

Doug Smith ([00:07](#)):

Hey leader and welcome to episode number 333 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 in 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'll 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 there. And if you've been listening to the podcast for a while and it's impacted your life, it would mean the world. To me. If you'd 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 our audience and reach more leaders.

Doug Smith ([00:47](#)):

So thank you in advance for that. While leader today, you are in for a treat. You are gonna hear my conversation with Jesse Cole, who is the founder of fans, first entertainment and the owner of the Savannah bananas. And I've had Jesse on the podcast before I interviewed him in episode number 273. And I was blown away by my first interview with Jesse. And I've been following him intensely ever since. And he is an unbelievable leader and has been amazing to see what's happening in his life. There's so much going on. What you'll hear about in this interview. If you are unfamiliar with Jesse, let me just tell you a little bit about him. His teams have welcomed more than 1 million fans of their ballparks and have been featured on MSN, NBC, CNN, ESPN, and an entrepreneur magazine. The bananas have been awarded the organization of the year entrepreneur of the year business of the year and won the CPL championship in their first year.

Doug Smith ([01:36](#)):

Fans. First entertainment has been featured on the ink 5,000 list as one of the fastest growing companies in America. The Savannah bananas currently have sold out every single game since their first season and have a waiting list of, he said this in this interview, 72,000 people are in the waiting list for tickets. He released his first book to find your yellow tux, how to be successful by standing out in January of 2018. And I could go on and on his resumes. Unbelievable. And he wrote a, a new book, which is what we focus on in this interview. And I, I just can't even wait. I'm not gonna keep going because you need to just dive into the interview, but you're gonna love this. If you've never been exposed to Jesse, get ready, buckle up. But before we dive into the conversation, just a few announcements.

Doug Smith ([02:18](#)):

This episode of the L3 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@BeratungAdvisors.com. That's BeratungAdvisors.com, securities and investment products and services offered through LPL financial member, FINRA, and S I C Beratung 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 Henne, my wife, Laura, and I got our engagement and wedding rings through Henne Jewelers. And we just loved our experience. And not only do they have great jewelry, but they also invest in people. In fact, for every couple that comes in engaged, they give them a book to help them prepare for marriage.

Doug Smith ([03:08](#)):

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, let's dive right in. Here's my conversation with Jesse Cole. It is an honor to have you on the podcast. Again, my friend and I was just telling you, you know, before our first interview, didn't really know a lot about you. And after that first interview will happened to be on it, my friend as well, and we just walked away and said, that was the most unbelievable interview we've ever had. So I'm so excited to, to do round two man. And you've been pretty busy over the last year and a half since we've had that conversation.

Jesse Cole ([03:40](#)):

Yes, it's, it's been quite, it's been quite eventful, but I'll tell you, I still remember what fired up with the conversation that we had. It was so much fun.

Doug Smith ([03:46](#)):

Yeah. And, and catch us up on a few things. So I know ESPN's doing a documentary on you. You came up with a new book, which we're gonna talk about and what, what has happened in your life the last year and a half.

Jesse Cole ([03:57](#)):

It's the overnight success that took 15 years. Right. You know, I very fortunate, you know, we've been just trying to make baseball fun here with the bananas and really, you know, hit a whole nother level with banana ball. So we invented a brand new game faster game, a more exciting game, two hours long fans catch a foul ball for an out. And we started doing it you know, a seven city world tour. We always think bad, big. We only stayed in mostly the Southeast, but everything we think big for the world tour will eventually be all over the world. And we did that and yeah, it went from 1 million social media followers to 4 million. And from the New York times to today's show to CBS HBO, real sports, and now the ESPN show, we've just it blown away. And then now mixed in a book in between. But just doing I'm in my zone of when they say the zone of genius doing what really fires me up every day gives me energy. And I'm so fortunate to have a great team that supports that every day.

Doug Smith ([04:48](#)):

Yeah. I have to throw it in. Can, can you make Pittsburgh a stop in the world tour?

