

Gino Wickman:

And so, what you've heard me say for 15 years is what EOS is, is it's a system for managing human energy. So at the end of the day, that's what we're doing for our clients is we're helping them harness the human energy in their organization. So if you have a 10-person company, 50-person, company, 500-person company, we're going to show you how to harness all of that energy into one direction where everyone's energy is going into one direction.

Mike Paton:

This is Mike Paton with the EOS Leader. I've got a special episode to share with you today. The second half of a livestream interview I did with Gino Wickman to commemorate the launching of his latest book, The EOS Life.

In this episode, we'll dive more deeply into how Gino learned and trained himself to consistently live the EOS life. We talked about the real mental health challenges that we might all be facing as leaders and owners and runners of entrepreneurial companies. We dive into the ways Gino manages human energy in order to be at his best, most productive self day in and day out, freeing him to live the EOS life. Please tune in. I hope you enjoy this conversation as much as I did.

I want to change course a little bit and go to the origin story, the history, the context here. So there are people watching that don't know your story well, and you've already given us a high level. But when did you make a decision to share what you were experiencing with your clients, your EO brethren with the world, to walk us through that journey to make that decision?

Gino Wickman:

Yeah. So as I already shared, family business, EO, aha, saw the opportunity, saw the need in the world, and then decided that's the need I'm going to go fill. The company that we sold was a sales training company in the real estate industry. So my dad had created the number one real estate sales training company in North America, an incredible company. Impacted hundreds of thousands of people.

We had 50 trainers in that company, and I managed those 50 trainers. And so, when I took my leap, my plan was to be little old me working directly with entrepreneurs, making a huge impact on their life. I swore I would never build another company again, let alone a bunch of cats to herd like crazy trainers, i.e., EOS implementers.

So I was just going to go do that thing, but what's also important is Mike Palin, my guardian angel, a guy who's had an amazing impact on my life, gave me a book to read, The Monk and The Riddle. In that book is this person that works directly with CEOs. He came to call himself a virtual CEO. That's what I need in my company. I said that's what I'm going to go do.

So there I am. That's what I went and did. And so, for five years I did that. Like I said, 50 clients, 500 sessions, put the finishing touches on EOS. Then here I go, I was called to do this.

And so, in my book Entrepreneurial Leap, I talk about how if you're a true entrepreneur, you can't stop yourself from building a company. So I just couldn't stop myself.

So here I was in Southeast Michigan making an amazing living, making a ton of money, had this incredible balanced life, making such an impact on all of these entrepreneurs in their companies and their leadership teams, and I was just at a crossroads. I said, "So what do I do? Because I could retire off this thing so nicely, have this amazingly balanced life, and just ride this thing out, or do I leverage it to the world?" I was just called to leverage it to the world.

When I did that, I then sat down and bullet-pointed out on a piece of paper 15 characteristics of the perfect integrator partner that I need, which ultimately became Don Tinney, which ironically was sent to me by my guardian angel, Mike Palin, and then the rest is history.

So Don and I came together, I decided to put it out there. I decided to put it all in a book called Traction. Then we went to work on finding crazy EOS implementers like you and I.

Mike Paton:

What were some of the biggest struggles you and Don had to overcome in the early days?

Gino Wickman:

So the first one that comes to mind is finding these perfect EOS implementers, these perfect people, these beings, these balls of energy that could sell, could teach, could facilitate. We're entrepreneurial. We're fascinated about being inside of the black box of an organization. And so, you are one of them. And so, we found you.

And so, it was finding them because it was excruciating in the first couple of years, because we would bring in anyone that could fog a mirror at first. It was so brutal, so brutal. And so, I can't remember how many we went through before we found you.

But when you came into my session room during bootcamp, and I was teaching that bootcamp, if you remember the first break, we were an hour and a half into bootcamp, I was an hour and a half into meeting you, and I knew your energy three minutes into the day. If you remember, I grabbed you and I said, "I'm never letting you go." I knew you were going to be my successor. I knew you were going to kick ass at this thing.

And so, I don't know if you remember the words. I can't remember the words. I just know, again, the conversation energetically was that I am not letting this guy go. I mean I was [crosstalk 00:05:49].

Mike Paton:

And I [crosstalk 00:05:49].

Gino Wickman:

I was trying to hit the panic button on my cellphone, and I couldn't reach it.

Mike Paton:

You thought it was [crosstalk 00:05:53].

Gino Wickman:

Yeah, exactly.

Mike Paton:

Yeah, I was actually asked if it was some sort of an al-Qaeda cell I was headed off to join.

Gino Wickman:

So you're asking the biggest challenge. Well, the biggest challenge was finding implementers because the other thing was ... So what happened with Don is when Don and I joined forces, I said, "Don, you

have to go out and you have to reproduce all of my results. You have to prove somebody else can do this. If you do that, come back to me, let me know, and we will join forces and we will become business partners and we will build this thing."

So he went out in a year and a half and he reproduced every single one of my results. And so, then it was Don and I building this thing. Then we had some rough ones. It was really brutal because it was a year and a half of just mediocre people.

