

# Thriving Through Growth

Privately Speaking Podcast Series

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**Erika Whitmore:**

So excited to have you here with me today. I have been reading your book, which I'll let you talk about a little bit. And just super excited to have you here and on the podcast and hear all the things that you have to say based on your experience. So, Pete Steinberg, thank you for coming. And I'm going to let you introduce yourself.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Thanks. Excited to be here. Big fan of the firm. So, I've been fortunate enough to work with a lot of people in KPMG, so really excited. Pete Steinberg. I'm the president of a company called Innovative Thought. We do very difficult business and talent problems. We help come up with innovative solutions. But I think I'm more here because I wrote a book. It's called *Leadership Shock*. It's about how leaders can find themselves really challenged to really be their best selves. And leadership shock, the book writing happened when I finished my other career, which was as an elite rugby coach. So I coached the Penn State women's rugby team for 19 years, and we won ten national championships, and I coached the US women to two World Cups in the Rio Olympics. And there's actually some pieces of the book that come straight out of what I learned as an elite coach. So excited to be here and have this conversation.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Well, like I said, I have started reading the book, although I'm arguably almost halfway through. Okay.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Can I just say? It's like, as an auditor, I don't think about halfway through works. Aren't you actually supposed to know the exact?

**Erika Whitmore:**

I did calculate "about halfway through" was this weekend.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Oh, you did? Yeah. So I just wanted to make sure you were on the numbers.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Yeah. It was page 67, but then I made a little further.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Okay, got it. Okay. There you go.

**Erika Whitmore:**

So that's why I round it up a little bit. But it's great for me personally right now. And part of that is because I will be taking on a new role effective May 15, which we talked a little bit about today. But the opening pages kind of. They hook you, right? Because there's a story and it's interesting. And anyway, so, you know, if we think about when would a leader experience leadership shock, maybe that's a good place.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Yeah, I mean, I think so. First of all, I've actually through writing the book, I mean, let me just tell you a little history. So I've been an executive coach for about 20 years, and I kept finding my clients had the same symptoms. Right. And their symptoms were. The calendar was crazy. Right. It was, like, triple booked and they didn't know which meetings to go to.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Right.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Their teams were confused. They were exhausted. They didn't feel like they could move the ball. They weren't able to advance. And I kept seeing this over and over again, and probably a little bit later than I should have realized.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Better late than never.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Better late than never. I identified what happened. And what happened is that something in that context, something, around the leader, had changed. Now, in many cases, it was they'd moved to a new job, but sometimes it was the organization had changed and the organization had evolved. And their old leadership system, which was often very implicit, like not much thought it just happened, was no longer working in this new role or in this new context. And so that's why they found it very difficult. And so, and so it is that change of context that is really challenging, that puts leaders in a position where it's very difficult for them to make choice and to be intentional. And so that's when you get into leadership shock. And what I've realized in the book is that everyone was like, oh, I read the first three pages, and I'm like, this is me. And I'm like, maybe leadership. And so one of the things I've realized through the book is that, you know, it isn't really binary. It's not like you're

in shock or you're not in shock. And by the way, I very intentionally use the word shock because, and I actually got it from a CU business professor that I was talking to about the book. And it's because when you're in shock physically, your blood pumps, you can breathe, but you can't actually do anything. And that's what these, like, they're leaders. They go into work, they have calls, like everything. Like, if someone was like, oh, they're leading, but actually they can't do anything. And that's why it's called leadership shock.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And as I was reading the book, again, it related right away, especially with the calendar. I think everybody is like, wow, yes, that is a real issue. So, just to pull on the thread a little bit in terms of when is a leader in shock, you kind of gave overall, but for your clients, and again, don't, whoever they are, that's not what we need to know. But what are some examples, right. Where they were "yep, that's exactly where they're at." And then what did you do to help them through it?