Jesse Cole ([04:53](#)):

<Laugh> you know, soon, you know, the it's funny, Doug, I, I, would've never imagined this six years ago, sleeping on an aired, but we've been reached out to by five major league teams that have literally asked us what's it gonna take for you guys to come play at our stadium? And I'm like, you gotta be kidding me.

Doug Smith ([05:08](#)):

Are the pirates, one of them, the pirates for the bananas. I'm, let's go,

Jesse Cole ([05:13](#)):

I, I, the pirates have not reached out yet, but what I'm saying is you never know we're gonna go some smaller stadiums these next, next year, but hopefully we'll see, that's a beautiful ballpark there. We'd love to play near you might.

Doug Smith ([05:25](#)):

Yeah. We have a great relationship with them, for the nonprofit I work at. So I'm gonna request that they reach out to you so well, let's dive into things that will add value to the audience. You know, you talked about, you're always coming up with ideas last time. We, you mentioned that you, you come up with 10 ideas a day. What are you experimenting with when it comes to the bananas these days?

Jesse Cole ([05:43](#)):

Yeah. So it's a great question. I think you know, I always talk about, if you wanna have great ideas, you gotta be able to come up with more ideas. You gotta work your idea muscle. And so literally started this five, six years ago, just 10 ideas a day. And the biggest thing that I've learned is a most of those ideas. Aren't that great ideas. You know, if you come up with 10 ideas a day, you gotta at least 3000 a year that aren't the best ideas. However, it's the implementation of ideas that meet matter. And so how can you test ideas faster? How can you experiment with ideas faster? So the way we've, we've found a system here with the bananas is we followed SNL. And I believe the greatest leaders, you know you know, learn from outside their industry. And they, they put that into their industry.

Jesse Cole ([06:21](#)):

So we learned from SNL, their schedule every weekend, they are putting on brand new, creative, amazing output every single week. How do they do that from scratch? And so they have a rhythm. And so, you know, on Mondays they have their pitch sessions. Then they go to their table reads, then their rehearsals, and then they test the rehearsal in front of a live audience before they actually do it live in front of the, the, the full audience. And so it's so good for us that we started doing that this year. So every Monday we have our OTT meetings where we go over the top ideas. We get together as a staff, we come up with five to 10 new things we can do every single night at the ballpark. That's brand new. That's never been done before we rehearse it. We table read it, we test it.

Jesse Cole ([07:00](#)):

We bring in a, a VIP group and we do it in front of them. And I watch them, the fans, how their reaction is to those things before we decide, are we fully gonna do it? And then we implement it. So to answer your question, we're doing a lot from <laugh> from guys coming up to bat with their bats on fire to guys pitching in stilts through you know, you name it. We've tried it as far as walkups and new things, but it's, it's all comes to the idea process, which I think every company and every leader can work on more.

Doug Smith ([07:27](#)):

Yeah. What does it take to actually be a player? Like if I wanted to try out for the bananas, like, clearly I have to be good to baseball, but do I have to sing? Do I have to dance? Like what, how, how do people get to be a part of your organization?

Jesse Cole ([07:38](#)):

That's a good question. I, I think it, it's a key to know, you know, who are you for? And who are you not for? And this is whether you're recruiting people or whether you're just your organization as a whole. And we will never be the best baseball team, Doug, like, you know, even the pirates, they've struggled over many years. I don't think we could beat the pirates on a regular baseball game. Like it's not gonna happen, but can we be the most entertaining baseball team? Can we be the most fun baseball team? And I think for any leader, any organization, what can you be the most of? So when we say, can we be the most fun baseball team? Everything we look for is fun in entertainment. So the players, yes. If you

throw 95 miles an hour, but you're not open to dancing and you're not open to doing some cool tricks, you probably aren't a good fit for the bananas. So yes, we actually have you know, full tryout forms. What are your talents? What are the unique walkups you can do all that. And we try it. I mean, during our tryouts, we have dances, we have TikTok stations. That's literally what it looks like to be a part of the bananas.