And so, when I saw you, that's why I latched on because we needed someone other than Don to be the example. And so, you were the person that we were able to hold up now and say, "You could be a Paton. You could be a Paton, and everybody wanted to be a Paton.

Mike Paton:

If the implementers are listening, please set your sights higher. That would be my-

Gino Wickman:

Just for the record, Paton as an EOS implementer, huh? No, I'm just kidding.

Mike Paton:

You had a being compensated appropriately crisis that you had to solve, too. A couple of years in, you and Don recognized you were beating your heads against the wall, not getting compensated appropriately for the value you were trying to bring to the world. So walk us through that.

Gino Wickman:

So as every entrepreneur experiences, we had to change our business model. So the original plan was not the final plan, as is the case with every business. So we were a year and a half, two years in. It wasn't working. We were generating no money. So the only money Don and I were generating was as EOS implementers, because we still each spend half of our time EOS implementing and making damn good money doing that. But then we had this business for a year and a half, two years that made no money.

So sitting in a Starbucks during a clarity break I read *The Starfish and the Spider* and *Tribes* by Seth Godin. I was pouring over all the data points about this model networking and everything we had. Then I had my eureka moment. I left that Starbucks. I called Don. I said, "Don, I'm about to turn our business model on its ear." Then he sat quietly and I did a 15-minute riff. I finished my riff and he goes, "Gino, I love it."

And so, what we did is we just shifted the model to a total open source abundance-based model. We took all of those shaky implementers and we just split it to a pay ... You pay a monthly fee to play with us to be in this thing. It was crazy affordable.

So the original model was to pay a percentage of all the revenue that you guys generated. You weren't generating a lot of revenue as a whole. So 50% of zero is still zero. It was 15% at the time.

So, anyway, we shifted it to that. I don't know if you remember what you said to me. So then I go into our quarterly meeting. I think at the time we had 15 implementers was probably the number, is my guess. I'm doing the presentation of my life. And so, I'm guessing that presentation was about 30 to 60 minutes long.

I unveiled this new model to those implementers. I rocked their worlds, but for the successful ones. Then you came up to me at the break and you said, "Thank you, because, again, at the time you were generating about \$400,000 a year. You were paying us 15% of that. All of a sudden you were

paying us about \$30,000 or 40,000 less with what I proposed. You said, "Thank you, Gino. You just bought me a car," or something like that.

Mike Paton:

Yeah, that's right. That's right.

Gino Wickman:

So you were happy, but that model ... Literally the whole business turned on a dime after that. It just absolutely exploded.

Mike Paton:

Well, and what I love about that story is it's tied to the create more value, because I think-

Gino Wickman:

Yeah, for sure.

Mike Paton:

... what it looked like to me-

Gino Wickman:

For sure.

Mike Paton:

... as somebody who was the beneficiary of that business model is you were already creating tremendous value for me, and I was certainly happy with the revenue. But what you were saying to the world is if what we give you that's been proven to deliver value to other EOS implementers isn't paying dividends for you, then you've made the wrong choice.

Gino Wickman:

Exactly.

Mike Paton:

But you asked to be paid appropriately for the opportunity that you were created.

Gino Wickman:

Right. I mean we're going so deep into something that is not about EOS life. But I'll just say this last point, you're in charge here, I'll go wherever you want. But then think about what that then attracts when we say you got to pay to play.

Mike Paton:

That's right.

Gino Wickman:

So this day you come here, you've got to pay to go through our bootcamp. Then you've got to pay something every single month. So all of a sudden the commitment level went through the roof.

Mike Paton:

That's right.

Gino Wickman:

But get ready. I said I poured over all the data points in the decision I made to change the business model. One of those hundred data points was Paton's making \$400,000 a year. So I was able to say if you want to be a Paton ... And so, we had one or two or three of you that were relatively successful to say, "Look it, Don and I are successful at this. These one, two, three are successful at this." And so, if I didn't have you, I couldn't have changed the model.

Mike Paton:

You were able to point to the value creation possibilities [crosstalk 00:10:58].

Gino Wickman:

Yeah. Most of the people we're bringing in, you pay 15% of the revenue you generate. So there's no risk, because if they don't generate any revenue, they don't pay anything. That's going to attract everyone under the sun, because delivering the EOS process to a company, there are many things better and so much fun, but it's really hard to get to that client and get in that room. So, anyway, tangent alert.

Mike Paton:

No, no, that's good. Switching from challenges to successes, what were some of the flagship moments where you thought, "Oh, the flywheel's turning. We're onto something here"?

Gino Wickman:

Well, certainly you. You recreating Don and my results was really big. There's another moment we describe. So the original four were Don, Amber, Lisa, and I. For, I'd say, a year or two, Don and I would set these lofty goals. So in our quarterlies, we'd be setting these ... And I don't even want to call them lofty. I thought they were very doable. But we never hit them.