**Pete Steinberg:**

Yeah, I mean. I think that there are two classic examples I've come across with leadership shock. So one is when someone's come to a new role, and that role is significantly different than the role they had before. So that often happens when you get to your first leadership role. So you are a director in marketing, and then you become the vp of marketing. Those two roles are completely different. Or you're a director in finance and you're now the CFO. And that's a struggle because people's identity is really connected to their expertise in that space. This is really true in finance, where the director of finance, they are there because they're an expert in finance. The CFO doesn't actually have to be an expert in finance. Therefore, your job is very different. But if you aren't intentional, you find yourself doing the director's job, and then you can't actually do the CFO's job. And that's why your calendar goes crazy, because actually you're doing two jobs at the same time. And so that's a very classic case. And in all of these, and this is what's in leadership shock, we leverage something called the authentic leadership model, which is a system to think about your leadership. It breaks it down, and it's authentic because it starts with things that are true about you. Right. So what's your purpose like? What fulfills your emotional talent? What impact do you want to have in this world? It has, what are the strengths that you bring to this new role? And then it also has, like, what are your leadership beliefs? And those are the authentic pieces. And, you know, I've seen models that have those, and they can be really powerful and they can really help you as an individual. But I think context, because shock is contextual, context is really important. So says, what's your role expectation? The role expectation is different than your job description. The CFO is a great one. What's your role expectation? The expectation is you're an enterprise wide leader, that you're helping everyone in your company be more effective in how they manage their business, not an expert. That's the role expectation. And then your vision, which is, what do you want to accomplish in this role? When you take those five inputs, you can really start to identify, where do I want to spend my time?

And therefore, where shouldn't I spend my time? And then also, what kind of leader do I want to be? Which is different. So the director of finance, I was probably a manager. I had to understand the numbers. But as a CFO, I need to be a leader. That's a different role. And so one is a different role the other place that happens, this might be true for some of the listeners to this podcast, is when the organization around you changes. So, and it actually is really hard in growing companies because it's like the myth of boiling the frog. Right. So it's sort of like it's potentially a little bit easier when I take a new role because I stop and I'm like, huh? I need to do things differently. But if I'm in a role and the company is now twice the size that it was when I started in that role, I probably have not changed my leadership and I'm probably not fulfilling the role the way I should. And again, my calendar is crazy because now the people, number of people that report to me has doubled or tripled, but I haven't actually intentionally changed the way I lead. So that's another area where people get into shock, which is when the context around them changes. And I think you see this actually a lot in startups where you get to a point that the startup, like, you know, I might have been the chief information officer or the chief technical officer, and there's six people on us. Right? And now there's 100. Have I been really intentional about how I'm changing the way I lead and the role that I have? And I think in most cases the answer is no. And that's why I think founders and early employees to startups really struggle because they're just not intentional about how they're....

**Erika Whitmore:**

Running so fast, growing the business so fast.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Right.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Which is also important.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Right.

**Erika Whitmore:**

But at some point, if you don't stop and like you said, be intentional, then who knows where's the goalpost, right. Where are you trying to get to?

**Pete Steinberg:**

Yeah. And Erica, you actually touched on something. I think often I get asked what's the biggest challenge for people to get out of leadership shock? And the biggest challenge is time. Yeah, it actually takes time, but it's an investment. Right. And one of the things that I think is we actually don't value our time very well. Like people just give it away. We give it away like it's free when it's actually our non renewable resource. And I hear companies say things like that.

**Erika Whitmore:**

I like that term.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Yeah, it's a non renewable resource. Like once I've used my time, I don't get it back. And, you know, I remember I was working with a leader and I was working with a chief of staff, and we were looking at their calendar. We were saying, where is the leader spending their time? And next week their calendar is crazy. They're super busy. I don't look at next week, I look at two months out, and I say, two months out. I'm like, oh, what's this meeting with this vendor? And they're like, oh, that vendor asked last week if they could meet this week, and they were too busy to meet this week, so they put it on the calendar two months from now. I'm like, okay, two months from now, is that week going to be crazy? Yeah. So we discount our time.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Yeah.