Doug Smith ([08:33](#)):

<Laugh> that's awesome. And you know, we were talking about how much you've had going on in the past year and a half, all the attention you're getting after 15 years of work that no one saw. I am curious from a leadership perspective, I saw you posted the other day on LinkedIn. Just about the power of saying no. What are you learning about balancing time saying no to all the opportunities. What have you learned about leadership from that angle in the last year? Whew.

Jesse Cole ([08:58](#)):

This has been the biggest challenge I've had as a leader. Mm. When the name of your company is fans, first entertainment, the book you wrote is fans first, and everything you do is to try to create fans with the overwhelming amount of attention. I've had to disappoint people. And it's been very, very tough and I've prided myself in always replying to every person that reaches out. And unfortunately, based on the volume of emails and messages, I'm unable to do that now. However, you know, you gotta look at with what you're doing and the deep work and the process, are you creating greater good from us? Happiness, fun, delivering. I believe the time that I put into my deep work, my creative work, my focus work, what can drive even greater happiness, hopefully, and inspiration, and that you're gonna have to be okay with disappointing a few people. And so that's what I've learned and, you know, I'm hiring, I think you connected with our, I hired an executive rock star and titles matter, not executive.

Doug Smith ([09:58](#)):

I know, I love it.

Jesse Cole ([09:59](#)):

It's an executive rock star. <Laugh> so so, so yeah, it it's, it's, it's, it's learning how to say no to certain things and being okay with sometimes disappointing people to create a greater good for more people. And I, I think you still create fans first moments, but say no, stay in where you can be the best at where you can be the most creative what your energy is. And for me, it's trying to create the greatest show possible for the most amount of people. And every day I try to focus on

Doug Smith ([10:22](#)):

That. Yeah. And you do a phenomenal job, so we've mentioned already, but fans first is your newest book. It's your second book. And I just wanna take a bunch of things that you've said in here and just hear you talk about cuz man, phenomenal book. If you've ever read one of Jesse's books and you're watching or listening to this, going by a Manal, they're extremely entertaining, but also extremely valuable and practical. Just on the fun note, I noticed that you, you quoted Ted lasso multiple times throughout the book which I love, love, love, love the Sears man. Did that, did that Sears make an impact on your life? What'd you learn from Ted lasso?

Jesse Cole ([10:55](#)):

Oh yes. And actually it's made a bigger impact at numerous levels because it, it was the first TV show to really show that you could do sports and, and a fun heartfelt, you know, you know, good natured way without trying to go into all the debauchery and all the craziness and which has helped us. And, you know, we've got some other news coming on, some other shows and things in the works, but it's helped us tremendously and a lot of level for me, yeah, you watch that show with a smile on your face and, and he was ridiculous. He was fun, but it was a spirit. And I think something, Doug, we don't talk about leaders enough is, is the spirit of people, the spirit of an organization, what it is they stand for, who are they, what are they behind? And the spirit of Ted Lasso, even as, you know, ignorant and naive to so many things in that world, he was, he had a beautiful spirit and fun and ridiculous. And I think that was something that inspired me. So I, I thought if I gotta put Ted Lasso in here and obviously the quotes fit with what I was trying to say as well.

Doug Smith ([11:51](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Love this series. So I'm just gonna, I'm gonna throw out a bunch of quotes or principles that I ran the book and just wanna hear your Spitfire on them. So first one early on in the book was just start before you're ready.

Jesse Cole ([12:04](#)):

Yes. I think this is something you know, Avi, we can write business plans until we're blue in the face. We could just come up with all these ideas and strategies of how we're gonna do something you're never actually ready. And the reality is, I think, you know, you should be able to look back on your original work and be embarrassed by it because you should go look back and say, what was I doing? Because you started before you're ready. You don't start learning until you start doing. And you know, I really believe that. I mean, obviously you and me are big readers and we learned so much, but we learned so much more by doing it and putting it in our life and implementing it. So yeah, everything we've started before already, I mean, launching a brand new game, banana ball, eliminating sponsorship, having dancing players you know, creating an all inclusive model at our stadium where every single ticket includes all your food. No one's ever done that. We, no one would ever be ready for it. And we weren't, and we're never ready. You have to be able to get through the messy to get to the great, and the only way you can do that is if you just start and start learning.