And so, the way we describe it is the day that Amber beat all optimism out of Don and I, she pulverized us and made us pessimists. And so, the second we changed the goals to be more realistic, we started hitting them every quarter, feeling successful.

So there was also a lot of momentum in that. So we always jokingly pick on Amber for beating all optimism out of Don and I.

Then the other thing that really surprised me is the overriding goal from day one was to impact 10,000 companies, was to take 10,000 companies through this process.

I never would have guessed achieving that goal, which my goal, I said at 20 years, it was 20 years ago, to be hit by December 31st, 2020, and we literally hit it with one month to spare, which is shocking. So message for all of you out there setting ten-year targets, they work, five to 30 years. Mine was a 20-year. But I never would've guessed ...

So I saw 10,000 companies and that's it, and a bunch of implementers. I never could have imagined how freaking valuable that was, how many people that was truly going to impact, because I

never guessed that 10,000, we implementers taking 10,000 companies through the process, translates into 100,000 companies. So I never would have guessed the impact. And so, when I started to see that, that was ... So those were some of the things that come to mind.

Mike Paton:

Yeah. One of the things you talk about in the book is the power of mentors and helpers and people who can help illuminate your way. Who are some of your most influential mentors along the way?

Gino Wickman:

Yeah. So there's like the big three and then there are all of these influencers, if you will. So the big three are right at the top of the list. My dad, my dad is my greatest mentor, and then I call these three people my three greatest mentors, because it's so close. It's like a really close second and third.

Number two is Sam Cupp, my business mentor. Then the number three is Dan Sullivan, who to this day is still my mentor. Sadly, Sam Cupp has passed away. My dad has retired, but we still have great conversation. I still have his ear.

But Dan Sullivan, 24 years later, I'm still in his program and still learning something from him every single 90 days, for any entrepreneurs out there and getting the strategic coach program, it'll change your life. It changed mine. So those are the big three.

Then there's a bunch of influencers. I list these in the book because prior to creating EOS, because the EOS influencers are Jim Collins and Pat Lencioni and Verne Harnish, certainly Dan Sullivan's in that list, and so many rich authors and books that I learned from to create that.

But before that, and I think more important than all of them, are the influencers that created my philosophy and how I live my life. And so, these are the Jim Rohns, Earl Nightingale, Napoleon Hill, Les Brown. I'm trying to say them all, Michael Gerber.

So there's the big three and then there's a whole bunch of influencers that I just am a fanatic for learning and I just study these people.

Mike Paton:

I may be wrong when I say this, but every time I hear you walk through that list, all of them have a gift for reconfiguring the way the neurons are firing in your brain to think about the world in a different way that opens up possibilities.

Gino Wickman:

Yeah, I hear, hear.

Mike Paton:

That's something I've learned to emulate from you, that if you're not constantly expanding your ways of thinking, you're going to get stuck in a rut and feel like it's not your lot in life to step out of this thing.

Gino Wickman:

Hear, hear.

Mike Paton:

So you made a couple of key business decisions that were really driven by a desire to get back to living your EOS life as the founder and visionary for EOS Worldwide. The first is stepping down, as you predicted you would, by your 50th birthday and the second is to sell the company. I want you to talk about the EOS life influence on those decisions.

Gino Wickman:

Yeah. So I want to share three things there, and I'm just trying to pick the right order there. So I never intended to sell the company. It was never on my radar, never of interest to me. Most of the teaching out there is that's not entirely smart, you always want to see the outcome, and I have a different philosophy around that.

So I won't get into that, but I never intended to sell the company. The company was always just an extension of my neurosis. It was a pretty good thing.

Mike Paton:

Of which I am vividly aware, just so we're clear

Gino Wickman:

Hear, hear. It has benefited you greatly. So hallelujah. So I never intended to sell it, but always intended to be out of it. So, again, you know this well because as we started to bring on implementers and we meet every quarter, we met every quarter all those years, I would say in every QC almost, I would say I'm going to be sitting back there with all of you someday as an implementer, because at the end of the day I'm just an implementer and I don't want to be the visionary of this company.

But I had to step out of being an EOS implementer to become the visionary to get this company to where we need to get it. I said, "But someday I'm going to be sitting right back there with you."

And so, the thing I always did know is I was going to get off that leadership team, get out of the visionary role, and just be the owner of the business and the majority owner. I was just going to sit back, be an owner, and let you guys run it forever. So that I knew.

Then to your point about how does EOS life play into it, so let's go to loving great. I didn't love being the visionary of the company, but I was pretty good at it. So I would say I was probably great at that, but I didn't love it. When I weigh all the other things that I wanted to do business-wise and being an EOS implementer, I love those things.

So delegate one thing every quarter. I literally got to the point that if I wanted to spend 100% of my working time in my sweet spot, I had to delegate an entire company, because no matter how you slice it, I realize even if I got to the owner's box fully and out of the visionary seat, which we did and we ran that way for a couple of years, so I experienced it, I've got to say it this way, that fucking company was on my mind every single night.

Mike Paton:

Oh, every day.