**Pete Steinberg:**

So our time in the future, the further out it is, it's less useful. Right. It's less like we're actually makes no sense. Like an hour now is the same as an hour two months from now. And so being really like, time is the real challenge that I think, I mean, I think it's the big solution to being a great leader. There's Scott Kobe, who's the CEO of United Airlines. United Airlines is one of my clients, and he schedules 4 hours of meetings a day. That's it. And he says, how am I supposed to think if I have... And therefore, he has to be very intentional, not just about what meetings he's in, but he has to be very intentional about his expectations of his leadership team so he doesn't have to meet with them all the time. Right? So he has to be really. And I just think, I heard that and I was like, that's someone who's, who values their time. They're like, I need time. So when I work with people in shock, the first thing we have to do is we have to point on. And so if you're in a startup and you're growing, the one thing you don't have is you don't have time. You feel the pressure, right? This week, next month, sales, like getting things out the door, but still, you need to, like, if you want to be a great leader, you have to find time to invest. So you have to make a choice. Do I get more return by being in this meeting that makes an idea 2% better, or is it better to use my time to think about my leadership? Most leaders I work with are like, no, 2% better. That's where I spend my time. I'll just finish this. And I know before the podcast, I said, I can be careful. So Erica is going to give me, like, these things when I talk too much. A signal. But I called up a C-suite executive, Fortune 500 company, actually now CEO, former client who was amazing at his time. And I said, how do you decide if you're going to be in the meeting. And he said, I'm only in meetings that move the stock price.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Well, that could be almost anything, couldn't it?

**Pete Steinberg:**

No, because most meetings that you're in, right. Like, most meetings that we find ourselves in all the time are in that "Are we making this idea 1% better?" That's not going to move the sock price.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Okay.

**Pete Steinberg:**

He's like, this is a risk question. If I'm not in that meeting, is a decision that, like, what's the risk? It's really a risk decision that he's saying when he said, what he really means is like, move it up or down, mostly move it down. And if there are meetings where the risk is very low, like, it's good people, this guy doesn't. I'd have to be in that meeting. And I think for most of us, we're like, no, I need to be in that meeting because I need my voice to be heard or I need to make it. I need to make sure that we're doing the right thing. But actually, you spend an hour in that meeting, and it would have been exactly the same if you weren't in it.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Absolutely, Yeah.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Right. And that's how we don't value our time. So time is really important to get out of leadership shock.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Which, I mean, I think, again, I think so important. Right. And really, honestly, and you talk about it in the beginning of the book. Well, really throughout the whole book, but continuously revisiting that and solidifying that concept in your brain. Super helpful. So I know you wanted to discuss the Dunbar number.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Yeah. So the Dunbar number and leadership shocker are linked. So Dunbar was an anthropologist that did a study with primates. And what he found out was that when primate groups got to more than 100, they would actually split and become two groups, two different troops. And that's been applied pretty successfully by cultural anthropologists to organizations. And they think the numbers around 150. And so what I think is really interesting for fast growing companies and for leadership, is that what it says is that, what the Dunbar number posits, like what it proposes, is that when you get above 150, maybe we're not sure exactly what that number, but there's some number. People's focus becomes less collective and more individualized. In other words, I stop being connected to these people in a personal way. So if there's ten people in the company, more connected. If there's 20 people in the company, we're connected. If there's 50 people in the company, it's getting harder, but we can all be connected.

**Erika Whitmore:**

And it doesn't matter if you're virtual or in person, right?

**Pete Steinberg:**

It doesn't matter if you're virtual in person. Yeah. At some point you get to a number where we actually, we can't all be connected. And groups have. Right. So people create their own troops, and what they see in the Dunbar number is that individual incentives become more important than collective incentives at the Dunbar number. So the collective incentive is we want to grow. We're all aligned. There's stock involved, there's equity that we get. But once you get to a certain number, those motivations, extrinsic motivations, become less important. And now it's more important about how I get rewarded because I don't feel part of the collective.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Right.

**Pete Steinberg:**

I think you can hack the Dunbar number a little bit, and I think you can do that by being really intentional about building communities so people feel connected to the community even though they're not individually connected.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Smaller communities.

**Pete Steinberg:**

No, you can do it for the larger community.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Okay.

