

Doug Smith ([00:04](#)):

Hey leader and welcome to episode number 309 of the L3 Leadership podcast, where we are obsessed with helping you grow to your maximum potential and to maximize the impact of your leadership. My name is Doug Smith and I am your host and today's episode is brought to you by my friends at Beratung Advisors. If you're new to the podcast, welcome, I'm so glad that you're here. And I hope that you enjoy our content and become a subscriber, know that you can also watch all of our episodes over on our YouTube channel as well. So make sure you subscribe over there. And if you've been listening to us for a while and it's made an impact on your life, it would mean the world to me if you would leave us a rating and review on apple podcast or Spotify or whatever app you listen to podcast through, that really does help us to grow audience and reach more leaders.

Doug Smith ([00:42](#)):

So thank you in advance for that. Well, in today's episode, you'll hear my conversation with Aaron Walker and Aaron was actually a referral to me from a friend for the podcast and after meeting Aaron, I was absolutely blown away by what he does and how much wisdom he dropped in this episode. And let me just tell you a little bit about Aaron in case you're not familiar with him, but Aaron has been an entrepreneur for over 42 years. He's actually had 14 different businesses, all scale. He retired at 27 years old and now he, he runs mastermind groups and does coaching and all kind of things. And one interesting thing about Aaron is he was actually in Dave Rams, he's mastermind group for over two decades. And so I think you're gonna love this conversation. We talk a lot about mastermind groups. Obviously we have that in common and you'll hear him share.

Doug Smith ([01:22](#)):

Every leader needs to be in a mastermind group. You'll hear him share some lessons that he learned while he was in Dave Ramsey's mastermind group. And what he's learned from Dave, and you'll hear him talk about business. I mean, he's been very successful. And so he gives lots of great business advice to entrepreneurs as well. So you're gonna love this conversation, but before we dive into it, just a few announcements. This episode of the L three leadership podcast is sponsored by Beratung Advisors, the financial advisors at Beratung Advisors, help educate and empower clients to make informed financial decisions. You can find out how Beratung Advisors can help you develop a customized financial plan for your financial future by visiting their website at beratungadvisors.com, that's beratungadvisors.com. Securities and investment products and services offered through LPL financial member, FINRA S I P C Bertatung Advisors, LPL financial and L3 Leadership are separate entities. I also wanna thank our sponsor. Henne Jewelers they're jeweler owned by my friend and mentor John, he and my wife, Laura, and I got our engagement and wedding rings through he jewelers and loved our experience. And not only do they have great jewelery, but they also invest in people. In fact, for every couple that gets engaged, they give them a book to help them prepare for marriage. And we just love that. So if you're in need of a good jeweler, check out, hennejewelers.com. And with all that being said, here's my conversation with Aaron Walker.

Doug Smith ([02:38](#)):

Hey Aaron, thank you so much for being willing to take the time to do this interview. And I won't really wanna just are talking to you about mastermind groups. It's something we do here at L three leadership, and that we're extremely passionate about. And, you know, as I was reading over your profile and just doing research on you, I learned that you were in a, a mastermind group with Dave Ramsey for, I think, well over a decade. And so I just wanna start there, you know, that must have been quite an

opportunity. I'm sure. Dave, wasn't the only sharp person in the room. Obviously you were there. What did you learn in that time in, in being in Dave's mastermind group and, and then specifically, what did you learn from Dave? I'd be curious.

Aaron Walker ([03:11](#)):

Yeah, well, I appreciate that Doug, Dave, wasn't the only person in the room. He was a sharp guy. There were 10 other guys in there that were equally sharp. And I want to go back just a little bit, just digress, just a little bit to a few decades ago, I didn't even know what a mastermind group was. I was at the curb center watching a Mercy Me concert, and Dave walked up to me and he said, Hey, big A, he said, I want you to think about joining my mastermind group, Dave and I had a long time relationship prior to that, I was his second sponsor sponsored his show for 21 consecutive years. So we had quite a history right outta the gate. We both live here in Nashville. And so I was with him from day one. You know, when he launched his show, he came to me and said, Hey, I want you promote our show.

Aaron Walker ([04:00](#)):

And I did. And that turned into a friendship, which later turned into being a member of his mastermind group. But to be honest, Doug, I didn't want to join. I went to Rob and my wife and I said, I don't want to go in there. I don't wanna do this. And she said, why? I said, well, you know how Dave is? He's all up in your business, he's in your face. He's gonna be telling me to do certain. And I just don't know if I want to do that. And she said, ah, you already go check it out. So I went to the room and I said, Dave, I said, I don't even know what this is about. And he said, I'm gonna invite a lot of other really cool people. You'll enjoy getting to know. And I think it'll be something good for you.

Aaron Walker ([04:36](#)):

So I went right out the gate, Doug, I sat down at the table. They said, Hey, we're gonna study these books together and we're gonna learn. I said, Dave, I don't like to read. He goes, I don't care if you like to read or not. He goes, here's the book. Get to reading. You don't just get smarter through osmosis. Like, dude, we gotta be filling our minds up with positive things. You're gonna learn. And I'm like, okay, here we go. It's already started. So he introduced me to the other guys in the room and they've turned out to be some of my best friends over the course of my life. And it was a place where I really learned that vulnerability and transparency where those two things intersect. That's where strength really begins. And it allowed me a safe environment to where I could let them veil down the facade that I was living and be totally vulnerable and transparent in a very closed environment that they could allow me the vantage point from trusted advisors that could really help take my life to the next level. And I adopted this strategy decades ago and I've never looked back and quite honest, it's been probably the catalyst for the success that I've had over the past few decades.