Gino Wickman:

So it just weighed on me, because while you guys were solving all the issues ... And, again, you can attest that I let you run that damn company, I still knew every issue and they weighed on me. So I had to

delegate that off to free up my energy for the next thing. And so, that's when I realized it was time to sell.

We actually got approached. I'm not going to say who approached us, but it was them approaching and me having those thoughts that I said, "You know what? It's probably time."

Mike Paton:

Yeah.

Gino Wickman:

I would have never guessed the company was worth ... It's my point about getting to 10,000. I would have never guessed it was so valuable. That's not why sold, but that wasn't bad.

Mike Paton:

So what I love about that is you just shared a planned move and an unplanned move, both of which led you to getting closer to living your EOS life.

Gino Wickman:

Yeah. And so, thank you for that because that's the point is if I'm living my EOS life, you can't perfectly plan everything.

Mike Paton:

That's right.

Gino Wickman:

But it drove my decision.

Mike Paton:

That's right.

Gino Wickman:

It was a no-brainer. When you look at it through that lens, it's like a no-brainer. The driver of that second decision, the unplanned decision, was you coming to grips with the fact that you thought stepping out of the visionary seat was going to create peace for you, and it didn't. And so, there you are back at your journey to live your EOS life and there's more work yet to do.

And so, that's what our listeners are going to experience themselves. You can't figure this all out right now. You have to take it one step at a time.

Mike Paton:

I hear you. All right. End of the book, there's a little mini book. It's about human energy, which is a recurring theme. I've been hearing you talk about human energy for 14 years, every quarter ad nauseam. It's a fascinating concept.

The reason it's fascinating is because you believe it can and should be managed. I think a lot of people feel like it's uncontrollable or inert. So when did you first begin to tune into this idea of human energy? When did you start noticing how valuable and important it was to notice human energy?

Gino Wickman:

So at first, I was going to tell you, I don't know when it is, but as you were asking that, and I went somewhere else with my ADD, an answer came to me. I'm trying to remember the name of the book. It was very, very popular 30 years ago. Oh, Celestine Prophecies. It's that book that made me look at myself and human beings very differently.

Again, who knows what you believe, but I think we're all just balls of energy. I think it's like scientifically proven that we're balls of energy, but I'm not smart enough to understand all that. And so, if you see yourself that way and understand that you're just a ball of energy, you can actually harness and direct that energy and increase that energy.

And so, what you've heard me say for 15 years is what EOS is it's a system for managing human energy. So at the end of the day, that's what we're doing for our clients is we're helping them harness the human energy in their organization. So if you have a 10-person company, 50-person company, 500-person company, we're going to show you how to harness all of that energy into one direction where everyone's energy is going into one direction.

So that's what you've heard for 15 years, or 14 years. You now reminded me of where it all started for me. Then what happened is ... So I included in this book ... So the EOS Life book and the EOS content and what I wrote there is EOS Worldwide's content. They bought it from me. So it's their content. It's theirs to take to the world. I own the book. We're this amazing, great relationship where together we magnify things.

But what I decided to do with this book is up and over that, I added this mini bonus book to the book that's called 10 Disciplines for Managing and Maximizing your Energy. And so, to complete the story, what happened is I was trying to decide what my keynote was going to be for the EOS conference two years ago. It's just crazy way how the message comes to me, but it just hit me that that's what I'm going to teach. I'm going to be vulnerable. I'm going to tell the world how I manage my energy. And so, it's 10 disciplines.

And so, the final piece to the puzzle is I literally then started thinking and I started just writing what are all of my disciplines for how I manage my energy, and just these 10 were so apparent. Then I delivered that message in the reaction was incredible. Then I decided to put it in this book, because, again, it's a little uncomfortable putting it in there because it feels a little selfish that I'm teaching how I do it. But the reactions.

So I had 80 test readers on this book, which is the most ever, but the reaction from 80 out of 80 to those 10 disciplines, I just knew there was something there. And so, I decided, eh, what the hell? I'm going to start teaching the world how to manage and maximize their energy from this humble opinion.

Mike Paton:

So this may be unfair, but can you walk us through the 10 at a high level real quick?

Gino Wickman:

No, but I can read them to you.

Mike Paton:

Thank you.

Gino Wickman:

Listen, maybe it's because I'm 53, but I can't remember them in this order. But just really high level and then you tell me where you want to go with these.

Mike Paton:

Sounds good.

Gino Wickman:

But very high level, we already touched on the first one. It's tenure thinking. Tenure thinking is transformative. It will change your life. Time slows down. There's a peace that comes over you and, ironically, you get there faster.

Taking time off. And so, we indirectly touched on that, but this is about truly taking time off and recharging your batteries and really understanding the power of recreation, recreating yourself.

Number three is know thyself. So really deep stuff here, but I'd like to say let your freak flag fly. And so, figure out who you really are, be that every moment, and your energy will go through the roof because you're pretending you're somebody different in every case. Then on this one ... And do you want me to go a little deep in each one or high level and then go deep?

Mike Paton:

Yeah, high level and [crosstalk 00:25:16].

