of a solution. Now again, I think that starts to speak of the best in business and in individuals that I have some skills or talents, I have talent in treasure that I can use. Who can I partner with to help? And again, I think it's in these partnerships and collaborations and this ability to listen first and then figure out how to collaborate.

Mike, if I think there's one thing in today's, particularly in Minneapolis and St. Paul that's needed more than ever, it's going to be leadership that to how to coordinate all these different people who want to help. We have found that the cities, given these civil unrest have taken a real hit in that people don't trust them. And so it's coming back to community leaders, businesses, nonprofits, and others, and individuals to fill that leadership and to dive in and really rise up. I think we're going to find some really good, true leaders that find their way out of the ashes and take a stand for things, but do so in a way again, that brings people together as opposed to dividing them and being able to innovate and leverage in new ways. So, gosh, when you put a civil unrest on top of a pandemic, sounds kind of crazy. But this crisis that we have, everything is on the table. Every different possibility is there.

So as crazy as it is now is a awesome time to think about change and to think about kind of unity and innovation in these different spaces and how... And these are not easy questions. How do we police? You do need a police force, but you need other resources as well. And so how do we best solve these problems? Where are the root causes? Again, I think there's a lot of components here in which are difficult problems that take time, but I think it's as simple as listening first and then telling our story and being not afraid to really engage in uncomfortable questions and answers as to how do we move forward and make progress.

Mike Paton:

Yeah. And a very lovely and important answer to a complex question. And also the motivation for starting this podcast David, if you don't mind my sharing, my belief is that if the individual leadership capabilities of the entrepreneurs and leadership team members that I've seen do heroic things inside of businesses are not deployed at difficult problems like this, we can't count on government agencies alone or big corporations alone to throw money or yelling at the problem and expect it's going to go away. We all need to step up and do what we can to leverage our own skills and find a way to listen and lead. So well said and grateful to share that message with a larger audience for sure.

David Reiling:

Absolutely. I couldn't agree more with you in terms leadership is the key.

Mike Paton:

Well, let's talk about the future of banking and FinTech because you're in an industry that is changing at the speed of light and so help the listener understand where things are going and how the work you're doing is going to help unite people.

David Reiling:

Yeah. So banking is being completely disrupted, it's being digitized. And so as a result, it is every facet of financial services and not just banking as you think about a checking and savings account, but your insurance, your investment portfolios, et cetera, et cetera. There is a financial technology company today working on every little facet, niche, cranny, corner in which to make a better customer experience, to make it very accessible and convenient and easy to use. I mean usually at a very fair price. And so when you take an old model like banks, you just got to think of you go from a blockbuster model where you got to go in to a place and get a physical tape and bring it home. And you get penalized when you don't, it's just archaic, right? And so obviously Netflix comes in and they started out by sending out DVDs.

It was just a slightly better model, but then quickly evolved into the streaming and the digital. They digitize this service and that's what's happening to banks. You're just going to see fewer and fewer branches, but it's not going to mean that there's fewer services. It's just going to be over your phone or your computer. And so it's going to be more convenient and the use of data and technology can really help that. So we're really striving to do is again, when we were talking about the folks that have lesser means, the bottom of the financial pyramid, the digital platform is a great place to again, make financial services more accessible, more convenient, easier to use and explain. It can be in 14 different languages at the same time, we can explain to you in pictures, what it's going to be in real time. And as a result of that, everyone is better.

Our economy is better. More people are participating. They have access to credit. Their credit bureaus can get built, or they have an opportunity at least to build their credit histories. And so it's in this space where I think financial services is really going. And if I was to just maybe take it from a different level once, you will find much like the Uber effect. So when you take an Uber or Lyft, you just get out of the car and the payment is done. And so there's got to be a bank behind the Ubers or the Lyfts to move the money from your account to their account. So when you think of financial technology and where a bank like Sunrise may sit, we're going to sit in the background, we're either going to move the money, we're going to store your money in terms of deposit, or we're going to lend you some money.

Now that's what a bank does. It's almost utilitarian in terms of electric company, right? Store, move, lend money. There's one more key element to this and that banking is super regulated. So we have to do compliance to make sure that these financial technology companies, as well as the bank is ultimately responsible for is meeting all the compliance in those sectors of move, store and lend money. And so banks are just going to continuously be challenged with new technology and really for the betterment of business and consumer in terms of their ability to access financial services. And so it is exploding. It's an exponential curve. It's not an incremental one. And so Sunrise having engaged in that, we're probably one of 25 banks in the country that's really ingrained in the development of banking as a service, if you will.

Mike Paton:

Yeah. You didn't expressly say this, but it sounds to me like the ancillary benefit of everything you just described is that you're reducing the number and exclusivity of gatekeepers to services that would benefit everybody. There's less of a red velvet rope outside the club and more of a, here's where you go to get this essential service for moving money, storing money or borrowing money. Is that a fair summary?

David Reiling:

Totally fair assessment. Yep. And it all depends on where you are at and what services you need. There will be something that'll be customized for you. So whether you're just starting out and you need a check in your savings account as your first thing, or you need one for your child, there'll be a specific thing for that. If you are trying to do an estate plan that's complicated there's going to be specific experts in technology that can help you do that as well.

Mike Paton:

Cool. Thank you. Back to leadership for a second, your greatest leadership success and your biggest or scariest or most challenging leadership decision.

David Reiling:

Wow. You got to give that to me one more time. So the best [inaudible 00:34:18].

Mike Paton:

Tell us about the greatest leadership success you've had and then let's stop there and I'll ask you the follow-up question.