Doug Smith ([13:00](#)):

Yeah. Actually I wanted to follow up on that. I think in our first interview, I, I don't think you pulled the trigger yet, but you were saying you were about to get rid of sponsorships. I may be wrong on that. Clearly you've executed on that. I read an article that you were in recently and you just said, you know, we consistently leave outrageous amounts of money on the table. Could you just talk about the sponsorship thing? How is that going? And, and why do you leave outrageous amounts of money on the table when everyone else would think you're crazy to do that?

Jesse Cole ([13:26](#)):

It's what you're driven by. And it sounds crazy, but I'm focused on long-term fans over short-term profits. And if every decision you make is how do you create long term fans? Eventually the dollars will catch up. They do. They do. And we say, I'll explain how that happened. But yeah, I mean the amount of money we leave on the table is crazy. So give an example, Doug, this is something I don't talk about much. You know, we pay everyone's taxes at our stadium. So let's put that in perspective. If you buy tickets to an event, you pay taxes on it. If you buy food at an event, you pay taxes on it. We pay all your

taxes. So \$20, wow. Includes all your, your there's, no fees, no ticket fees, no convenient fees, all your food and everything. And it's \$20 flat. If you buy a \$30 custom hat, it's \$30.

Jesse Cole ([14:08](#)):

It's not 32 50. And so that is hundreds of thousands of dollars. We leave on the table sponsorship. We get reached out to a lot about partners who want us and we don't. And we say no. And the crazy thing is everyone's like, why would you do that? We're the only one in the industry who does that. No one comes to our ballpark to be sold, to marketed, to our advertised, to they come to banana land for fun. They come to banana land to feel like they're a part of something special and see something they've never seen before to have a car dealership saying, come buy my car right now. And here's all these flyers about this special deal at our local, you know, whatever does not help. And so how has it turned out? <Laugh> we threw away hundreds of thousands of dollars of sponsorship, hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Jesse Cole ([14:52](#)):

We now do 12 times, 12 times the merchandise. Wow. And we did in sponsorship. So 12 times merchandise. So what happens is fans wanna invest in you, Doug, follow the money. You look at major league boy baseball. You look at NBA, you look at all. Most of their money comes from TV rights, sponsorship, corporate rev share all that. 98% of our money comes from our fans. So who do we work for? So that's, that's the big thing. So every decision we make for our fans, so that means we'll create a better experience and our fans will wanna invest more in what we're doing. And fortunately, it's started to work out a little better,

Doug Smith ([15:27](#)):

Man. That's incredible. Congrats on that. Another thing you say in the book at which we've talked a lot about is just attention, beats marketing, and and clearly, you know, everyone can just see with what you guys do as a bananas. You have done that. I'm curious, you know, I work at a, at a nonprofit. We serve the homeless in our city. You know, if you had to leave the bananas today and you, you joined our staff at light of life at a homeless rescue mission, you know, I'm just curious, what, what would you do to get attention or, or change the game in a whole new field and, and sector?

Jesse Cole ([15:56](#)):

I think attention is sometimes like, it's like a dirty word for people like, oh, you're just trying to get attention. You're just trying to get attention. You know, attention theoretically is just asking, what is it that you do? That's different. The same never gets attention. Normal never gets attention. So with you guys and any nonprofit, how is what you're doing, the story so different, the experiences that you're creating so different that the media has no choice, but to talk about you. Wow. So for instance, everything we do with the bananas, whether it's the way we celebrate after home runs, it hits the way we walk up to the plate, the way we play the game, which is different than anyone else everything is thought about is this different, unique, fun, and a greater experience. And then what happens because of what baseball's doing the normal way.

