Karl Pister 00:00:04
Hello and welcome to the Healthcare Leadership Excellence Podcast. I'm your host, Karl Pister. I'm an executive coach and a strong advocate of superior leadership. On this podcast, we explore the essence of leadership through interviews and dialogue, and provide you with tangible steps you can take to improve your leadership performance. As a bestselling author, John Maxwell says leadership is about one life influencing another. The stories, experiences, and wisdom you hear throughout each episode will inspire you to step up, lead, and influence those around you. I'm just excited to have you with us today on the Healthcare Leadership Excellence Podcast. We have a unique experience today. I ran across our guest a few months back and had a delightful conversation with him about a month ago. You hear a lot about, you know, transformation and navigating change and innovation and I think deservedly so. I think that's great. But when you have someone who has been in senior leadership of major organizations with some real success behind him, that can talk to us today about a 30-year path that has taken him through all of these.

Karl Pister 00:01:26
I mean, he's done transformation. He's navigated change and he's done innovation. So I am just delighted to welcome to our show, Mike Murphy with Sunstone Management Advisors. Mike, welcome today.

Mike Murphy 00:01:39
Wow, thanks for that intro. Pressure's on. I gotta have to be really impressive now, don't I?

Karl Pister 00:01:43
You know, it's it's like Yogi Berra said, Mike, it ain't braggin if you can do it.

Mike Murphy 00:01:48
So that's true. That's a good point. That's right.

Karl Pister 00:01:53
Moving beyond baseball wisdom here. Just give us a couple of minutes. What brings you to Sunstone. Just a little brief intro.

Mike Murphy 00:02:00
Yeah. So, my journey started many, many years ago, you know, 40 years ago, actually, I started inside the large company. I worked for one of the major insurers for about 15 years. Going up the corporate ladder. A great experience, great people, great teaching. But I woke up one day and I realized that for me, spiritually, having a bigger job wasn't having a better job.

Mike Murphy 00:02:22
And then I really wasn't a house cat. You know, I really I don't get gross, but I don't breed in captivity. Right. I got a little more feral, right? I need to run around a little bit. And so yeah. So I kind of stepped off that and went into more entrepreneurial type things. And, first job out of gate was actually working for a company, where I got an equity stake. We were privately held. We sold our business to United Healthcare. And so I learned kind of the pressures of being inside of a small company. I did a series of entrepreneurial things after that, and that's kind of building fixie, changing stuff. Skunk works inside larger organizations. And then I would just

say is just okay, you know. Be very wary of the organization saying they want some sort of sea change, because most of the time what it means is doubling down on their activities and hoping for a better result. And so that wasn't, you know, all that fulfilling.

Mike Murphy 00:03:16
And but then on the back half of my career, I got more in kind of the small company, small and mid-sized companies, C-suite activities where I was able to really make some some impact and some quick things. I recently was CEO of a small to mid-sized payer service technology company, took three companies, put them together, all in different stages of trouble. And we grew the EBITDA 40% in the first year. And we grew the revenue by $18M and set that, you know, company on its path going forward. Prior to that, I built a company from the ground up, an insurance company, from scratch and started, you know, as one of the starting employees. It was inside of another large company, but got up to about a half $1 billion and about 20 to 25 million to be done about three and a half years. Today it's over a billion. And then prior to that, I did a pretty sizable turnaround on a troubled company. The one thing I would say is that, you know, having to do transformations and sea change, I would say this, that if you ever hear me tout a corporation or a company that I'm going to, that's going to be a great time to short the stock.

Mike Murphy 00:04:21

You should instantly short that stock. I am not, you know, for whatever reason, I've gone into 3 or 4 scenarios where, oh my God, you know, and I'm not talking like, you know, the executive washroom isn't what you promised. And you know, the coffee isn't great. I'm talking like, oh my God, are we aren't going to be able to make payroll where I was like, so I seem to have been caught up surprised by all this, but in all circumstances have found a way to make it happen and, you know, turn things around and get some success. So my 40 years have taken me on a journey, and certainly a lot of that is around recognizing, managing and driving change as you describe. So yeah, I came out of the last thing and said what I want to do next. Friends came to me and said, you know, you're good at building and fixing things and, let's pool our resources.