David Reiling:

All right. Sounds good. So the best leadership moment for me happened last year, and it happened at a funeral of an employee who had cancer, awesome guy, young guy, married, two young kids, dies of colon cancer. In his eulogy, his family mentions me in the eulogy. So maybe my acid test of impacting people's lives positively or showing leadership or compassion or whatever you want to call that. But it was at that moment, if I could have impacted a person that much, that positively, that they would go to an extent to even reference me in that personal moment, to me, that was the height of leadership. That was a result that I think at the end of the day, when you talk about what's your meaning of life, to me, that is a component. And so it was in that space that I think I witnessed the best of my leadership.

Mike Paton:

Thank you for sharing that David. Flipping the table a little bit. What's the scariest or most challenging leadership moment you've encountered. How did you deal with it and how to turn out?

David Reiling:

Yeah, the scariest Mike is I have a lot of scary moments as being a leader. There are many events that I would consider the bottom of the ninth, with two outs and the bases loaded and three, two counts. It's in those intense moments as I had mentioned to you that those are my moments. Those are leadership moments. If there's ever a time that leadership is going to rise to the occasion or fall it's in those intense moments. And those usually happen with people, they happen, maybe negotiating a contract that really might be, make or break in terms of the business model. A lot of times they show up in relationships and moments that you have to have those adult conversations that are so hard. But I would tell you the most intense moment for me as a leader was I had mentioned we consolidated these bank holding companies together.

And at the time, I owned one of those bank holding companies, and I was the majority owner, which is a seat that I want to sit in and I want. It's not, I don't know how else to tell you that. I don't like anything but that. So when I merged the two companies together, my father was the majority owner and I told him, I said, "You would be the only person I would ever be a minority owner with. And even the moment that we do this, I want to be the majority owner." And so I lived in that for a couple of years and I could hardly live with myself. Because again, the business was really an expression of who I was and my values and where we were going. And it was my baby. It was me. Right? And so the intense moment in the leadership space was I have to ask him to buy certain amount of his shares to become the majority owner.

And if he doesn't agree, then this is done. And the family is going to suffer as a result of this and will be fractured. And so I mentioned, I came from an Italian family. Family's really big. One half of the family is Italian, which always says, "We're getting the family together." And then the German side of the family says, "You will be that." Right. And so that is the world that I grew up in. So fracturing that and fracturing, maybe the person that I consider the best leader that I learned from, certainly from the

very earliest of ages was terrifying, was absolutely terrifying. But it's in that moment that you go, if we are going to do this, if I see where this business is going to go in terms of doing well and doing good, but at the end of the day, I'm the person who has to make these calls. I cannot share it with anyone. I will take the blessings and curses that come with it, but now is the moment.

Mike Paton:

Wow. Great stuff. Thank you for sharing that.

David Reiling:

Sure, absolutely.

Mike Paton:

That's scary. I presume he agreed.

David Reiling:

He did. My dad was fantastic in that we had a lot of discussions around it, but he and I are very alike. So we are both entrepreneurial minded. The only thing that's different is we can both quickly come to where we're going. We're going to point A, but he is going to go around to the right. And I'm going to go around to the left. We get there in two totally opposite ways. Even though we are crystal clear on what the goal is. So it's in that in-between is where we really had some good conversation.

Mike Paton:

All right, last question. The hope is that listening to this podcast and others like it will make young, middle aged and older leaders better. And so for those of us who want to become better leaders every single day of our lives, what one piece of advice would you give to the listener to make them better leaders?

David Reiling:

Yeah. My one piece of advice is you have to know yourself. The more you understand your strengths, as well as your weaknesses and I know that sounds kind of hokey, but really being truthful, what it is, what are you uniquely gifted at? What gives you energy every day? What is that passion sometimes referred to as your unique ability. You're not just excellent at it, you can wake up in the morning and do it all day, at the end of the day, you would have more energy. Knowing yourself that well and keeping yourself in that space and building a team to help you with everything else around it is I think the one space where leaders become authentic. And they can say, "I need your help. I am not good at that. You are better than I." And you give someone actually a gift by delegating it and putting them into their sweet spot where you can stay in yours.

And again, you have to have the courage to say, "I don't know at all, I'm not good at this. Or, you know what? I really don't want to do this. I need someone who can." And so it's in that place, I think of honesty and integrity and authenticity that you find yourself as a true leader. But again, that comes with a lot of introspection. And so test it out, put yourself in difficult situations, see how you react. Be honest with yourself. Don't be afraid to show up in places that seem a little weird. You got to get out there and show up and really try. You're going to come back home with your tail between your legs a lot, but that failing forward aspect of it is really the key to learning yourself in what you're really good at and what you'd like to do. And what you don't.

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Mike Paton:

Thank you. Couldn't have said it better myself. And ironically, in that gambit, a lot of leaders feel like it's too selfish to focus on their passion and their gift. And I actually feel exactly the opposite way that you're really giving to others when you allow them to augment what it is you were put on the planet to do. So couldn't agree more. Couldn't have closed the conversation any better. Before I let you go David, where can the listener go to find out more about you and Sunrise Banks and FinTech For Good and all the good work you're doing?

David Reiling:

Yeah. So you can certainly, for Sunrise, you can go to our webpage, www.sunrisebanks.plural.com. If you're looking for me, you can just type in David Reiling, R-E-I-L-I-N-G into LinkedIn. You'll see my profile there or on Twitter @ReilingDavid. And that's my handle.

Mike Paton:

Awesome. Thank you again for a fabulous conversation. You've made a lot of people better at what they do. I really appreciate it.

David Reiling:

Thanks Mike. Great to be with you today.

Mike Paton:

If you're interested in applying what you've learned today in your own business, the five books in the Traction Library can be helpful resources on your journey. You can learn more about those five books and actually order them at a deep discount by visiting EOSworldwide.com.