Jesse Cole ([16:48](#)):

We're so fortunate that we're creating a lot of attention, both on our social media and both national media, because they're like, wow, no one else is doing this. And you, you know, how does a company Doug make new a way of life, new things, new things they're trying. That's why every game five to 10

things we'd never done before. So that's part of our attention plan. It's not, let's roll out a marketing campaign to try to sell more, get more people involved in our nonprofit. It's what are we doing to share unique things on a daily basis that increases our story and improves our awareness that is dramatically different of what we, what we do

Doug Smith ([17:20](#)):

So good. In the book, you mentioned five E one of them being eliminate friction. I thought this was such an interesting part. You talk about there's two kind of different types of friction. There's macro friction and micro friction. Can you, can you talk about that for our audience?

Jesse Cole ([17:36](#)):

Sure. You know, I just, again, I knew none of this and oh, it's, it's the process of learning and going through you know, seeing what we're doing in the industry that we've come to this kind of idea. It's macro friction is industry level. So what are the problems with the industry? So like the legal industry you get charged by the minute, you know, you get charged for the email, you get like the macro industry of how things are done. Baseball, macro long, slow and boring, wherever you go. I sorry for baseball fans. And then I know if you're a pirates fan, but it's long, slow and boring to most people macro. So whatever the industry is, the biggest friction points and frustration points for the, from the customer point of view. That's the big thing. That's the big thing that we're always attacking baseball too long, too slow, too boring.

Jesse Cole ([18:20](#)):

How do you make it faster and more exciting? That's what we constantly think. Micro are little parts of the experience. So for instance, I give examples obvious, you know, invoices, voicemail, hold music. How long does it take you to, to get in touch with someone from your, your team? You know, how easy does define a phone number or a contact form on your website? You know, everyone wants to be taken care of how quickly can you take care of them? So what are those microfriction points that prevent them from getting what they want to work with you and every company has. And we still have lots. We're working on a daily, you know, lines at the stadium. You know, we're trying to sell tickets. Our wait list is now over 72,000 for tickets. So we have a friction point where people can't get their tickets and how to keep them involved in the process. So those are the micro points.

Doug Smith ([19:04](#)):

Wow. So if I am, if I want a ticket to Savannah banana games, when, when could I go see them? Is it like years? Is it, I mean, that's amazing.

Jesse Cole ([19:13](#)):

So <laugh>, no, it can happen quicker. You just have to, you have to be in tune. So, okay. The wait list just keeps joining cuz the whole season sold out, but we're going on world tour and we're gonna probably play in front of 400,000 fans. So just be ready when we come to a city. Your time is at nine o'clock. You just gotta be ready.

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

<Laugh> all right. All right. And you're coming to Pittsburgh. I'm calling it now.

Jesse Cole ([19:35](#)):

Not, not next year, unless the pirates call pretty quickly.

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

All we'll see. On the micro side, you asked a question in the book. I think you asked your team of it pretty consistent. I just love this. I wanna hear you talk more about just, it's very, very simple, but it's just, what do you hate about your customer journey? Yes. I just said that was a profound question. I don't know if you have anything to expand on that, but I thought that was brilliant. Yeah.

Jesse Cole ([19:55](#)):

Give me an example. We're in a 1926 ballpark and it's old, it's challenged. The maintenance is not great by, you know, it's, it's in a challenging spot. We have about 30 drains around the stadium. It rains a ton of Anna. So there's drains all around the ballpark for when it rains. I didn't know this happened until it happened. Our, one of our ticket experience coordinators comes on me and says, Hey, Jesse, what do you think of these? And I go, what is that? And he goes, it's our new drains. I go, what do you mean? And he goes, I go, it's awesome. He got custom made bananas, drains <laugh> himself. He goes, I just saw all these rusty drains. I just thought didn't look good. So they're all like 30 different bananas in them. And they're tiny and they're all around the ballpark. And only 1% of our fans probably see them, but it was a little friction where he said, you know, what, what does that say about us? And you know, how you do anything is how you do everything. And everything speaks. You know, I've heard this, I think from Dennis Snow, with Disney, everything speaks. So a rusty drain speaks. That's a friction point. And how do you empower your team to find those moments and, and take care of it?