Gino Wickman:

Because I'm trying to hit each one quickly. But there's a story I tell about this one, in my aha moment. Kathy threw me a 30th surprise birthday party. And so, I show up surprised and I look around this room of 100 people, and there were six factions of my life in this room. There were my business partners, my employees, my family, Kathy's family, my high school friends, and my new neighborhood friends. I realized I was a different person with every one of those factions.

I look around ... Again, you can swear when you're quoting somebody ... and I look around that room and I go, "Who in the fuck am I going to be today? Who am I going to be today?" So that was the moment I say ...

So now we're talking about energy. Imagine the energy you're burning trying to be all these different things to all these different people. So from that day forward, I was one person. So that's what that one is.

Number four is be still. Again, call it meditation, call it silence. Call it what you want to call it, but take 10 to 30 minutes every day. Be still. Powerful for your energy.

Know your 100%. And so, knowing your 100% is the opposite side of taking time off. We then directly touched on it a little bit, but this is much deeper in terms of figure out how many weeks you're going to work every year. How many hours you're going to work every week. Get really clear on what I call your work container.

This isn't about taking time off. This is about figuring out your energy. I'm 40 weeks, 55 hours a week. That's my perfect energy. Any more, my energy wanes. Any less, you get a little bored. I need to work.

Mike Paton:

Anyway, I'm going to try and get through the rest faster.

Gino Wickman:

[crosstalk 00:27:00]. Please ask your questions. Next is say no often. Next is don't do \$25 an hour work, dot, dot dot, if you want to make a six-figure income. Number eight is prepare every night. A very powerful discipline I've been doing for 25 years, and that's don't go to bed, don't let your head hit that pillow until you know exactly what you're doing tomorrow, until you've laid out tomorrow. You'll sleep better. Ideas will come to you. You'll have a much more productive day.

Number nine is put everything in one place. So we entrepreneur leaders, we've got a bunch of stuff going on. We're making promises, commitments, and we're doing sticky notes and stuff here and putting a note in our phone. You're just a disaster. You're letting people down. Decide the one place you're going to put everything. You'll be more organized. You'll follow through. Again, energy will go through the roof.

Then number 10, be humble. You are all out there somewhere on the spectrum of humble and arrogant and be honest with yourself. But I promise you a humble life is much better than an arrogant life. And so, that's my passionate plea.

My father-in-law Neil Pardun is my greatest example of humility and wealth. It's possible. He has passed, but he changed my life, because I was going down a very arrogant, negative, non-humble path in my 20s. He never said a word to me, but by his example, he taught me that the humble life is better than the arrogant life.

Then a great quote: "Being humble is not thinking less of yourself. It's thinking of yourself less." So for what that's worth, there's energy.

Mike Paton:

Lovely. A couple follow-up questions. You've figured out your work container. How do you defend it? How do you prevent it from bleeding into the other containers in your life?

Gino Wickman:

But you're saying what do I do if somebody tries to expand my work container? Is that what you're asking?

Mike Paton:

So the person I'd be most interested in you being able to control is you. So many of the people listening know that they'd like to work 40 weeks a year, 55 hours a week, but they won't let themselves, or they have other people picking at them for more and more of their time. What are some techniques or some strategies for getting better at really keeping your work confined to that container?

Gino Wickman:

Well, here's one. It's called stop doing that. So I'm a big believer in context. And so, what I'm doing with this book is creating context, because if you can see the context, how you do it ... Everybody's looking for a technique for how to do that. But what I realized, if I can show you the context of this thing and you give yourself permission to do it, you'll figure it out, because there's 1800 different ways to do what you're asking.

Again, we're talking about moving the needle, incremental steps. Just be aware. Start playing with some stuff. Take three weeks off next year, take four weeks off the year after, take five weeks off. You're going to get to a point where you're saying, "Man, this is too much time off." I figured out my perfect formula is I take 12 weeks off a year. I take the month of August off every year. I've done it for over 20 years.

So I just figured out that my formula is 40 weeks a year. Anything less than that, I will go crazy with boredom. Anything more than that, I don't have enough time to do those passions and spend the time with the people that I want to spend time with. So for me, I'm fanatical.

And so, for me ... and, again, sometimes I'm oversimplifying it, but if anything tries to compete with that, it's a no-

Mike Paton:

It's a no.

Gino Wickman:

... because, remember, discipline number six is say no often.

Mike Paton:

So I was going to go there next and I'm going to observe something about you that I think you think is natural to you, but it has always stricken me as something you're better at than the average person. When you say no, you've built a mechanism many times for giving the person who's asking you for something a yes that doesn't involve you using your time.

Gino Wickman:

That's interesting. That's interesting.

Mike Paton:

You're better at that than anybody I've ever seen. I've been that person in a lot of situations, podcast interviews in the early days. And so, I think you stay in the yes until there's a solution that doesn't involve you spending time doing something you don't love. That buys you the confidence to say no and say, "But here's how you can get that need met that doesn't involve me."