**Pete Steinberg:**

It's a little bit like, you know, you're in a partnership. You don't know all the partners, but there's a community. And if you meet another KPMG partner, you're like, hey, we're both partners. There's a connect. You don't know them, but you're part of the same community. Right. And so what research will say is there's three things to build communities. So one is purpose.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Yeah.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Right. So people will feel like they're part of a community if they feel like they can be fulfilled there. The second thing is strengths. So people feel like they're part of a community if they feel like they can have an impact. My strengths are leveraged. And the third thing, which I think is really interesting, is citizenship.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Interesting.

**Pete Steinberg:**

So citizenship is: Do I have some say in the experience somehow? Right. So citizenship is a really interesting concept. And I think, again, if we think about fast growing companies, when you're a group of 20, you all feel like you're citizens. You're all part of it, right? You're in this and you're growing. You have to. Right. And if you don't feel like part of a citizen, you're not going to survive.

**Erika Whitmore:**

No.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Like the reason you work 80 hours a week and you work on the weekends is you feel like you're part of this. You're all citizens of this community.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Right.

**Pete Steinberg:**

But when you get to 200 now, it becomes really hard to feel like I'm part of that I'm a citizen. So you can be really intentional about how you do that. And this is where it leads to leadership shock. When leaders get to that space of the Dunbar number, it's 150, it's 200. All of a sudden, they're like, what happened?

**Erika Whitmore:**

They can sense the shift.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Why isn't everyone on board? Why isn't it like the old days? And the reason is your role has shifted. The way that you've led has shifted the way you lead at 50, where I can actually meet everyone. At 200, I can't do that. So you go from really being a manager to being a leader. And so being a leader requires you to change authentically the way that you lead to create these people. So they still feel sticky, they still feel like part of the community. And you can do that because....

**Erika Whitmore:**

How do you do that? And again, I know we only have a certain amount of time, but if you were to give those, because I bet you money, there are a lot of folks listening right now, they're like, oh, my gosh, that's where I'm at. How do I do that?

**Pete Steinberg:**

So the way that you do that is you have to be intentional. You have to say, like, you have to see it as a system. So my organization is a system, and the way I lead this system, so the other thing that happens once you get to a certain level of leadership is that cause and effect becomes less direct. Right. So when there's ten people in the organization, I talk to people like, we pull levers, things change. When I've got 250 people in my organization, I'm like, if I say something, what's going to happen? I actually don't know. Are people going to do it? Are they going to not do it? And so that cause and effect goes away. So you've got to see it as a system, and that system is really challenging. I think you've, like, the first thing I would do is be really clear about what you're trying to do in your organization.

**Erika Whitmore:**

So really clear with the purpose.

**Pete Steinberg:**

With the purpose. Right, right. And say, look, this is what we're trying to accomplish and help people understand how that can be important to them.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Yeah.



**Pete Steinberg:**

And I would also say that this is sort of, like, a little bit, like, good to great. Like, give people the option to be on the bus or not be on the bus. We worked with a company, 300 people recently, and we redid their values and purpose exactly for this reason. And the big thing that they did is they gave people an offering. So they said, hey, here's our purpose, here's our values. We're going to change. Would you still like to be part of this? And the reason why that's important is that citizenship, it's like, do you want to be part of their control? They have agency, they're like, no, I want to be ok. And as soon as you do that, all of a sudden, psychologically they're like, I'm in.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Yeah, right. You're either in or you're out.

**Pete Steinberg:**

And we don't do that enough in our organizations. What we do is we hold on to people who've been there for ten years or they've been like, you think they deserve it. Right. And they're not being fulfilled. They're also not performing very well. You're like, this person used to be really good. It's because they're not aligned in their purpose.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Right.