Doug Smith ([20:59](#)):

So, I mean, you just shared a phenomenal story. You're a phenomenal storyteller. In fact, most of the things that I see you post is all about stories. Can you just talk to leaders about the power of story and, and maybe do you have any systems in place for you to collect stories or keep them in the same place? So they're fresh at mind cuz you're just a story and vision machine. I feel like

Jesse Cole ([21:16](#)):

<Laugh> how you view things is how you do things. And I share this in the book and I think it's your lens on things. So Doug, back in the day with our first team, I sold sponsorship. Like that's what I, that was my job. And so everywhere I looked, I saw a billboard, an ad, a radio ad TV. And I just saw it. That was in my mind, like I thought, and I saw it and I thought of, Ooh, that could be an opportunity with the banana or that with our Grizzlies, our former team. So for instance on now I see everything in stories. Now I see everything with ideas for our ballpark because it's constantly on my mind because I'm writing this every morning. You know, again, it's your habits, your habits affect what you see. So, you know, like last night, for instance, so my LinkedIn post, which I share most of those stories last night I realized a couple promotions were going long.

Jesse Cole ([22:05](#)):

So I turned to our director entertainment. I said, I want you to start timing every promotion. So he is timing every promotion, 1 0 4, 1 36, 1 37. So then this morning I wrote, Ooh, all right, there's a story there every second counts. And I'm gonna share about how we did this and what we learned from a promotion that went almost two minutes and what happened from the fans' impact. So I just saw that as an opportunity to tell a story. So again, I think it is, how do you open up your lens? What do you really wanna learn? I wanna learn how to, how to come up better ideas at our ballpark and do things that

create a better show. And then I wanna find stories that can help inspire our team and other people that can make an impact. So that's what I look for every day.

Doug Smith ([22:43](#)):

Yeah. You, you mentioned LinkedIn and I believe that's the, the main space you stay in. As far as socials concerned, you do you post every day, what's your cadence and, and on content creation.

Jesse Cole ([22:53](#)):

Ha I used to, I used to and on purposely I don't anymore. I think <laugh> just like ideas come up with tons and test, test, test, test, test until you learn a cadence that has the biggest impact. And so I think three years, four years I posted every single day. I even did real talk Sundays, which were videos way back, which is very vulnerable and embarrassing about the struggles and challenges that I would do. Cause I was like, all right, I'm home Sunday morning. I'm gonna just do a video of things that I'm going through every day I posted and I learned that certain things, stories written form, you know, better than videos just started making a big impact. And I realized that sometimes if I post it every single day, it cannibalized one of my other stories or whatever and didn't get to grow as much. So now I do, I, I do Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and I do either Thursday or Friday and one weekend. And so, but yeah, that's my platform. It's where, where I enjoy the most. And I think it's so hard to be good at everything. And you know, Gary Vader, Chuck and the people that dominate every social media, I applaud them. I'd rather do what I'm really best at. And so I spend most of my time LinkedIn and the following ship has grown tremendously because I've really put the focus on, on that as my cadence.

Doug Smith ([24:02](#)):

Yeah. One of the chapters you have in the book is just called just be your own biggest fan. And what encouragement do you have for, for leaders who that's a struggle? Insur is a struggle. Fear is a struggle. How can, how can they become their own biggest fan?

Jesse Cole ([24:16](#)):

Mm yeah. And the story I share is about Cameron Hughes, the guy who's actually a professional fan at games, which is he's an amazing guy. We've become very close and, and he shared all that about how you gotta be your biggest fan. And now it's tough. Sometimes you gotta get stand up and cheer for yourself and get yourself going. And I struggled with this, Doug. I mean, I, I, I struggled mightily with this and when we started, I was doing so many things in with our team. Cause I cared so much that wore me out that just, you know, I was exhausted at the end of every day, I was doing operations at the ballpark and finances and hiring and just things that I just was not good at. And I realized that that's not how I'd be a big fan of myself.