Doug Smith ([05:48](#)):

Wow. Well, I certainly wanna take time and dive deeper into mastermind groups, which we will in a second, but just while we're on the subject of Dave, I just think it would be fun. You know, in your years of friendship with Dave, what do you think are, is the greatest lesson or maybe two lessons that you've learned from, from Dave's life in, in business?

Aaron Walker ([06:03](#)):

Yeah, I would have to say that his tenacity his grit, his determination, his mindset of can do he's very focused. He's probably the most focused individual old that I've ever known. And like I said, for 30 years

now, we've been close friends and I've never been in a room with another person that had that level of focus. He didn't allow the shiny objects to deter him from his mission. And if it wasn't on the agenda and it wasn't something that was in the vision, it didn't distract him. And so he really conveyed that in a strong way at which I adopted 30 years ago to say, if this is where I'm gonna go, that's where I'm gonna focus and I'm gonna accomplish that thing. And I'm not gonna be deterred by the shiny object syndrome. So there's many, many other things that he's taught me over the years. The, but I would say his level of focus and commitment and tenacity is second to none.

Doug Smith ([07:03](#)):

That's wonderful. Let's talk mastermind group. So let's go back to how you said you didn't even know what a mastermind group was. There's people who or listening to this. They may not know what a mastermind is. What, how do you define a mastermind group and why are they important?

Aaron Walker ([07:16](#)):

I think we overcomplicate mastermind groups. They're really your trusted advisors that are non-biased that you subject yourself to their scrutiny and you're willing to listen to what they have to say. It's kind of like peer advisory group or your board of directors. It's people that really know you intimately. And the reason that you need to be involved in a group like that is we only have one filter there. There's only one way that we can see things regardless of how you would like to see them. You were raised in a certain environment. You had certain influences in your life and perspective is the number one value for being in these groups, alongside of somebody that's willing to encourage your super hours. Somebody that can point out the kryptonite in your life and then show you your blind spots. Because the blind spots is the things that normally get us, but also we can borrow their courage when we don't have any it's somebody that can walk alongside us and understand what our vision is and help hold us accountable along the journey to accomplish your goals and dreams.

Aaron Walker ([08:23](#)):

You know, there's countless things that are valuable in mastermind groups, but I use the analogy. Doug, if you were to ask me a question today, let's just hypothetically say it was about your finances. Let's just say that you wanted to buy a condo a second home in Destin, Florida. And you said big 80. You think I could afford to do that? Well, the truth is, I don't know, you appear to be successful. You've got a lot of cool things going on, but the truth is, is, I don't know your wife. I don't know your children. I don't know your aspirations. I don't know what your propensity is. I don't know what your skills are. I don't know what your, the historical data for your life is. I don't know your financial wherewithal. And so I could say Doug, it would be nice.

Aaron Walker ([09:13](#)):

But I really, really don't know. See, you're not gonna share all that information with the general populace, but you would in a close environment with 10 or 12 people, and then they could help you intellectually make that decision. But if I don't know that data, then I could give you a generic answer, but it wouldn't be applicable to you. And so for me, I want accurate information. I want an assessment to be made that people can give me solid advice. And unless they know that level of detail of my life, they can't really help me.

Doug Smith ([09:50](#)):

I'm curious, you know, in your experience in your mastermind groups, you've been a part of, do you have a moment? I know there's probably a ton of these, but a moment that you would just say this happened in my mastermind group, one time I received this feedback or, you know, XYZ happened and it changed everything for me, whether it was a piece of advice. I'd just be curious if you have a story related.

Aaron Walker ([10:09](#)):

Yeah, I'm a creator developer, like I've owned 14 businesses over the course of 43 years. Wow. I'm not a maintainer manager and I'll go take a shower and get out with three new ideas every day. Right? I've got these new ideas and where it really helped me in the mastermind group is like, I would go in for an example, I would go in the Eagles. That's what we were called. I'd go in the Eagles group. And I would say, man, I want to do X and Dave Ramsey or Ken Abraham or Dan Miller. One of those guys would go, Dave, primarily would go. That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard, man. You can't do that. Dan Miller would go, wait a minute, Dave, hold on a second. If he would do this and this and this, and maybe eliminate this or tweak this or redo this, I think maybe this would work.

Aaron Walker ([10:59](#)):

Well, see, you don't know what you don't know. And other people have insight. They have perspective that I haven't had and they were able to go, Hey, historically, this has proven to be true. And here's why, or this won't work because of X. And so I could pick a out countless examples that that's been the case. And I've propelled myself to a success in certain arenas that I didn't have previous info on or insight about because they had, they had been there. That's the reason that you want these groups even more diverse, right? If everybody looked just like Doug Smith, we only need Doug Smith, but you want the diversity, the other business experiences in that way, everyone is contributing to the value of the mastermind. And so a lot of people say, I want people to look just like me act like me. You know, it's like, well, no, you don't need that.