Mike Murphy 00:05:10
I mean, building and there's nothing more satisfying than fixing something or building it or watch it take off, as opposed to just grab the steering wheel and steer. So we relaunched Sunstone Management Advisors, a Sunstone. So I'm a history major, and so I take every chance I get to try to sprinkle some obscure historical facts and just to justify my education. And when I had relaunched my company, I went out to my family and said, okay, I'll give $500 to which of my children or wife that could come up with a new name for the company. And my daughter came up with a sunstone. And a sunstone is actually a Viking navigational device. It was thought to be mythological, but they actually found it in archaeological digs where the Vikings prior to the compass, or certainly GPS uses a navigation device to see the sun when it wasn't necessarily in the sky, behind the clouds or below the horizon. So I thought, that's cool, that's us. We're gonna help our clients find the sun.

Mike Murphy 00:06:04
So that's how we've reformed Sunstone Management Advisors a couple of years now. We've got a team of about 10 or 11 of us, all with different skill sets. And our single mission is we just

want to help companies improve their valuation, their optimal value. And sometimes it's really just informal brain pickage. You know, it's just being advice and counsel. We just live for that journey. And so yeah, that's what I'm up to these days.

Karl Pister 00:06:27
So that leads me right into one of my first areas. I remember where it was in the Wall Street Journal. It's when they had that narrow center column that talked more about culture and things, and it said that 70% of transformation initiatives fail within three months. So I know there are listeners out there right now that think, geez, he's going to bring up transformation again, I hate that. But I want you to talk to us. I want you to talk today in a teaching mode. A lot of people who are driving to work. And something you say today might be that I can do that.

Karl Pister 00:07:05
So what are the things that you see, Mike, that when you see them happening, you know, that they're going that those transcripts are going into cement in a good way. And others think, okay, by March that's going to be history. Give us some guidelines on what should we do in transformation so it works and what should we avoid.

Mike Murphy 00:07:29

I think the transformation and the you know, the subtitle of that change is the single most vexing thing that leadership teams and manage management teams face. And the first thing I would say right out of the gate is around alignment. And because ultimately, when you're talking about transformation, you're talking about, you know, doing some sort of intervention to try to change some sort of trajectory. And I'll tell you this little story. It's not an Aesop fable. It's it's real. And there's a lesson, there's an executive team that was struggling, and it was a new group of executives and an old group. The company had almost gone bankrupt a couple of years before, had pulled itself back from the edge and had literally, you know, gotten its balance sheet in order and had some feet underneath it and said, okay, now what? And there was all this tension in the room.

Mike Murphy 00:08:15
And at the end of the day, everybody agreed. The goal was we're going to be $1 billion business in five years. But to get there they needed 15% compounded growth. They've never done anything more than 3 to 4. And so then the debate was, well if we all agree on the goal, why do we have all this tension when there's an ombudsman? There was a facilitator, why do we have all this tension? And I was new and I said, well, okay, let's do this scale of 1 to 10 one, we can fall asleep in our chair and we'll get there. Ten we need to blow it up and start over again. How much change do we need to get to our goal? We all agree on. And it was the twos and the eights. And there were a group of they said, oh you know we only it's 2 to 3.

Mike Murphy 00:08:58
We the company won't take the change. If you try to put too much change in it'll fail. And somebody said, oh this is like, you know, took it, take it in a Porsche engine and stick it in a Volkswagen. Right. And so there was all this noise around the twos and the eights. And so, you know, so the the eights were, you know, bummed out. But you can start if you have the benefit of time, you can start your change meter at two. You'll lose time if you need it. Eight

you lose time. But you can turn it up over time. And by the way, what ultimately happened there is that the trajectory of the company that the twos thought were on was like way off. Not only were they not growing, it's going to grow at ten, 11%. It was minus two. But the twos didn't turn into eights. They turned into minus fours. They went looking for the Delorean to go back to 1956.

Mike Murphy 00:09:44
Right. So anyway, so the moral of the story is, is alignment around the objective. Obviously get everybody buying an objective. Top to bottom executives, all the various stakeholders. And then absolute alignment around the size and scope of the interventions and the design to hit that goal and then an agreement and a plan that as those things are going on, there are checkpoints and milestones where you can adjust the temperature up or adjust the temperature down. And by the way, there's nothing more informative to an organization to understand that it has two's when it needs eights, you know, because that sets up your communication strategy. Now my practical experience is, is that not all tools can get it all right. It just just can't. And so you have to recognize that and you have to make hard decisions. Some can, you know, with guiding and you know, and feeling like they're part of the process and feel like they're in control. So above all else. when it comes to transformation, it's alignment between the goals and objectives and the level of intervention required and up and down the line.