**Pete Steinberg:**

And then just helping people be good at what they do, like leverage their strengths, which also might mean as companies evolve, especially early on, that they adjust like, they move people. Like, you can move people with different functions. You move in different roles. You're like, look, you're really good communicator. We never had a PR department or a comms department before. Now we need one. Even though you might be a developer, you're actually really good at this. Can we bring you over here? Right. It's sort of like understanding exactly what they want to get out of it. So this is, and all of this takes time and all of it takes intentionality.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Right. I love that. So that's super helpful because those are tangible things people can take away and do right now. So I think the other thing that we wanted to discuss was, again, kind of further build on what can leaders do now? We touched on a little bit, but maybe go back to, you just changed roles. Right. So what can that leader do now? First of all, my guess is recognize that you are likely in shock, which again, if you pick up the book, you very quickly, well, here we are.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Self diagnosed.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Yeah, that's right. Exactly. So help us think a little bit more about that.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Yeah, I think so. I think it is more chatting in the book. Maria Taylor, who's the chief learning officer, United, I think, had a great point that I hadn't really thought of, which is you're more likely to get into leadership shock when you're promoted within your company than when you go to a new company. So when you go to a new company, you expect everything to be different, you know? You know, like, hey, it's going to be different. I have a new email. I'm like, if I go into the office, I'm going into a different office. Everything's different. Therefore I need to be different. It's really hard when you're, when your role evolves. And again, fast growing companies, often you take on the new role, not even formally. You just start doing it. Right. So it's really hard. It's all, like, very gradual. It's step by step. And so I think that I would argue that there's probably, like, you need a checkup.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Yeah.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Right. It's almost like you need to leadership checkup. And so, like, once a quarter, you should find yourself, you should find some time and be like, okay, am I being my best self? Am I being really effective? And am I feeling fulfilled? Like, one of the things in the book that I think is really important is the concept of purpose and really understanding what your purpose is. And we talk in the book about metacognition. And metacognition is not just reflection, but it's reflection of reflection. So, so an example is I might be like, I love working in teams. Right? So when you talk about purpose, you would say, you know, what really fulfills you? You're like, oh, working in teams. Okay, that's reflection. Metacognition is, well, why is working with teams fulfilling to you. Right. It's really, and then diving down. So really understanding what your purpose is, I think especially in a fast growing company, is really important because when you understand what, fills your emotional tank, you're able to then intentionally do things that fill your emotional tank. Because, look, no one has a job that is 100% alone with that purpose. Right. You've got to do some administration. You've got to do some pieces you don't like. But if, you know, oh, this makes me feel good and gives me energy, I need to do that. You can actually manage your day. And so when you look at it, you can be like, in the morning, I'm going to do all the administrative stuff that I have energy that I don't like doing. But at the end of the day, when I find myself tired, that's when I'm going to do the things that fulfill me up, that fulfill my purpose, because that's going to be exciting. That's going to make me feel good about myself. What we often do in the morning is we do the things that we want to do that fulfill our purpose. And by the time we get to the end of the day, we have no energy to do the administrative stuff that we don't like doing. But we have to do, again, this comes back to time and how you manage your time. The purpose piece for leaders, I think, is really, really critical.

**Erika Whitmore:**

And so just, I have a question on that because, and again, being part way through the book, do leaders struggle to figure out, do they think they know what their purpose is? Maybe right away. But then as they, as you continue to work with them, they, and you find maybe you knew the whole time, but that it's not actually...

**Pete Steinberg:**

So I would say that, that leaders have some idea of what fulfills them but don't understand it. In almost every case, don't understand it at a depth that's useful. So it is a little bit like, I like working in teams. Okay. But that's not your purpose. Right. So it might be. And when you dive in, it's actually the collaboration. Right. I actually really love collaborating teams is where that happens. But I love collaborating. And then often it's, I love solving difficult problems and collaborating with smart people to do it.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Right.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Like, to be able to help or I love working. Like, I love leading teams. Okay. But actually what I really love is developing people. I love seeing people that's really, so in most cases, they have an idea broadly of what fulfills them, but they don't really understand why. So they understand, oh, this is, and so that's what we do. And the nice thing I think about the book that you're going through, Erika, is we actually give you a head. Like, here's some questions to think about the help you do that. I would argue that we all need someone to bounce those ideas off, like, in our head. It's really hard to do that on your own. But going through that process of actually, what's the root cause of all of these things, I think is, is, is really, is really powerful.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Well, and I think your point on creating, because the way I kind of interpreted what you said was: do the hard things first when you probably already have natural energy, but then you need to create energy in order to get the rest of this done. Well, that happens because it's aligned with your purpose and because, you know, it fills you up.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Yeah. And also, I think when we are in, when we're explicit about what our purpose is, it reinforces the power of doing things. It's like, oh, hey, this fulfills my purpose. Right. And all of a sudden, I get really excited and it gives me energy where if I didn't know that, right, if it wasn't explicit and I didn't know that, right, I'd be like, at the end of it, I'd be like, oh, that was good.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Well it comes back to being intentional. Right. And so if you're intentional and then there's awareness, then all of a sudden it becomes more clear.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Yeah. And I think this is actually that intentionally. I was working with leaders of large companies, so 14,000 people. But actually, I think it links to probably your leaders, too. And the leader was naturally a really great leader. She was amazing, but she wasn't intentional in how she engaged her team. And so what would happen is that whoever was sitting next to her or, like, there'd be a problem and she would just be like, oh, Erica's here, let's talk about it. Versus. Hold on. Who should I involve? And I think, like, that intentionality about, like, how you, that's the leadership question: Who should I? And there's lots of reasons why it involves them not just solving the problem. It could be developmental. It could be because I want them to feel included. Right. There's lots of different ways that I would do that. And I think that's another challenge with fast growing companies is that intentionality about who I engage with. And when there's ten of us, it's easy.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Right.