Gino Wickman:

Damn, that's pretty good. So I want to say two things and I want to come back to that, because what's important to understand is when you live by tenure thinking, you take time off, you know yourself, you be still, you know your 100%, you say no often, you don't do \$25-hour work if you want to make a six-figure income, you prepare every night, practice tenure thinking, take time off, no thyself, be still, and know your 100%, what to say no to is abundantly clear. Abundantly clear.

So I think that's the most important thing is this awareness and moving the needle thing we're talking about is now I know what I need to say no to. So now it's how do you say no?

So I love what you said. I honestly never thought about the fact that I do whenever ... So I get asked literally a thousand times a year to do something and I literally say no 998 of them. But you're right, I always do have a solution for them. I do have a place for them to go, a plan B or whatever. So maybe that's a habit I developed. But, nonetheless, even if I didn't, the answer is still no.

Mike Paton:

I hear you.

Gino Wickman:

I love saying no. Then since we're on it, and this is one of my favorite topics, so whenever I'm teaching this with an audience, I always then have the audience look at each other and say no, no, just to build the muscle.

And so, there's two things. A great quote from the book Essentialism by McKeown I think it's pronounced. There's a quote in there and it talks about how the mere thought of saying no to someone gives us physical discomfort. I mean we physically get discomfort.

But here's your choice. You can say no and feel that discomfort for all of five minutes and move on or you can say yes and regret it for days, weeks, months, and sometimes years. So that's very powerful.

Then my favorite quote of all time is Warren Buffett's quote that says, "The difference between successful people and really successful people is that really successful people say no to almost everything."

So I love saying no. I love when you come to me so passionate and I'm going to kick you in the balls, if you can say that on a podcast, and say no, because with all due love and respect, you are not going to mess with my life.

But that's so helpful, and I will teach that forever now, I do have a habit of saying, "Here's an option for you." What's ironic, and I'm realizing now how ... I taught this to Kelly Knight as well, because the 50 phone calls she gets a week with people that want to hitch their wagon to EOS, the answer's almost always no, but it's that response and that other option. They always go away feeling better, feeling good, feeling something positive.

Mike Paton:

That's right. That's right.

Gino Wickman:

So I will teach that forever.

Mike Paton:

Well, and for me, it takes us back to the EOS, the content of The EOS Life. You can't do what you love-

Gino Wickman:

I'm going to write that down. Keep talking, but I'm going to write that down.

Mike Paton:

You're welcome. You can't do what you love if you're not surrounded by people you love, who you have confidence can do the things that are important for your business-

Gino Wickman:

Hear, hear.

Mike Paton:

... and the people who want something from you. And so, it comes full circle. I want to go deep. We have a question from the audience, and I want to go deeper than the 10 disciplines for managing human energy, which is a good answer to this question.

But Omar from Texas says, "How does Gino protect his own mental health through the inevitable ups and downs of business and life?" And so, let's go a little deeper on the subject of mental health, because entrepreneurship and mental health challenges tend to go hand-in-hand. So talk to us about that a little bit.

Gino Wickman:

Yeah. Well, for one, I would not consider myself a mentally healthy person, so that's all relative. So, again, that point about let your freak flag fly, whatever that means. I remember I went to the Amen Clinic, which they're one of the number one clinics. They look at your brain, they see what's going on with your brain. That's when I learned I had ADD. I never would have guessed I had ADD because I come off so focused.

And so, I remember you go through two days of testing and then you meet with the doctor at the end. He's looking at my results and he goes, "Oh." I think first thing he said was, "I didn't expect to see so much damage," but I've taken a lot of hits to the head in my lifetime.

But he also said, "I see where you have built a life around your brain." So I could never be an accountant. My brain is not an accountant brain.

So what does mentally stable mean? I mean the homeless person that they say is mentally ill, sometimes they look really happy. They might be the smartest person on the planet, or whatever it is. So who are we to judge?

So I wouldn't call myself mentally healthy, but I did my seven years of therapy in my 20s. I go back from time to time. So I work on that hard. What do I do when I get my ass kicked, which is every other month for the last 35 years? Sometimes I curl up in a ball for a day. I mean you lick your wounds. So when I really get kicked in the ass, I go down and I go down hard.

I'm an introvert, so I will get quiet. Extroverts will get loud, but I'll give myself the permission and the time to sulk. I always picture myself sucking my thumb in a Terry cloth robe curled up in a ball. So it's energetically that, but that's not what's really going on.

This is life, and so I've learned to take the lumps, sit in the lumps. I've also learned to take the big wins and keep them in their proper perspective. And so, my dad says good things happen and bad things happen, but neither last. That says it all.

Mike Paton:

Woven into that story is you're not afraid to ask for help. This is-

Gino Wickman:

Yeah. Oh, 100%. There's a great book I recommend to every visionary entrepreneur called The Hypomaniac Edge. It's a powerful book on the brain, the energy of a true visionary entrepreneur.