Mike Murphy 00:10:54
Agreement on what those things are. That's what kills transformation.

Karl Pister 00:10:58
So you're coming into my company and I have a pretty good reputation. I'm a go getter. I'm, you know, excited. I come to work. I'm definitely a paddler in the right direction, very engaged. But on this one, I am a two, and it doesn't look like I'm going to move. How do you handle it when a traditional high performer is just running into the wall? How do you what do you do to get me going, and when do you have to pull aside and say, Carl was great in the former organization, but he's doesn't look like he's going to join us in the new one.

Mike Murphy 00:11:36
Yeah, that's really hard. You know you can. And I watched this early in my career and it shaped me for sure. I was a young sales manager. I was a VP of sales in a very large sales shop, and I was in my 30s, and most of the salespeople were in their 40s and 50s experienced.

Mike Murphy 00:11:57
But I watched a whole cadre of them that were very successful over time, and the business started to go by them, and it started to go by them because that hunger that when they were learning, that drove them kind of went away and it got replaced with a sense of their opinions became dogma. And they had a hard time reacting to what was going on. Your two's, as you describe the boss, was a contemporary their age, but he understood and got it and you know, and but he just made the painful decision that, I mean, these guys were in their mid 50s gone. He knew there's not they're not going to get there. And it's you're not doing them any favors by keeping them around and watching them you know, fail And you as a leader, you have to keep the organization moving forward. Now, not all the mid 50s, the handful of

them were, you know, got it right. They said, okay, now we got to make some adjustments. We got to change.

Mike Murphy 00:12:52
So I think you have to deal with it in a very frank and straightforward situation. Respect first and foremost, you know give and then just try to appeal to their better angels to try to get them to understand that, you know, that the ability to reinvent yourself and to be self-aware and to have confidence, but also have confidence in to being able to challenge in yourself and learn and grow. And like I said, I don't know what the math is, but it's not a big number that make that leap. They're not a big number. I'm going back to my twos and eights. They they sat there and they said 15% growth. We have 11 to 12 in the bank. Done. We don't need to do anything else. You guys come up with the other two and it was minus three minus three. And you said okay here we go. Now it's going to be 15. No, no, no. They got even more recalcitrant. And so then it became just, you know, the Woody Nelson School of Golf, which is set the pars at 15 and brag about birdying them

Mike Murphy 00:13:45
You know, it's like blame the referees. You know, it's like, it just becomes just about salary preservation instead about growing the company. So, you know, I start with a period of respect. You know, try to appeal to their better angels, try to get them to go on a journey of discovery and change, but understand that if they're not getting there, you're not doing them any favors by leaving them in place, they're going to be miserable. You're going to be miserable, and your organization is going to fail and let them go on to someplace else where they can be naturally more who they are, and let them get on with it.

Karl Pister 00:14:16

Now, you may have just described it, but you just hit on such an important point. I really want our listeners to drill in here. The pathway to reinventing yourself. Talk to us about what impedes that, because it you know, it should be just, wow, this is a great opportunity. But you hit the wall at 60.

Karl Pister 00:14:38
So if you're talking to Carl, I hear, you know, appeal to the better angels. Can you dig in there a bit? Help me see the advantage. How does this manager who's driving to work right now thinking. Yeah, Carl, really? My Carl really needs to reinvent. What would be your first steps to get me on the reinvention path?

Mike Murphy 00:14:56
Well,like anything else, the first thing you got to do is get some tacit approval or acknowledgement of what the issue is, and that's tough because they're not, you know, they're not going to come forward and admit that, oh, you know, I'm a two I don't want to change even though the organizations require me to change. But you've got to you've got to either you got to start that conversation, then you got to break through and just say, it's not a debate. You know, we've gone through the conversation. I've tried to get you to understand now it's not now you need to listen to exactly what I am telling you.