Jesse Cole ([24:56](#)):

I'm actually making myself do things that I'm not great at. And so I just really started focusing on what I'm, I believe I can be the best at and what gives me the most energy. And every day I look at my calendar and I say, is it filled with things that give me energy? And that's how you'd treat, you know, a fan you'd give your you'd, you'd give a, a great fan. You'd give 'em that moment to be there in the moment and do what's best for them and really be there. And, and I think a lot of people, they look at their days and what they do, and they're not doing the things that give them energy that fire them up. And they're not truly being a fan of, of their work. And so if you want to create fans of other people, you better be your biggest fan of what you do.

Jesse Cole ([25:36](#)):

And as you can tell, everyone's like, how do you have so much energy? It's like, I'm doing things that give me energy. And this fires me up every day, what I'm doing, I fires me up because I'm not doing the things that I don't like. So I'm a huge fan. So that spreads and you look at our staff of, of young millennials that just absolutely love it and are fired up because I think it's contagious of what we're doing. And I think that's important as a leader, you can't fire up a team if you're not fired up yourself.

Doug Smith ([25:59](#)):

Yeah. This is randomly came to me. I think I saw a post that you took your kids to see dude per is a dude. Perfect. I'm just getting into that, whatever that is is the dude's perfect. Yes. Yeah.

Jesse Cole ([26:09](#)):

Do perfect.

Doug Smith ([26:10](#)):

Yes. Yeah. You went and actually you were very complimentary of them. When you go to shows or movie, I mean, is it hard for you not to, to just take over in a creative mode or are you actually ever able to enjoy just a production?

Jesse Cole ([26:23](#)):

That's a good question. I would say there's moments of where I I'm lost in a, if, if a shows really good, they get me in it. They, they get me in it and not like where I'm on it. I'm thinking, oh, look at that light over there. Look at what that's happening down there. What's happening next. Ooh, those people are on their phones right now. So they're not paying attention to show this, this lost them. You know, I'm constantly looking around in an audience to see what parallels we can learn from. Dude, perfect had some good moments, but yeah, I was, I was just seeing opportunities to learn and you know, it is what it is. It's, it's my lens, I guess you would say. But to me, that's enjoyment, cuz I walk out with two, three pages of notes and ideas of things we can do. And that, that fires me up.

Doug Smith ([27:01](#)):

What percentage of shows actually pull you all the way in? Would you

Jesse Cole ([27:06](#)):

Say there there's moments in every show, a show that like fully pulls me in the whole time, there was one show and it was one show in Vegas and it was called absent and it was a crazy, not even, it was just a wild show and it's not appropriate on many levels and I never knew it was gonna be like that. However, it was, it was so outrageously over the top in a different direction that you would never expect a show to go that I was like this, all right. I'm in like, I'm just I'm and my wife and I, we never laugh so hard, not an appropriate show for many audiences. And I, I wasn't expecting that. They didn't tell me it was gonna be that raunchy, but it was, it was extremely funny. That was one I'll I'll never forget. And I think that's what Vegas does really well. They have to perform every night so well they get better every night. It's why some of the best shows in the world are in Vegas.

Doug Smith ([27:51](#)):

What's been the most rewarding part of owning the bananas for you.

Jesse Cole ([27:56](#)):

It's I hate saying the cliché answer, but it's the people it's it's every day, it's the people and it's not just the fans, but it's our biggest fans. The, you know, it's, it's at the end of a night at midnight, like last night, our game finished at midnight cuz we had a three hour rain delay and no one wants to go home and you know, some nights at one o'clock in the morning, we'll literally keep the lights on and play kickball with our whole staff while playing music, having drinks, having fun after working 12 hour day we're around each other and that's, to me that's pure joy. So I want to have those moments where you can escape with people and not nothing else matters. You're not on your phone, you're just together. And that's what we try to create at our ballpark. And I love creating with our own team as much as anything.

Doug Smith ([28:38](#)):

Yeah. Well, Hey, as we wrap up, you know, we've spent this entire conversation with me asking what I wanna ask. Is there anything you wanna talk about time? We have anything on your heart for leaders.