**Pete Steinberg:**

When there's 200 of us, who do I actually involve in this, and why do I involve. Right. And that's, sort of like, in my next book is going to be called Team Shock because....

**Erika Whitmore:**

Are you being serious?

**Pete Steinberg:**

No, I'm being serious. It's actually not my next book. I have another book, but the reason why it's Team Shock is that, you know, the other work that I do is in these high performing executive teams. And when you work with high performing executive teams, almost all of them are dysfunctional. Right. They are functional experts that try to work together and they're not explicit and they're not intentional. And so the same thing comes out. And so often when I work with a client who's in leadership shock, the outcome of that is working with their team, because you've got to be like, actually, we need this to be more functional. I'm fortunate with my background of coaching elite rugby teams, I can get, and I actually took a group of KPMG partners last summer to the Olympic training site in San Diego to train with the women's Olympic team. And these are like women, and they're amazing. These women are all amazing. Like, we have women from Harvard. There's a woman trying to go to Paris that has a degree from Princeton and a JD from Harvard and quit a job at JP Morgan to come and try and make the Olympics. So these are like really amazing people. But what they really are is they're amazing team members. And so when I take executives there, there are these like 22 year old women who are like, wow, these people don't play very well together. Like, they're not very good team members. And I'm like, I know because partly because we don't reward that.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Yeah, right.

**Pete Steinberg:**

That's not what we select for. Like, again, if we go back, the director of finance that becomes CFO is not the best team member. It's most likely the best finance person. Right. And so now what we have in our executive team is the best functionality experts.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Right.

**Pete Steinberg:**

But that's not what you should select.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Right. So then you have to develop that.

**Pete Steinberg:**

So then you have to develop that. So I actually think there's a metric problem. Like, we measure outcomes the same in sport, right? I actually don't like sports analogy. Like, you look at team that wins, you're like, great team. They could, they could be, may or may not be. And we look at like a great salesperson. We're like, great salesperson. But is the market growing? So we, we have a metric problem when it comes to leadership, where we don't actually know what to measure except the outcomes. So what we select on outcomes for our leadership team, but then we wonder why our leadership team is dysfunctional. But we're not selecting on attributes, just like they're collaborative. Are they good communicators? All attributes are the innovators like attributes that are really important. But I'm going to give a kudos to KPMG. I helped one of the management committee be selected, and they selected complete their attributes. Not on functional expertise. I was like, that's really cool, right? That's how you should select someone if you want, if you want a really functional executive team. So I think that's another thing for fast growing companies is you need to be intentional when you're 200 people or 300 people about what your leadership team is.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Absolutely.

**Pete Steinberg:**

And is it easier to develop? Well, I think it's easier to develop technical expertise than it is to change attributes. And so I would always select an attribute first. It's easy to do that. I mean, I do this a lot when you're like, oh, we need to bring in a new CEO or we need to bring in a new CIO. And so we bring someone in from the outside. And I think in fast growing companies, the number one criteria they look at is experience, because that's kind of what they're hiring. Right. They need someone who's a bit more experienced to help us go to the next level. But actually, experience is something that's very easily replaced. Like two years in, you have all the experience that you need. And now what you have is someone that doesn't have the attributes that you want to grow the business the way you want it to go because you didn't hire it. You hired someone with experience. And so I think experience is important, but is it the most important?