Mike Murphy 00:15:31
And these are the things I need you to do. You know, I'll give you all the reasons of the world, why it's going to be great, and you're going to be you're going to come out of it and you know it's going to be wonderful. It's going to be painful while you're going through it. But it's not a debate. You have to do these things. So again, start with the carrot and then try to, you know, through the Socratic method, get them to oh okay. Yeah. Maybe you know and then, but then at some, at some point you gotta go, okay. We can't keep delaying. Now we gotta be straight to the point. And I don't want to do it.

Karl Pister 00:16:02
So you're coming into my company. Mid-size company? Couple of hundred million in revenue. That is a hypothetical.

Karl Pister 00:16:12
I see people go deer in the headlights when you tell them that you're going to have to have that hard conversation, and they'll nod and inside.

Karl Pister 00:16:22
Not that I'm a mind reader, but you can read the nonverbals of there's no way that I'm going to have that level of confronting. This is what you need to do. Conversation with Carl. I mean, he's volatile and he could take my head off. And so they tiptoe around and they never deliver the message. So how do you train up-and-coming executives and even some higher-level executives who are brilliant in business and horrible in conflict management? I call it conflict leadership because I don't like the word management leading. How do you do that?

Mike Murphy 00:16:59
Yeah, I think the first thing is it kind of an inventory of traits, right. So what does it take to be able to have that conversation with somebody. And you know, we talk about IQ and EQ obviously it's a big EQ, but I think it starts with a sense. The individual, you know, that that whether it's the young manager that's afraid to confront or the executive who either is too consultative or non-confrontational enough, right? They follow the outliers fall into two baskets.

Mike Murphy 00:17:28
And the first thing is, is that, you know, for me at least, I look for what I would describe as a sense of peace with yourself. Right. If you're an executive. And you have a sense of peace with yourself, because I know you like to use the word confidence, because confidence can then turn into something else, that it's not really just a sense of peace. Are you comfortable in your own skin? Are you aware of yourself? And when you say comfortable in your own skin, you may or may not like everything about yourself and you want to make changes. But you you understand that you have flaws, but you still like yourself. You know you still have that sense of confidence. But why is that important? Well, if you if you have that sense of confidence, people can come at you and say things to you or criticize you, and you know, it's not going to either send you over the corner for a good cry or make you want to take your jacket off and get into Donnybrook.

Mike Murphy 00:18:21

You just you have that confidence because you're you're going to listen to what somebody says. You're going to listen an active listen, not for the actual words necessarily or how it's described, but the actual meaning. So when you're sitting with Carl. Are you active, listening, or do you have your EQ on? Do you understand kind of what Carl's going through? And are you trying to, you know, bring him or her along, you know, in the journey. So for that manager that's afraid to have the conflict. The first question is what do you think management is is leadership. Leadership is making hard decisions. And there's nothing worse in the world than having to let somebody go. But when you sit there and look at it, you have a team responsible for you. And while you're it's not the military, you're not putting their lives at risk, but they're, you know, they're physical lives and their emotional lives are at risk if you won't take the steps you need for somebody on the team.

Mike Murphy 00:19:11
And sometimes that's somebody on the team, maybe a terrific person probably is. But they're not succeeding and you can't pretend they are. And you bring the rest of the team down with you and your organization fails. So you have to have the courage to know that ultimately, that while it's tough, that even for them, It's their best thing for them because they need to move on. So it's, you know, not trying to make light of the difficulty of it. but it's one give them the comfort or at least make sure that they have the confidence and comfort in themselves and their own at peace, that they can have a conversation with somebody, that there's a quiet strength to what they're doing. They don't need to raise their voice. You know, they don't need to cower over. There's a quiet strength like I hear you, but this is what we're doing. And it's they know it's not negotiable. And you keep the tone down. And so, I don't know, it takes. It's taken me years.

Mike Murphy 00:20:04
Right. We figured out we grow over the years. And I fortunately had some great mentors that, you know, that showed me things and showed me things like, oh, I didn't think about that. So it's a constant journey. But yeah. So the young executive or manager that's afraid to confront, well, if you're afraid to confront, maybe you shouldn't be in management. Right. Because that's what it is. You gotta just they gotta give positive feedback and negative feedback. You got to coach the team. And sometimes that means you got the wrong players. And that's hard. But they need to go and you need to move them out. And it's ultimately for their own good as well. And then for that larger executive that, you know, the the somebody that's presiding over this, the, you know, the fight or flight thing, they've got to have the they gotta have that calm demeanor so that they can, you know, they can take somebody comes at them not overreact on the EQ side and keep the emotional thing where it should be, but have that steady, strong sense of purpose and discipline and know this is what we're going to do.