Aaron Walker ([11:53](#)):

You need more diversity in these groups than less. And so, yeah, having done this now for 22 years, I've been in a mastermind group every week for 22 years. Every bit of my life. It's not just professionally though. It's personally as well, back in 2001, unfortunately I was in a horrible automobile accident. I ran over and killed a pedestrian on my way to the office. And if it hadn't have been for the support of these guys and what they did for me and undergirded me and gave me strength and courage when I didn't have any, I probably would be crawled up in a fetal position under my desk today. And they were able to walk me through that horrific automobile accident. There was another time in my life where I made some bad choices and they were able to walk alongside me from a relationship standpoint, call me out and say, this is inappropriate.

Aaron Walker ([12:52](#)):

You shouldn't do this. And able to help me and mend some relationships back together. There were some times in my life where I was bitter there was unforgiveness and they were able to challenge me on that and say, you know, you continue down this path. You're gonna use that as a filter in your life. And everything is gonna be tainted as a result of you, this unforgiveness in your life. And I was able to eradicate that out of my life and I was able to make better decisions. And there was times in my life, I wanted to make a financial investment. And they heightened my awareness to things in my life that I

couldn't. And here's why. And then there were spiritual needs in my life that the, they were able to shed light on. I made better decisions as a result of it.

Aaron Walker ([13:39](#)):

And you see, we, as I said earlier, don't know what we don't know. And when you subject yourself to that level of scrutiny, to people that don't have anything to gain or lose as a result of their advice and input general consensus of that multitude is really gonna serve you well. But the benefit is when you're in it long term, and then they can see how you live your life. What's important, these aspirational goals that you have, and they can just shore up underneath you and pick you up and walk you down that journey to accomplish those goals. See, they always say, if you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go with the community and that's what the mastermind group is.

Doug Smith ([14:26](#)):

Yeah. So I wanna talk about a few things for people who may be interested in them. One is cadence. You said you've been in a mastermind group every single week as have, as you've led masterminds have been a part of them. Have you found what, what's your ideal cadence for, for someone joining a mastermind group?

Aaron Walker ([14:40](#)):

Yeah, I've been in a group every week for 22 years and will continue to.

Doug Smith ([14:46](#)):

The same group?

Aaron Walker ([14:48](#)):

Well, we started, which gets in kind of the history. So we met for dozen years, you know, in Dave's office. And we don't do that any longer because you want to take what you learn, right. And multiply that, and now not be a mentee, but a mentor. And then you go out and these guys have now started other groups and very successful in their own, right. In doing and sharing. And it's having kind of an abundance mindset. It's sharing what you've learned, you know, with others. And you know, I'm not the Sage wisdom, but I do have 43 years of entrepreneurship. I've been married 42 years. You know, I've got five grandchildren. I've got a little bit of value that I feel like I can. And why would I want to just sit in a group and not go do that and teach other people?

Aaron Walker ([15:36](#)):

And so my mission is helping ordinary men become extraordinary in all that they do. And so I want to continue to share and to educate and to teach. You know, the irony of that is, is the more we do that, the more people we attract, the bigger we get, you know, iron sharpens, iron is our mastermind group. Now we have 17 groups. We're in seven different countries around the world. We have aspirations and goals of having 30 groups in the next 18 months. And so we just continue to teach and encourage others to show them the value of surround themselves with competent, capable people. And when you do that, and you're a giver, the natural reciprocity is, is people wanna give back to you. So instead of having takers, we've built a community of givers.

Doug Smith ([16:26](#)):

What advice would you give to someone who's saying, wow, this sounds great. I would love to be a part of a mastermind group. You know, there's thousands of master on groups out there. How do you really find one? Should you start your own? What would your advice be to someone looking for one

Aaron Walker ([16:39](#)):

You could do either, or, or, you know, some people are not really qualified or capable in starting right out of the gate, leading a group, especially if they've not familiarized themselves with them. So I would investigate really getting, first of all, together with a group of people, maybe in your community, maybe in your civic groups that are there locally, or your church, or just business people, you could assemble a group historically. What I've found though, that those groups don't really last long term. They will for a short period of time. But if they're is no skin in the game, if you're not paying people, attend what they pay for and any opportunity to come up, to make a sale, or to go play golf or hang out with their buddies, they're gonna do that instead of making a commitment to meet with the groups.

Aaron Walker ([17:27](#)):

So there are some groups that do okay, meeting without paying, but we just really pay attention to what we pay for. So I would suggest highly getting involved in a group where you've got skin in the game. We welcome people, you know, to be involved in iron sharpens, iron mastermind, and we've got the framework laid out. We teach people actually how to start their own groups. We have a product called the mastermind playbook to where we teach people all over the world, how to start your own group. A lot of people have an audience, but they don't have the framework. We help with that. Lot of people do that. And then they get involved in our group and they're learning as they go. And then they're growing personally. And so there's a number of ways to approach this. The important thing is, is to surround yourself.