And so, this was my 20s and 30s. And so, your highs are high and your lows are low because you have ADD. You are manic. It will help you understand. It goes through all these great visionary leaders over time. But once you understand it, you can learn to live with it, work with it, manage it, not when you're on the down, which looks like depression, realize that this isn't depression and I'm going to come

out of it. So it took me about 20 of these and then 20 of these that followed to realize I'm going to come out of this thing.

So that's just life, man. So you get knocked down? Sulk. Because I think the worst thing you can do is get knocked down and go, "Whoa! That didn't bother me at all. That's nothing. That was nothing," because you're lying to yourself. Your guts are burning inside.

So just sit with the burning. It sucks. It hurts. Sometimes it's five days of burning, sometimes it's five minutes of burning, but, nonetheless, that's life. And so, anyway, somehow that.

Mike Paton:

Yeah. That was the second thing I wanted to say. If you believe that you're going to go on an entrepreneurial journey and achieve your full potential as a human being, and you're not going to experience highs and lows and get emotional and get pissed off and get depressed and get sad, and all of those emotions are going to happen, you have to be comfortable sitting with that stuff. It's-

Gino Wickman:

Yeah, and not to get too far off on this tangent. I'm not trying to promote another book, but it's why I wrote Entrepreneurial Leap for all those people that think they want to take an entrepreneurial leap to help find the ones that truly are, because they're built for what you just described. Then the ones that aren't, "Please don't do it. I'm trying to help you avoid 10 years of misery because it's hell if you don't have the brain for it."

So you started by saying mentally healthy. I'm putting that in its proper perspective, because then there are brains that are built for being a great administrative assistant, for being an accountant, for being a cop, for being a nurse, for being in the military, and you've got to figure out your unique energy.

Mine is just this crazy energy that I'm unemployable. Nobody wants me. So I just had to build a company with a bunch of people around my neurosis. By the way, my quote of the entire interview is, "I didn't expect to see so much damage."

Mike Paton:

Yes.

Gino Wickman:

Those were his words exactly. Now the damage wasn't terrible. I said, "Can you maybe expand on that a little bit?" He said, "Well, if a brain is a 10, yours is about an eight." But I mean we won't get into my fighting days-

Mike Paton:

[crosstalk 00:40:54].

Gino Wickman:

... but I have taken some hits in my crazy days, in my drinking days. So we won't get into that.

Mike Paton:

Okay. You heard it first here. Quick break before we wrap.

Gino Wickman:

[crosstalk 00:41:04] drinking, not a problem.

Mike Paton:

You need to start taking the steps on this journey to live the EOS life. So let's talk about the future. What are your hopes for this book?

Gino Wickman:

Well, the hopes are that a whole bunch of people are living their ideal life. So that's a very general statement. Then I'll go a little more specific than that. I mean I do hope it reaches millions of people. We just hit a million copies sold of Traction, literally this week.

I see where this could probably possibly do better. Who knows? And I'm not measuring that by book sales. For me, it's about the people that it's impacting. So I do believe it can impact millions of people.

The other thing is if someone out there lives their ideal life, I believe that they will become an example to the people around them, and we touched on that. But then that one person that they've touched goes to them and says, "Teach me what you know." If that one person living their ideal life teaches one or two people, and those one or two people learn it and are the example and teach one or two people, and then those do the same and those do the same, what a world it would be. So hopefully, indirectly, there's the answer to your question.

Mike Paton:

Yeah, that's perfect. Do you have any other passion projects you're currently working on or in the waiting room?

Gino Wickman:

God, I appreciate you asking that. So, yeah, I'd say two. So the one I'm smack dab in the middle of, a 10-year project, I'm two years into the 10 years, is Entrepreneurial Leap that I alluded to. E-leap.com if you want to find out more.

But that's all about if you out there, you think you're an entrepreneur or you have someone in your life that you think is an entrepreneur, again, that mission I described, it's helping them determine if they are and showing them the exact path for getting there, but also hopefully talking them out of it. You either have the six essential traits, you either score well on the assessment or you don't.

Then number two, I don't know what this is going to become, but the second one really is the reaction I'm getting from 10 disciplines. I'm going to do something with that over the next 10 years. I don't know what yet, but there's just something there.

Whatever that is, it's going to be so totally different than anything I've ever done before. The way I'm going to do it, I don't know what that means, but those would be ... There's just something there. Just something is just calling me to put some energy into that. So those would be the two.

Mike Paton:

Awesome.

Gino Wickman:

Then other than that, half of my life is still EOS. I'm an EOS implementer, I have clients, I speak. So half my life is still EOS. Then the other half are these other passions. At the end of the day, I'm an EOS implementer, it's still my number one love, is walking into that session room and seeing my clients' smiling faces and then kicking their ass for eight hours.

Mike Paton:

Having been there, he is not lying about the ass-kicking. Just so we're clear. A great question, [Isla 00:44:08] from Arizona asks, "Do I have to know EOS to understand the concept of living the EOS life?"

Gino Wickman:

Thank you. I'm so glad that was asked. No. So the first page of the book, I put in [inaudible 00:44:20]. If you don't know EOS, you're going to be fine. It all makes sense. This is so intuitive.