Karl Pister 00:20:58
So, McKinsey just came out with this brand new book, The Journey of Leadership, and it's an excellent book. And what prompted that is your comment of being at peace with yourself. And so, again, talking to our listeners this morning, driving to work on the treadmill wherever they might be. And I just know some of them are thinking, is that easier said than done? Walk us through some examples of how because cheese just last week again hypothetical I'm a bedside nurse. I do really well there. So they promoted me to charge nurse. Now everyone hates me. I've never been in leadership before. And he talks about being at peace with

myself and that person. Because you're absolutely right. How does Carl, the brand new charge nurse, think? Okay. How do I do this?

Mike Murphy 00:21:51
Yeah. So the first thing is, and I've used this to and, you know, and you take it on the role of leadership. Right. And it's an awesome responsibility. No matter.

Mike Murphy 00:22:01
You know what? I was a one time a supervisor, like, you know, everybody's kind of going on their journey. I had 37, you know, billing clerks that I was supervising, and I was 25 years old, and they were all older, and I was and so the inner peace is a sense of confidence. And it's also a sense of confidence in that you're, you're flawed and that you're not perfect, but you're still going to be okay. You know, you're still It's gonna be okay. Because if you, you know, to our charge nurses out there, people will respond to your leadership, right? And so what you gotta be is you gotta be that duck on the water right where the duck is sailing along, nice and smooth. And underneath it's going 9000 miles an hour. Right. And I learned that the hard way because I'm mercurial by nature. And so I would come out of meetings where, you know, the upper ups were doing dopey stuff and it was going to ruin lives.

Mike Murphy 00:22:51
And I would go storming through the, you know, department. And we were all grumpy and, and I had a I had a good leader at the time said, you know, you may naturally go up and down. Your team needs to see you as steady and a cheerful warrior, you know, and that doesn't mean you're an automaton. There's a time and a place for, you know, take the sword out. We're going over the hill, you know, that sort of thing. There's always a time for emotion, but that steady, kind of calm demeanor. And you've got to find that to not just acting it, but you got to find it inside. And so, you know, whether it's prayer or meditation or your loved one's getting that sense of peace and that gives you a sense of confidence, because then you say, you know what? You know, I am flawed. I am not perfect, but I'm still better than most. And you know. And I have the will and the energy and the heart and care for the people around me and the people that I'm leading that will find a way through this and we'll get there.

Mike Murphy 00:23:44
And so but if you don't have that sense of, you know, if you don't have that sense of peace, again, sometimes it's confidence because it's, you know, thin skinned people won't react to somebody challenging them. Right. We're going in the ground like a dart. You don't know what you're talking about. Get the hell out of here. Right? So there's nothing more demoralizing than that. Or, you know, they're they have to be right about everything. You know, there's that they think the idea of, you know, they think that Vince Lombardi was a great leader because he was barking at everybody. Right. And so or there's the other one, there's kind of a mush, right, that just doesn't want to make any decisions or paralyzed. You know, you look at the models of leadership and it's really it's steady confidence. Find it in yourself. If you're struggling with a little bit, make sure that, you know, you got to put up a face that the troop has to see you.

Mike Murphy 00:24:25
The bullets are flying overhead. They got to see you. Steady. Hand on the tiller. Even though

underneath you're that duck going 9000 miles an hour, you know. So yeah, I used to say to folks, you know, I tell them that I believe it's that you have a prodigal right to complain about the boss. It's as American as anything. Right? So I said, my only ask is that. Don't shoot at me from behind rocks. Come in. Let me have it. Hit me in the face. Both barrels call me names. I don't care, you know, because I'm interested in what you're saying. Not the package that's coming in. And we may agree to disagree. And we each reserve the right. Say, I told you so. If the other was right, every now and then I might pull rank. But a lot. Sometimes I won't. But you create that environment where the people around you feel empowered, that you're in a journey together and your leadership is quiet.

Mike Murphy 00:25:07
It's not, you know, I've got the business card that says this. Here's the org chart, and I'm going to talk loudest in the room. It's that quiet sense of, oh my gosh, you know, we're we're moving. We can feel it happening. And again it starts with an earpiece.