Aaron Walker ([18:14](#)):

And we all know Jim Ron's quote, you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with. And I think that's more accurate assessment than we give it credit for, because you want to be around other people with a growth mindset, not a fixed mindset. You want to be around people that encourage you and challenge you. People that are willing to throw the flag on you, right. And say, Hey, Doug, you can't do that. Like you say that to your wife. One more time. She's liable to pack her bags and get out of there. Like, you've gotta have boundaries. You've gotta be at home. You've gotta be around your children. It's people to encourage you to do those things. If I were left to my own devices, you know, I would be probably the worst in the world because I'm selfish by nature. I've got an ego, I've got pride. We need people around us to help us walk through those challenging times. And community is what we were all designed to be in. We weren't designed to be in isolation because isolation is the enemy excellence. And if you really want to Excel, you've gotta get in community. So you can call that a mastermind, peer advisory, accountability groups, whatever you want to call it, but we need to be around other individuals that can spur us on. So

Doug Smith ([19:31](#)):

Yeah, I wanna talk about paying in return on investment and charging. So from both ends of the spectrum, one for, for someone who's listening to this and there's mastermind groups that are free, that you mentioned, and I know there's masterminds out there that people pay 20 grand a year plus, you know, I'm sure there's way more than that. Talk to someone who might say, like, why, what would the

ROI be on my invest? I get having skin in the game, but really am I just gonna pay to meet with a group of people? What would you tell them?

Aaron Walker ([19:58](#)):

Well, people with that approach, first of all, it's gonna be difficult to see the investment initially, but it's a long term investment. It's not an expense either. It is an investment in growing your a character. It really helps you identify kind of what your core values are, what you're really looking for in life. It, it helps you understand how you can be a better person. I think my ideas are good sometimes until I run it through the council of the multitude. And then I find out, man, there's so many pitfalls in that, that I wasn't even aware of. Right. I talked to Jeff Hoffman, Jeff Hoffman was one of the founders of Priceline. And he was talking about 10% of everything that he watches and reads has no bearing whatsoever on things of interest. And I'm like, I don't understand that. He said, well, the irony of that is, is that the vast majority of my successful ventures have come out of that 10% reading that I had no interest in initially because it opened up doors and avenues that I didn't even know existed.

Aaron Walker ([21:06](#)):

Well, see, that's what mastermind groups do you go into these groups and you think you're pretty well versed on a topic until it's brought up. And then you find out how little you really know about it. It also opens up an avenue for accountability, people that hold us accountable in areas that we're weak. It also gives us access to other people that can open doors because relationships matter most. And when we get into these groups, we find out that relationships, Trump, everything else, because if I were to make a call for you today to open a door, you leveraged the assets of my relat. And so our net worth is directly proportionate to our network. And so when you get in these mastermind groups, not only are you being held accountable, you have access. It also gives you resources. There's so many things that are provided, you know, in light of financial resources documentation courses, books, you name it, introductions and podcast interviews.

Aaron Walker ([22:14](#)):

You name it they're there. But then as I highlighted earlier perspective is probably the biggest asset because you think it one way you see it. One way, I had a construction project that I did it at my house recently, and we brought engineers out general contractors subcontractors. There was a construction problem that we couldn't solve. And we were standing in front of my house. I was trying to do this addition and we could not solve it. Two weeks later, I was sitting on my patio behind the house. I was on a coaching call and I looked up and I solved it immediately. And the reason I did is we looked at it from a different perspective and see that's what mastermind groups do for you when you present whatever area of life, personally, professionally, spiritually, so many different areas in our life that we can present.

Aaron Walker ([23:07](#)):

And we get a different perspective. It could be the game changer. And you're saying, what ROI is there? So this is a very, very small example, but there's two gentlemen that joined our mastermind group, iron sharpens, iron three and a half years ago, two brothers, they were in the real estate business and they had bought four houses. Well, they wanted to buy more house, but they didn't have the resources, a connection a year later within the mastermind group, let's fast forward 36 months today, they own 250 houses. And their goal this year is to buy 200 additional houses this year because they made a connection. They built trust with an individual that had unlimited resources. And at the end of next year,

they'll own over 500 houses. So you tell me what the ROI is on that, right? That's one example out of hundreds of members, they would've never had that connection.

Aaron Walker ([24:08](#)):

They would've never had that relationship. And the list is endless. Doug, I could go on for hours giving you other examples. We had one guy that was he was a butt, just to be honest with you, to his family. And we gave him advice. You keep down going down. This you're gonna end up in a divorce. And we heightened his awareness to his condescending, judgmental attitude towards his family. And we were able to preserve that relationship. Okay. So what is the ROI on that? Okay, so you get a divorce, you've got two small children. I mean, the financial that is related to that, had he not had people in his life to call him out is immeasurable. And so it's just in every area of our life. Like what, what is the, what is the downside right from getting in a group to get a perspective from others, from having an opportunity to have endless resource is from building a network that is second to none. Like, like what is the downside of that? Right. And it's a minimal investment for all the benefit. And so the people that come in that want an immediate financial ROI, 30 days, 90 days, I'm like you, you're not for our group because you have a short sided mentality. We're looking for long-termers people that get it. They understand the value of everything that I just described. And then their life is exponentially grander in every arena because of the people that they surround themselves with.