**Erika Whitmore:**

Yeah.

**Pete Steinberg:**

And it kind of depends. And so I think that being intentional as a leader about who's in on your team.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Right.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Because I could do everything. Right. But if my team is really dysfunctional, I'm going to go into leadership shock. I was actually, I was talking to a CEO this weekend, former client, who was talking about his executive team and how he's a recent CEO and how it's really difficult because he leads very differently than the previous CEO. And he expressed that the big, the big mistake he made was not making more changes because you've got people

that have attributes that don't work in the way that he wants. They're in their fifties and sixties. They're probably not. Yeah. They're not aligned. They're probably not going to change. And he kind of knew that was it. But as the new CEO, like, it's just hard to do that. And so I think being ruthless about your executive team is something that's really important. We don't value that.

**Erika Whitmore:**

I think that is such a good point, being ruthless about your executive team. Now, that might be two people or it might be ten. Right. But if somebody is where they are right now. So it's this. They just came into this leadership position. They need to go through this, but then their team needs to go through it.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Right.

**Erika Whitmore:**

To see what. Okay, so are we gonna get there or not? Right?

**Pete Steinberg:**

Yeah. I mean, I worked with actually sort of a leader. It's actually in the book. So there are four case studies at the back, and one of them is a guy called Jeff Turner. He's the CEO of Simply Good Foods. And I worked with him with his first vp role in marketing. And he was sort of like the OG client for the authentic leadership model. We kind of co-created it. And his model is, like, so advanced. Like, I don't do that with those clients because he took it to another level and his level included: What's my expectation of my team. So it's like, here's how I want to lead, or here's how I lead, and then I'm going to be explicit with my team about how I lead and what my expectations with them are. And that is, like, so important for leaders. What we actually do is most leaders mold their leadership to their team because it's not intentional.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Right.

**Pete Steinberg:**

It's not like they don't have a system. And so what happens is their team, they like, oh, yeah. Like, I would love to, like, be more innovative, but these two members of my team really like to do things their way. So I'm not going to be more innovative. Like, no one has that intentional thought. But the reality is what you say is I don't want that conflict.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Right.

**Pete Steinberg:**

And so therefore, I'm not going to have that discussion, and therefore I'm not going to fulfill myself as much as I really need to or as much as the organization needs me to. And I think people in fast growing companies that probably have large amounts of equity really need to put, like, if you're the leader, and that's what you need to

find ways to be the best leader that you can be and not be restrained or restricted by either the leadership team that you put in place, because three years ago, we were a different company or the leadership team that was there because you've just come in to, like, accelerate that growth.

**Erika Whitmore:**

That makes a lot of sense. Thank you for being here today. Go ahead and, and tell us about your other podcast, because I think that's important.

**Pete Steinberg:**

So, well, I mean, first of all, people can find me on LinkedIn.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Yes.

**Pete Steinberg:**

Love people to connect with me on LinkedIn. Always looking for... Although LinkedIn's, like, you should only connect with people, you know, I'm like, really? Who does that? Like, who only connects people on LinkedIn? But please find me on LinkedIn. You can also find me at [petesteinberg.com](http://petesteinberg.com) we have a monthly leadership shop newsletter if people want more, more information. And then we actually have a podcast coming up with Leadership Shock. We have some experts in the field as well as some of the case studies, so you can talk to some of the case studies and hear their stories.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Is that going to be a reoccurring podcast or?

**Pete Steinberg:**

It's an evergreen. So I think we have six episodes that are going to come out this spring and only the six episodes that are going to come out in the fall.

**Erika Whitmore:**

And we can get that?

**Pete Steinberg:**

Find it on any of the podcasts. So just look for Leadership Shock.

**Erika Whitmore:**

Awesome. Thank you. Well, thank you again. This was so fun. Favorite part of my job. One of my favorite parts of my job. So thank you, everyone, for listening, and we can't wait to talk to you next month.

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