Karl Pister 00:25:20
Excellent. So that switches me to another theme. Pretty similar lane. We talked in our pre call about crisis leadership. I saw so much of this kind of came up with a saying during Covid. People will stay around during Covid because they almost had to. But after Covid they stayed or they left because of the leadership they had during the crisis. And you told a story about a dental company that was a great example of crisis leadership.

Mike Murphy 00:25:55
I'm trying to think. Exactly. Trying to think exactly. Oh, well, at least for me. My own personal journey. A company we had sold it, and when they were coming down, they were getting ready to close. And then there was a something in the financials that were upside down.

Mike Murphy 00:26:11
And they came back and said, well, we can't close. We may have to we consider this material adverse change. We're going to have to redo the whole thing or walk away from the deal and the company, the owners or, you know, bootstrapped it. So there was no outside money. It was all friend and family and management and had been 12 to 13 years in the making. And they were watching it kind of go up. And then they, said to me when I was a chief marketing officer. And so in order to avoid this, I had to run the table on my sales inventory, which was 2 or 3 large accounts. And then I had to go out and go to our largest customer and convince them to stay, but sell them a rate decrease. Right. So there's nothing worse in the world of selling somebody a rate decrease, because you basically admitted that I've been making a money ton of money off the overall this time. But now I'll be honest. Right. So now I'll, you know, so and I remember, I remember it was like for me personally, at that point, I'd gone from being inside a big company with 50,000 employees and feeling what I was doing was important.

Mike Murphy 00:27:11
And it was, I mean, and now it was me. It was just me. So this company of 200 people and its investors were relying on what I was doing. It was a kind of pressure that I had not experienced before. And, you know, I did it. I got it done. You know, it was like I ran the table. We we closed the 2 or 3 pieces of business we needed to close, which I thought was not going to happen. And then somehow I convinced this large client to, you know, accept a

large decrease, but not so much of a decrease that it wiped out, you know, our kind of financials and stayed with us. And I remember coming into my, house the day the final thing closed and the chairman had sent me a big bouquet of flowers and a bottle of Dom Perignon, and, I thought, wow, you know, it just it was just an amazing sense of accomplishment. And again, I had some great people around me.

Mike Murphy 00:28:08
But, you know, when you're faced with a crisis, you know, you break it down into small parts and you have a sense of will, and you just go, and it's amazing what you can accomplish. You know, again, if that kind of got you, you're not sitting there going, oh my God, it's too big. Now, I never thought that for a second. I was just going to take him one at a time. And you know, I'm not going to leave anything on, you know, anything out there. Everything will be. I'll give it all my best. And when it happened, I just it was just such a relief. And, and so when you face those crises and you face that as a leadership team, you try to get everybody to understand, is it the other side of this? Nobody wants to go through it. But the other side of it is there's a spirit that comes to you with this magic. I think there's a song by the mighty, mighty Bass Tones.

Mike Murphy 00:28:52
I've never been tested there, but for the grace of God go I. I'd like to think I'd pass, but I don't know. But in this case, yeah, I pass and I've had, you know, other examples where it, you know, we were going in the ground like a dart. It's all over, you know, how are we going to pull the nose of the plane up and all that stuff? And so, more than I care to remember, but I don't know, it's that confidence is going into it and just letting your skills take over and, you know, being surrounded by good people. And when you get to the other end of it, you know, not all of them succeed, but you get to the other end of it. And you look back and I'm like, I mean, even right now I'm thinking about it. I get a little giggle in my face. That was pretty cool. And that was 20 years ago.

Karl Pister 00:29:31
You mentioned in our pre call. Talk to us about the importance of and how you go about getting good people around you. Because some people say I have good people at work, but when you look at it, they're not the A-Team. They're just around us. How do you surround yourself intentionally with people who will pull you to the next levels you need to go?

Mike Murphy 00:29:58

Yes, and that's one of those things. You know, the old river in Egypt called denial. You know, there's so the different kinds of managers right there. Leaders are out there and there are ones that say, I have the greatest people in the world, you know, they're fantastic. And, you know, you'll hear those words out of me as well. And so but when you actually get into it, what you've got is you have a kind of a domineering parental figure. You know, father or mother figure, you know. Over a group of folks. And so there's a need to defend. Right. They're my people, you know, these are my people.