Doug Smith ([25:46](#)):

Yeah. And talk to the entrepreneur, you know, you have a lot of people listening who I'm sure wanna do their own mastermind groups, etc. What have you learned about charging and, and pricing on the other end when you're, you're the one leading the mastermind group?

Aaron Walker ([25:56](#)):

When I started these groups, to be honest with your audience, I wasn't gonna coach or start masterminds or do podcast interviews or anything. 11 year ago, like I retired from our last business and I went into our mastermind group and Dan Miller goes, what are you gonna do now? And I said, nothing. I'm through, I'm gonna buy a place down in St. Martin, down in the Caribbean, and I'm gonna rock myself into an oblivion. And he started that. And then he said, that's the most selfish thing I've ever heard you. And I'm like, dude, I've been working since I was eight years old, like I'm tired. He said, well, take a rest. He said, but you've had so much experience in business. And you and Robin have had such a successful marriage. You need to teach other people. Well, I'm Christian by faith.

Aaron Walker ([26:45](#)):

And so I go home and I tell Robin, we need to pray about this. They've really encouraged me to do this. And so they've invited me to entree leadership mastery and he said, you'd be my guest. And so I went as his guest and I thought, dude, that's pretty cool. It's a \$10,000 gift. I'll do that. So I went and Doug, I fell in love with it. And a couple of guys there at entree leadership hired me to be their coach. I said, Dave, this is your event. They're wanting to hire me as the coach. And he said, go do it, man, go do it. And so I coached them, started getting on podcasts, sharing my story a little bit. And our business just blew up. It was crazy. And so I started a mastermind group. So I wasn't even intending on doing this, but God just kept sending us these amazing people, these entrepreneurs from all over the world.

Aaron Walker ([27:33](#)):

And I kept doing, you know, John Lee Dumas, I've been on their six times pat Flynn, I've been on his show a couple times, Jordan Harbinger, you know, all these people just kept coming. I did one on Pat Flynn smart, passive income filled up two mastermind groups in 30 minutes. And I'm like, wow, man, what in the world is going on? And so here we are. And I'm like, man, it's changing. People's lives to transformational experience is unbelievable. Why would I just sit on the front porch of a Tiki hut and rock myself off when I can help change these entrepreneurs lives. And that's kind of where it started. And then my daughter is the COO of our company. She said, dad, we need to create a playbook, put all the systems in processes, in place, all the videos we'll teach everybody to do what we're doing.

Aaron Walker ([28:20](#)):

And so Inc magazine reached out, did a story on it. Dave Ramsey, us an endorsement, took his whole team through our process. And they said, this is unbelievable. Ray Edwards went through it. And he said, man, he said, this is the best course I've ever taken in my career. And then, you know, Shane Sam's flip lifestyles came to our live event and he filled up two mastermind groups in 30 minutes. When he announced it, he had 108 applications to join his mastermind group because he went through our framework. And so we teach people to do this very thing. I want to do it back to your question charging. We charged \$200 when we first started, that was a mistake. And the reason it was a mistake, there wasn't a high enough pain point for people to show up today. We charge 5 75 to be in our groups.

Aaron Walker ([29:09](#)):

And people are like, Hey, I feel that. And I wanna show up. I want to get the value because they got skin in the game. We have over 90% attendance. Every week we have 85 to 90% attendance to our two live events here in Nashville. Every we're talking about people all over of the country are coming together for a two and a half day intensive. And we do that twice a year. And we have found that we're able to charge a price that we're able to provide a spectacular, amazing event each and every week. And so if you don't have the resources, obviously you can't provide the level of mastermind that we've been able to do and to provide the resources and get the speakers and do all the things that we do and put on a spectacular event. Let's face it. There's no free lunches. If you're gonna get something spectacular, there's a cost associated with it. And when you really perform and you really use those resources to put on a spectacular event, people are willing to go because they're getting a huge return on investment in so many different arenas.

Doug Smith ([30:18](#)):

Yeah. I wanna go back to something you said, I wanna talk a little bit about entrepreneurship just in this line. You said that you're, I forget the way you word it. You're a visionary, you're a developer. And so I, my assumption would be that that means you're not created follow up, follow through, making sure it gets done systems. Well, I

Aaron Walker ([30:35](#)):

Haven't seen now that does that. I'm a creator developer, right? I'm a visionary. That's how come I've created 14 businesses? I develop good people around me. We have COO, we have an integrator. We have multiple team members. I'm leading them well, but I don't have to physically do everything. Right. I'm either gonna automate it, eliminate it or delegate it. Right. I'm a visionary. I wanna stay in my zone of genius. I don't wanna do something because I'm competent. It's not about, you know, how it's it's about who and we get the right people to do the task. And then I operate in my zone of genius. And I

don't wanna do things that suck the life out of me. Right? Cuz you won't do that long term. I wanna do thing things that give me energy. I wanna do things that God gifted me at that I can do.