So I do want to say this. So thank you for that question because, no, you don't. You absolutely do not. I do believe this content is going to find its way when I talk about that person teaching two people and that person teaching two people. I mean, come on.

So let's take a librarian. A librarian can do what they love with people they love, make an impact, get compensated appropriately, and have time for other paths. So whatever your walk of life is, it absolutely applies. No, you don't need to understand EOS. It's really intuitive and simple stuff.

Mike Paton:

Well, and if the EOS tools in the book are going to help you live the EOS life, you've done a fine job of explaining in a very basic sense how to use them and directing people to other resources for that.

Gino Wickman:

Hear, hear. Hear, hear.

Mike Paton:

So one little passage I love in this book, because it's very similar to something we wrote at the end of Get A Grip. You say very specifically when your leadership team meets every week, the meetings should be filled with laughter, intense debate, passionate discussion, high trust, and respect. You should look forward to working together and seeing each other.

So a lot of people listening don't feel that way and may not even think that's possible. Give them some reason to hope that it is and start taking the first step.

Gino Wickman:

I love that you went there. So I stand by that, verbatim. God, that's so well-written. I think it's because I have a great editor. But that is the litmus test. Whoever you are, the visionary, the integrator, the head of sales, the head of marketing, the head of finance, if you don't look forward to your level 10 meeting every single week and it doesn't look like that, something ain't right. You are not doing it with people you love, and it's time to fix that.

It might be that one leadership team member that's just a prick or the female version of prick, and they just need to go. It might be you. So it might be you might, "You know what? I just don't like these people."

Mike Paton:

That's right.

Gino Wickman:

Get the hell out of there. Go do your thing. But that is the litmus test. In your level 10, in every level 10, there should be laughter, there should be debate, there should be arguing, there should be passion, there should be ... So it should be all the emotions. That's when you're working with a great team, making an impact on the world, doing cool stuff. That's my humble [crosstalk 00:46:52].

Mike Paton:

Yeah. For me, I think what we're doing with the EOS life is we're helping everybody reading this book understand that if that's where you are, you're not stuck. The question is what are you going to do about it?

Gino Wickman:

Hear, hear. No, you're just getting started.

Mike Paton:

What are you going to do about it? Yeah.

Gino Wickman:

You're not stuck. You're just getting started.

Mike Paton:

That's right.

Gino Wickman:

Zero to 100. You're somewhere.

Mike Paton:

That's right.

Gino Wickman:

You just need to move the needle. Not stuck. It's just you're starting here or you're starting here or you're starting here.

Mike Paton:

All right. Last question.

Gino Wickman:

By the way, where are you?

Mike Paton:

I'm about 22.

Gino Wickman:

You are not. Stop it.

Mike Paton:

No, I started at 22. I'm about 66.

Gino Wickman:

You're 66.

Mike Paton:

Yeah, I know I need to get better.

Gino Wickman:

Boy, oh boy.

Mike Paton:

I'm on my journey.

Gino Wickman:

Boy, oh boy.

Mike Paton:

But I feel like a champion at 66, to your point.

Gino Wickman:

[crosstalk 00:47:39]. No, my favorite line was when you ... We were on the phone and you said, "Oh, I can't talk on Friday because I'm about to take a three-day sabbatical." I said, "Paton, that is not a sabbatical. That is a vacation." As a matter of fact, it's not even a vacation.

Mike Paton:

[crosstalk 00:47:55] it's a long weekend. The last question, I want you to boil all the work that went into this book down to the most powerful piece of advice you could give somebody who's not living their EOS life.

Gino Wickman:

So that one is easy to me because I feel like we already said it. You deserve it. You deserve it. You deserve it. So that's the first step. That's the first step is just realize you deserve it. If you're still sitting there going, "I hear what he's saying, but I still don't," go get some therapy. Go get to the root of what that thing is, start meditating, whatever it is. But you've got to clear that dark energy out of there.

Then the second one we said as well: don't get overwhelmed by this. Just move the needle. I mean what you're going to see are literally 60 different things you could do after reading this book to

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move the needle. Pick one, take a 10-year outlook, and 10 years from now, you'll be living your ideal life. Just one step at a time. So I wouldn't add anything more than those two things. I gave you my best shot earlier, Paton. Back off.

Mike Paton:

Well, that's good. I thought I'd give you a chance to reiterate.

Gino Wickman:

All right. All right.

Mike Paton:

I know you've got to hear it seven times.

Gino Wickman:

I'm with you.

Mike Paton:

So for the people watching and listening, please go live your EOS life. It is possible.

Gino Wickman:

Hear, hear.

Mike Paton:

I've made tremendous progress because of what you've taught me, and you've got a lot to teach the rest of the world. Thank you for being so generous with your time.

Gino Wickman:

My pleasure. This was a blast.

Mike Paton:

And thank you all for watching and listening. We want you to live your EOS life.

Gino Wickman:

Hallelujah.

Mike Paton:

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