Mike Murphy 00:30:27
And that's my definition of leadership is this kind of. I have the responsibility for my people, and they're great and they're wonderful because I picked them. But if you actually went in

and kind of split it all apart because you'd see that there's a flaw in there and they're not, you don't have a people, but you've got subservient people and a dominating personality who feels the need to be the, you know, the mother of the father figure. When you're a leader, you're not a mother or father, not your job. It's, you know, it's an institutional relationship, not personal. And so the first thing for me is it starts with, you know, a sense of kind of what are the rules. And it starts with 100% ownership, 100% accountability. Find the people where your role as coach and leader is to prevent them from beating themselves up too much when things aren't perfect. You know, if you got somebody like that, that's on your team. That's like, you know, they want in, they want to do a good job.

Mike Murphy 00:31:17
They want to get rewarded. They want to feel respected, and they want to be in an environment where they can contribute and they're heard. Those aren't likely the folks that need a lot of, you know, platitudes about, I have the greatest people, and they want a father or mother figure over them. They, you know, they probably have a healthy disdain of management, you know, probably a little bit like, I don't know, what do I need this guy for? But I, I started off every journey I ever had with anybody that reported me and said my marker that I put down. When our relationship is over, however, it ends that you'll walk away saying it was the best leader I ever had. And I'm not successful all the time. And that's not I can't take that. I've got to earn that. Well, how am I earning that? Well, it starts with, you know, clear, you know, lines of communication, open covenants openly arrived at back to my history, major.

Mike Murphy 00:32:04
Right. You understand what the expectations are. There are no surprises. Divine right of kings. Nope. Don't believe in that. You know, I'm. I'm the alpha wolf. Not because we're running around baring my teeth, or because I got a business card that says that our org chart says that's because I earned it. Lord of the flies. Right? If we didn't have if we were just, we were just a bunch of chaos. I went into a room and said, we got to organize ourselves. I'll end up in charge, right? Or somebody better than me line up in charge. But whatever. You know, it's so it's that to give that peace, that confidence you have and then that your communication with everybody becomes around again, clear and free communication. Let them speak their mind, say the words they want, call your names, you know, whatever. Just lots of task pressure, not relationship pressure. And if you surround yourself with people like that, it's magic. I mean, , another part of career, young in my career, we were we had an impossible task to achieve.

Mike Murphy 00:32:57
And people quit before we even started. Like, I'm there's no way we're going to do it. I'm, you know, and so we respect them. Off they went. And then you surround yourself with these folks and you achieve amazing things. And I remember 1 or 2 of them came to me and it was this was a great thing. They said, you know, No. I really want to thank you. You made me. And I go. no, I did it. I said, look, I'll take credit for, you know, creating the environment for you to be successful and recognizing your talent. And when you had a, you know, a runway well beyond, you know, where you were at that stage, but you're the one who did it. You know, I can't take a mediocre person and make them grow. If somebody's got the heart and soul and the brain, if I can create the environment, they'll do magical things. And so that's how you do it.

Mike Murphy 00:33:41
You want to surround yourself with people that are going to push you every single day and have different perspectives than you do different energy levels. I mean, they can be quiet, you know, they can be loud, you know, get it, get a mix. But motivated by one thing we want, you know, for as long as we are in here doing this job, we are going. You know, my Vince Lombardi quote, we are going to pursue perfection, a goal which can never be attained. But along the way we'll find excellence. And then Winston Churchill, my other favorite quote. Sometimes doing one's best is insufficient. Sometimes you must do what is required. And if you got that energy around you and you got those people around you, it's magic.

Karl Pister 00:34:19
I want to end up today. I should have done this about ten minutes ago because this might take us a while. You know, our listeners know that I'm a history fanatic. In our pre call, we talked about a very common the power of what common people can do.

Karl Pister 00:34:34

And you spoke about, in my view, one of the very best examples of this is Ernest Shackleton and what he did in taking this ridiculously small boat going across the South Georgia Sea, navigating celestial navigation during some of the worst weather you can imagine on the planet, and landed his men on a little island that could have easily been missed by 1 or 2 degrees.

Mike Murphy 00:35:03
And the wrong side of it. And they had to climb up over the top of the glacier. Right. Didn't even got the island. But on the wrong side, they can't do anything. That was amazing.