Aaron Walker ([31:28](#)):

Only what I do and the mindset of a lot of solopreneurs and even entrepreneurs is that they have to do everything. You can't do it. You don't have to bandwidth to do it. If you're gonna scale it, if you're gonna maximize it, in any possible way, we need to really focus on what brings us joy, where we're gifted, where we can move the needle the best and then develop a team around you. And so that's what we've been willing to do for my entire career. And that's why we've developed some pretty successful companies because of that mindset.

Doug Smith ([32:04](#)):

So good. Just outta curiosity, you mentioned integrator and then you said, who not how are, are you connected with Dan Sullivan all and strategic coach in that whole?

Aaron Walker ([32:11](#)):

Well sure. I mean everybody is right. I mean that, that's, he's a great leader of facilitator. He's got some great material out. That was a great book. I'm giving him a plug for it right now. It's yeah. Fantastic about how it's who right. And so Dan Sullivan as strategic coach does a great job. He actually lives here in Nashville as well. So we got a lot of Nashbillions, you know, right here that do an incredible job, but yeah, anyway Gino Wickman, you know, EOS, I interviewed him just a couple of months ago, brought him into our community and interviewed him. And he's got a phenomenal program out there.

Aaron Walker ([32:54](#)):

Seth Godin, Rocket Fuel recently I brought Seth go in and wow. Gave some great leadership tips, Mike Mac Callows Brian Moran. Those guys are phenomenal leaders in their space. And so, yeah.

Doug Smith ([33:09](#)):

Well you mentioned several times throughout the interview, you're passionate about family and wanna get back there too. So I'm just curious, you know, before we go into the lightning round, you have a lot of leaders listening, a lot of young leaders, you know, I was telling you before we, we started the podcast, I have three little ones at home. My wife's a full time sales executive, I'm in leadership roles and yeah. You know, what advice do you have for, for us young leaders, raising young families to keep our families in the midst of also trying to succeed at work and then leadership.

Aaron Walker ([33:35](#)):

Yeah, I'll talk on this just for a minute. When I was young, I broke when I was a kid, my dad never made over \$15,000 a year in his life. He was a general contractor. He built houses and he physically did it with a hammer, right. And dug the footings with a shovel. I mean, my dad was a hard worker. He was a terrible businessman, but I decided early on that I was going to do better financially. And so I really put my head down and said, I'm gonna put in whatever grid and determination is necessary. I'm going to do whatever I need to do to delay gratification, to pour the money back into our companies and build them. I started my first company when I was 18. I sold out to a fortune and 500 when I was 27. So I was able to retire when I was 27 years old.

Aaron Walker ([34:25](#)):

And I said this gives me a launch pad to do other things and went back, bought the company I started with when I was eight, I mean, 13 years old. And we developed it and grew it. And the focus that became for me was the tangible assets. It became the big house on the hill, the place on the beach, the place in the mountains, the Mercedes, all the things. And what I discovered when I had the automobile accident when I was 40 years old, was that my ladder was leaning on the wrong wall. What I figured out was is that I came home with a pocket full of money, to a house full of strangers. And my wife said, thank you for providing for us well, but I'm taking our daughters to cheerleading practice and girl Scouts and brownies and ball games and athletic events.

Aaron Walker ([35:21](#)):

And you're making money. And I appreciate that, but you're not serving your family well. And when I had the automobile wreck, I realized that nobody cared about the level of success that I had, but my family and I hadn't left a legacy that I wanted to leave. The legacy that I had left at that point was poor kid from Nashville. Tennessee makes enough money to retire at age 27 and nobody cares. And I said, man, that's not the legacy I want. The legacy I want is Doug Smith's life is better. As a result of having interacted with me, me, I wanna be the giver. And so I've really focused, outward, helping other people accomplish their goals and their dreams. And I found out that the tangible possessions, the things that moth and rust destroy is not what matters to people. What matters to people is, is how your life impacts them.

Aaron Walker ([36:14](#)):

Nobody cares about your things. They only about how your life is affecting and impacting them. And as a result of that, I discovered that relationships matter most. It's our first core value. And so I would say Doug, bill boundaries, if you're gonna cheat anybody, cheat the world and cheat the office, don't cheat your family because you only only have one go through with your family. You don't get a do over. I can start more companies. Obviously I can make more money, but I don't get to relive my children's teenage years with them. I don't get to share those visions with my wife if I'm never at home. And when little Bobby wants to pitch baseball and I've gotta send one more email, I've just missed a grand opportunity that in a few years he's gonna be gone. And I don't wanna be that guy. That's rich with no relationships and a destroyed family.

Aaron Walker ([37:08](#)):

It's just not worth it because it doesn't scratch the itch like you think it's going to. So the word of caution is, is to prioritize your priorities. Really put the big rocks in first and spending inordinate amount of time, focusing on the things that really matter and allocate enough time to make the resources that you need money as a tool. And we need to treat it as a tool to live the life that we really wanna live. And if, if we don't really get our priorities, friend of mine wrote a book, Roy Vaden does here in Nashville called procrastinate on purpose. And what we really need to do is be very intentional about the things in our life that really matter. And I think we lie to ourselves. Doug, I think we say these things matter, but you're actions are speaking loudly in that you're not investing the time. And for me it doesn't matter what you say, it's what you do. And if you're not implementing on what you do, then it's really not important to you. So pay attention to your family. Your kids are not gonna be there long.