Jesse Cole ([28:48](#)):

<Laugh>, you know, I, I got on my a sleeve here. It says endless curiosity. And I, I think that's, that's something that I'm always fascinated by and you know, the calls that you have, the questions that you can ask and to really lean in. And so, you know, I'm, I'm truly fascinated now again, I wish I, I, I, I knew a little bit more about your details and everything you're going on, but I know a little bit what calls and questions are you getting the most from leaders right now? Where are they? I don't wanna say what's keeping them up at night, but what are you seeing? That's the biggest challenge that leaders are having right now?

Doug Smith ([29:25](#)):

Leaders in general. Yeah. I mean, I think it's just, is anyone you talk to in industry? Yeah. I mean, I think it's coming out of COVID and learning how to lead in this, this whole new world, you know, do you re lead remotely specifically within our rescue mission? I mean, that's, that's where I live every day, you know, it's, it's still with the homeless population. The homeless population is seeing all kind of challenges right now. We have the opioid epidemic. We have people with the, with inflation, not being able to afford to live anywhere or to have food. And so what do we do with that and how do we help these people? So, you know, in a postcode world and the world we live in right now, that's, that's the challenges we're looking at.

Jesse Cole ([30:00](#)):

Mm interesting. Yeah. I it's, I, I just keep being very aware of, you know, everyone sees so many challenges out there and I hope that it doesn't take away people's optimism. Mm. I hope it doesn't take away people's spirit because there's so many challenges they're talked about more than ever. And I think about that with leaders, you know, can we keep that same spirit, energy and optimism to really make a difference and not let the world and the challenges bring us down and that's, and I'm fascinating cuz you have obviously there's big challenges in your world. Yeah. And how can people still be excited and fired up and see the hope and not just see the, the, the, the problems.

Doug Smith ([30:35](#)):

Yeah. I mean, I'm, I mean, I think about a principal in your book, you said, I, I think the quote was just, you know, it's, everybody's, it's, it's a, it's always every somebody's first game or pretend it's everyone's first game like that kind of principle. And so for me, you know, realizing that every man or woman who

walks into our shelter every night, like that's their first opportunity. Like that may have been the most courageous decision they ever made was to come in for a meal or to come in for a night of shelter. And for our staff, that's our opportunity to intersect with that person. And that could be the moment that changes their life forever. So I think it's remembering that everybody walking through our doors for the first time could be the time that changes everything. And so that that's what keeps us helpful. And that's why we keep showing up to work every day.

Jesse Cole ([31:14](#)):

Oh, I love that. That's inspiring. My friend. That really is that's outstanding.

Doug Smith ([31:17](#)):

Yeah. Well, Jesse, thanks for your time. It's always thanks for the new book. Thanks for everything you do. And again, we'll include links to everything on the show notes. Make sure you get a copy of it. Fans first, you won't be disappointed and make sure you follow Savannah bananas everywhere they are. And and Hey the, is, is the documentary out yet or is it coming out from ESPN? Are we allowed to, to know any details there?

Jesse Cole ([31:36](#)):

Yes. mid-August it'll be launching, it'll be a pretty big launch and people will be hearing about it. We're excited.

Doug Smith ([31:42](#)):

Beautiful. All right, Jesse, have a good one. Thank you brother.

Jesse Cole ([31:45](#)):

Thanks Doug.

Doug Smith ([31:47](#)):

Well, Hey leader, thank you so much for listening to my conversation with Jesse. I hope that you enjoyed it as much as I did. You can find ways to connect with him in links to everything that we discussed in the show notes l3leadership.org/333 and leader is always, I want to challenge you that if you want to 10 X your growth this year, then you need to either launch or join an L3 Leadership mastermind group. Mastermind groups have been the greatest source of growth in my life over the last seven years. If you don't know what they are, they're just simply groups of six to 12 leaders that meet together on a consistent basis 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 joining or launching a mastermind group, go to L3Leadership.org/masterminds. And as always, I like to end every episode with a quote and I'll quote Dave Ramsey today. He said this, he said, you have to pay a price to win live, like no one else. So later you can live and give like no one else. Love, love, love Dave. Well, Hey know that Laura and I love you. We believe in you keep leading. Don't quit. The world desperately needs your leadership. We'll talk to you next episode.