Karl Pister 00:35:12
So what can we learn from? Because one of the reasons we brought it up, the journey was a failure.

Mike Murphy 00:35:20
Complete failure. Debacle.

Karl Pister 00:35:22
But amazingly, no one died and no one mutinied. Take that into 2025. What lessons can we learn from that?

Mike Murphy 00:35:34
Yeah, I use it all the time. That story, in fact, if I'm new to an organization and we're on a journey, I start. I have a whole slide deck on Shackleton and everything that went wrong.

Mike Murphy 00:35:45
It just it doesn't take long to get through. And and it is one of the most inspirational things you could ever see. I mean, every step along the way. I mean, he made gargantuan mistakes. He ignored things. He was being told that the ice flow was thick and that he shouldn't go. And, you know, but he had these, like, a lot of great entrepreneurs. Now I'm going, damn the torpedoes! And off he went. And you're right, the ability to hold the team together during a

extremely difficult. I mean, we're not talking about, like, you know, we're putting in a new claim system, you know, kind of stuff we're talking about. We need to survive. So it's like a whole other level of stress, right? And, but that, that sense of purpose, they keep the team together, recognizing the personalities and a steady state of calm. He never flipped out. He should have a bunch of times, but he never did.

Mike Murphy 00:36:35
When they got to that, Elephant Island, I think it was. And. Okay, we're on shore now because they'd been at sea and he looks up at the cliffs and he can see that winter. This whole thing is going to be underwater. We can't stay here. We're not done yet. And now we've got to go navigate across the Antartic to find his little dot in the ocean, in a rowboat with rocks in it to keep it from flipping over with a sextant to try. And I mean, and again, they get there. Yay! Oh, we're on the wrong side of the island, and we can't go back out around. We have to go up over the top of this mountain. I mean, just and so the lessons there are is the inspiration on, you know, from leadership and the journey and the team holding together and everybody's skill sets recognize there was a carpenter was a photographer, there was the, cartographer. You know, everybody had a role. Nobody died, which is amazing.

Mike Murphy 00:37:26
You know, a couple of limbs, I think got lost due to frostbite. But and so it's this sense of the inspirational and I, you know, I go back to, you know, carpe diem and, and, dead poets make your lives extraordinary, right? It's, you know, and again, I it's the other thing. That's it. It's we put too much time and energy into our work without hopefully, we have a sense of exuberance about it. Not I mean, I don't want to make it overly dramatic. I mean, we're not we're not again, we're not solving cancer and we're not, you know, saving ourselves, navigating the Antarctic. You know, we're putting in a new claim system, but, you know, there's some excitement to get from that. You know, there's some sense of journey and purpose. I remember a CEO I talked to once and he said, you know, as kids and again, men and women, now after title nine, you know, when you stop playing sports, you lose that run out of the locker room feel.

Mike Murphy 00:38:14
But you can have that in your place of business when you nail the big claim, you know, implementation. By gum, we just beat state. That's what I try to inspire that sense of joy, excitement, fear. You know, it's all part of it. But let the emotions come on the journey we're in. And even if it's something small, you know, and again, I'll make it seem like we are, you know, we're we're the Spartans at Thermopylae or whatever it is. We're holding off the horde. And, you know, it's some great thing, but, yeah, we put a new claim system. It's still us.

Karl Pister 00:38:42
So one thing I just like to say now to our listeners, this is probably a listen to it again episode. So give yourself time to go back and listen, because we have learned from someone who has walked the talk. And Mike, thank you for being with us today. This has been an incredible hour. Thank you.

Mike Murphy 00:39:01
Thank you for having me.

Mike Murphy 00:39:02
I really enjoyed it. I just I love the topic and hopefully, you know, I, I exist to help others and hopefully that folks will take something from this and learn, as I did along the way, from other folks that spend the time to talk to me as well.

Karl Pister 00:39:14
Excellent. Thanks again. My pleasure. Thank you for listening to today's episode. We hope that you found it valuable for the work that you do. If you did, please do us a favor of leaving a review on your preferred podcast platform. Your feedback is vital in helping us enhance our content and reach more listeners like you. Furthermore, if you know someone who could benefit from this episode, please share the link with them. And if you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to us on LinkedIn or through our website at coaching Group Inc.com. Thank you again for listening until we meet again. Keep learning and leading with excellence.