Doug Smith ([38:19](#)):

He that's about relationships mattering most and throughout the interview you've clearly developed quite a network of other leaders that you connect with. I'm just curious, you know, and even before you,

I think you said you were on a hundred plus podcasts a year, you mentioned several high profile podcasts. What advice do you have for, for leaders when it comes to networking, expanding their network? Et cetera.

Aaron Walker ([38:41](#)):

Yeah. I would say adopt a mindset that we've had over the course of my career and stop trying to make the sale and focus on adding value. Yes. And it's even my, so focus on this today. It's not about what we're gonna get out of. It is how can I help Doug spread a message on his podcast that would add value to his listeners? And when you adopt that mindset, the natural reciprocity is gonna come back in resources and networking and relationships. And it's connecting the were very, very intentional about being proactive in building relationships. You know, COVID has really hurt us. The pandemic has really hurt us, but there's still a great opportunity online to build these relationships. And so we just make a very concerted effort at extending our network out on ongoing basis and that's by adding value to other people. And we even teach how to do that in our mastermind. We're very proactive in teaching people how to develop these relationships, but it's very intentional.

Doug Smith ([39:49](#)):

Oh, you've clearly added value to me today. And I'm sure everyone listening to this thinks the same thing. I wanna dive in with the rest of our time into the lightning. These are just a bunch of fun questions that I ask leaders in every interview. Cool. And the first one is this, what is the best advice you've ever received and who gave it to you?

Aaron Walker ([40:04](#)):

Yeah, I would say fear missing an opportunity more than you fear failure. Hmm. I'm always afraid of what I'm missing. Not of the repercussions that are gonna, I will kill me to lay in bed at night and think would it have worked? Wow. And so for me, I'm just gonna go for it and then develop if I can have to develop a can do mindset. My mom had a saying when I was a child, she would say, can't, couldn't do it and could did it all. And I've adopted that is my life mantra. Like I can do it. It may take me a minute to figure it out. But with that mindset, coupled with fear missing an opportunity more than you fear failure, you'll be very successful.

Doug Smith ([40:50](#)):

If you could put a quote on a billboard for everyone to read, what would it say?

Aaron Walker ([40:57](#)):

Yeah. If I could to put a quote on a billboard, what would it say? You know, relationships matter most. That's what is highlighted in my mind in everything that we do because people matter. And so I would put that on the billboard

Doug Smith ([41:12](#)):

Best purchase you've made in the last year for a hundred dollars or less

Aaron Walker ([41:18](#)):

Oh man. Hundred dollars or less, you know, it's a silly it's a silly thing, but it's a JBL Bluetooth speaker, cuz I can take it out in the yard when I'm peeling around out there. So a JBL, Bluetooth speaker.

Doug Smith ([41:37](#)):

Do you have a book or two that comes to mind when that has significantly impacted your life?

Aaron Walker ([41:43](#)):

Yeah. How do friends, how do in friends and influence people? You know, I think they should make that book required reading. Yeah. If I could get we've already talked about it, but it's, it's who not how that is an incredible book. We took our whole mastermind through that book and it's been a game changer for many people.

Doug Smith ([42:06](#)):

I know you're on a lot of podcasts. I don't know if you listen to a lot of podcasts, but if you do, do you have a favorite go-to podcast?

Aaron Walker ([42:12](#)):

Yeah. Pretty careful about making that comment. I've been on podcast and I'm gonna take the fifth amendment on that one.

Doug Smith ([42:21](#)):

Okay. What do you wish people knew about your journey that they may not know?

Aaron Walker ([42:26](#)):

You know, I've kind of alluded to it early on and I'm not one that's in your face, but Robin and I, this this June will be married 42 years. We got married two weeks outta high school and people ask me all the time, man, how have you had such a successful marriage? And just for me, we have kept Christ as our common denominator. And even when we've reached an impasse, when we go to our knees, we can work through it. And so it's been the key to a successful marriage, keeping Christ at the central focus of our marriage.

Doug Smith ([43:04](#)):

You get to spend time with a ton of leaders. I'm curious, do you have a, a go-to question or two that anytime you meet a leader for the first time you always ask,

Aaron Walker ([43:11](#)):

You know, I always ask this question regardless of who it is please tell me your story. Because most of the time we're thinking about what we're gonna say rather than actively listening. And I always want to let other people's story be their story, never matching them or one upping them. And so I love to learn. And the only way you're gonna learn is by asking question, not telling what, you know,

Doug Smith ([43:39](#)):

What's your biggest leadership, pet peeve?

Aaron Walker ([43:44](#)):

Yeah. Leaders that think they have arrived and they know it all, you know, we can learn it doesn't matter who we're with. There's always a nugget to learn. If we're willing to ask enough questions and we're willing to listen, tentatively,

Doug Smith ([43:58](#)):

You were retired at 27. I don't know if you have or had a bucket list, but it sounds like you've had the resources in time. If you wanted to have a bucket list and cross a lot of things off you could, I'm curious, what's something that you've done in your life that you think everyone should experience before they die.

Aaron Walker ([44:14](#)):

You know, I'm an outdoorsman. I love to fish and, and play golf and things like that. If you're an outdoorsman, one of the most enjoyable trips and it wasn't expensive was I spent 10 days in the Amazon going down the Oroco in the Toma river and it's so far removed from the general populous the piece, the serenity was immeasurable. And so I would say that doing an outdoor excursion or a trip like that is worth its weight and gold. And primarily we spend the vast majority of our resources on experiences. I live a pretty conservative life but we spend an inordinate amount of money on experiences because that's the things that I've found our family enjoys the most.

Doug Smith ([45:07](#)):

I love that. So speaking of which, what, what else is left on your bucket list? What are you looking forward to in the future?

Aaron Walker ([45:13](#)):

You know, when you said bucket list, it made me think about this. My wife and I love to cruise. That's our vacation of choice. Matter of fact, I'm leaving a week from Saturday to go on a pretty nice cruise. We love to do that, but I wanna do a cruise around New Zealand and I would love to go to Fiji in the south Pacific. So I think that would be really fun.

Doug Smith ([45:38](#)):

Best crews you've been on. What would you recommend?

Aaron Walker ([45:41](#)):

Yeah, I would have to say celebrity in Holland America. We're about to go on the new apex. It's their newest ship. And so we're pretty excited about that. My wife's got a big birthday coming up this month. Come on. And so we're gonna, we're gonna spend some time on celebrity apex.

Doug Smith ([46:00](#)):

If you could go back and have coffee with your 20 year old self, what would you tell him?

Aaron Walker ([46:06](#)):

Yeah, I would say not get so tangled up in the aspiration for tangible possessions. That's gonna cost you quality time with your family. I was tangled up in that for a couple of decades and it just didn't do for me what I thought it was gonna do now don't get me wrong. I like to make money and I wanna make more money. I hate get when people with money go, money's not important. I wanna go, you're a liar. It's

really important. Right. Right. Just take all your money away from you and see how important that's not what I mean, but I would better focus on money being a tool of the things that it could do for me proactively in living a life that I've, pre-planned so something that I want to do and I would pay less attention to what people think I should do. I would be very proactive in living the life that I was called to live

Doug Smith ([47:06](#)):

And on the other side of your life. And I think you've already spoken to this, but what do you wanna be remembered for? What do you want your legacy to be?

Aaron Walker ([47:11](#)):

Yeah. I want Doug Smith's life to be different as having interacted with me. That will be a legacy for me. That will be immeasurable if your life was better as a result of having interacted with me.

Doug Smith ([47:27](#)):

Well, for me personally, you can check that off. So check on that. Anything else you wanna leave leaders with today?

Aaron Walker ([47:33](#)):

You know, I would just say, go out and have fun. If you're doing something today that you don't enjoy really figure out a way to change that lost my sister recently too, early 64 years old, she had planned her entire life getting ready to retire and she didn't get a chance to live it. And so I would say enjoy each and every day as though it's your last because it could be. And so life is too short, Doug to be doing things that don't give us energy. It's not giving your energy, try to figure out out a way to get out and do something that does

Doug Smith ([48:12](#)):

Aaron. This has been a wonderful conversation. It's so great to meet you. And I definitely look forward to learning you from you more in the future. Thanks for investing in me and thanks for investing in our L three community. We really

Aaron Walker ([48:21](#)):

Appreciate it. Hey Doug, if everyone wants to get involved, I would love to have them for free. This is not an up sale. This is for free it. Every Tuesday I coach just like you've went through this interview on various topics and I do it every Tuesday. It's called Tuesday noon.live. L I V E Tuesday, noon.live. It's free. There's no motivation there other than us educating teaching giving, and we do it in areas to help you get unstuck going through transition, having huge accountability in your life. I just enjoy doing what we've done today. And I do it every Tuesday at Tuesday, noon.live.

Doug Smith ([49:05](#)):

Beautiful. And we'll include thanks to everything you discussed throughout the whole conversation in the show notes. So everyone can check out you and follow you and maybe even get involved in watchmaker. So

Aaron Walker ([49:15](#)):

Thanks again. Sounds good. Thanks for having me today, Doug. I enjoy it.

Doug Smith ([49:20](#)):

Hey leader, thank you so much for listening to my conversation with Aaron. I hope that it added value to your life. You can find ways to connect with him and links to everything that we discussed in the show notes l3leadership.org/309 and leader. I always wanna challenge you that if you want 10 X your growth this year, then you need to either join or launch an L3 Leadership mastermind group. Mastermind groups have been the greatest source of growth in my life over the last seven years. And if you're unfamiliar with what they are, you shouldn't be, cuz Aaron just told you all about them. But they're simply groups of six to 12 leaders that meet together for at least one year in order to help each other grow, hold each other accountable and to do life together. So if you're interested in learning more about masterminds, go to [L three leadership.org/masterminds](https://l3leadership.org/masterminds). And as always, I like to end every episode with a quote and I'll quote, Gerald Brooks today. He said this, he said, the test of leadership is what happens after you leave the room. So good. The test of leadership is what happens after you leave the room leader. Well, Hey, I hope this episode encouraged you keep leading leader. Don't quit. The world needs your leadership. Lauren. I love you. We believe in you keep going and we will talk to you next episode.