

Doug Smith: 0:08

Hey, leader, and welcome to another episode 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. We also recorded this episode live from the new reiturn. com studio. 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. I know that you can also watch all of our episodes over on our YouTube channel, so make sure you're subscribed there as well. And, as always, 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 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, so thank you in advance for that. Well, leader, in today's episode, you'll hear my conversation with Joe Maul. If you're unfamiliar with Joe, let me just tell you a little bit about him. Joe has spent thousands of hours shaping managers into strong leaders, with his decades of experience, his compelling content and dynamic delivery in demand. As a speaker and trainer, Joe has attracted audiences of all sizes from all sectors from all over North America. Prior to launching his own firm, John was the head of learning and development for a top 10 US healthcare organization, where he managed training for more than 9,000 employees at over 500 locations. Joe's written three books Cure for the Common Leader, no More Team Drama. And his most recent Employalty, which is the focus of our conversation today, and you'll hear Joe talk all about a leader's role in creating great workplaces and attracting training and retaining world-class employees in today's job market, which I can't think of a more relevant topic for leaders right now. I think you're going to get a ton out of this. Before we dive in, just a few announcements. 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 at beratungadvisors.com. That's B-E-R-A-T-U-N-G-Advisors.com. Securities and investment products and services offered through LPL Financial. Member of FINRA and SIPC, Beratung Advisors, lpl Financial and L3 Leadership are separate entities. I also want to thank our sponsor, Henne Jewelers. They were jewelry earned by my friend and mentor, John Henne. My wife Lara and I got our engagement and wedding rings through Henne Jewelers and had an incredible experience. 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. We just love that. If you're in need of a good jeweler, check out HenneJewelers.com. I also want to thank our new sponsor, reiturn. com Leader. Let me just ask you this have you ever had an interest in investing in real estate? Now, for as little as \$500, you can become a

commercial real estate investor. Just visit Reiturn.com to learn more. That's R-E-I-T-U-R-N.com. Investing involves risk. Please consult the return offering circular if you're interested in investing. With all that being said, let's dive right in. Here's my conversation with Joe Mull. Hey, Joe Mull, welcome to the L3 Leadership Podcast. It's an honor to have you here. Why don't we just start up with you just giving us a little bit about your background and what you do?

Joe Mull: 3:17

Well, thanks for having me, Doug. I'm super excited to be here with you. I know that our conversation today is going to be a lot of fun, because I think we're passionate about a lot of the same things. I am 46 years old and I've spent the better part of the last 20 years teaching leaders how to be better bosses and how to create the conditions at work for people to thrive. I was previously the head of learning and development for a large healthcare system and then, about 10 years ago, went out on my own and built a boutique training and development firm. Most of my work now is about speaking and writing and training. I'm one of those people that nerds out around the social science research, for what makes people tick at work and how do you get people to care, and what role do leaders play in that?

Doug Smith: 4:03

This is obviously always an important topic, but I think in a post-COVID world, you have the great resignation. I'm being told that it's been followed by the great regret. We have leaders everywhere who have lost great people. They're trying to rebuild their teams. They're trying to figure out flexibility in the workplace. Do we do remote? I'm really looking forward to this conversation. Just to tee it up, you recently wrote a book. You've wrote several which I want to dive into, but your most recent book is called *Employalty*. Why don't you just set the stage of why you wrote this and what you want leaders to get out of it, before we dive into the specifics?

Joe Mull: 4:38

Sure, I ended up writing *Employalty* because I was getting frustrated by the national conversation that was taking place around the great resignation, that it was triggered by COVID, that it's all about money. Neither of those things are true. We know, for example, that what we're calling the great resignation actually started in 2010, in that every year since 2010, the number of people who voluntarily changed jobs has increased. We also know that it's being driven not by work ethic the issues that nobody wants to work anymore and people just got lazier. It's being driven by people pursuing quality of life after years of being overworked and underpaid and burned out. When I decided to write this book, it was really about helping business owners and leaders understand what they need to get right in order for people to join an organization, stay long term and then give it all. They've got to do great work. The word we're playing a

little trick on the reader. You hear the word and you think it means employee loyalty, but the definition of employee it's a portmanteau of the words employer loyalty and humanity. We know that when employers create a more humane employee experience, that's actually what activates commitment at work.

Doug Smith: 5:55

Yeah, let's talk about what you found in the book. What are people looking for? Leadership podcast. You're speaking to leaders who are constantly thinking this through what can we do to actually attract, recruit, retain all the above quality employees?

Joe Mull: 6:11

Yeah, we analyze more than 200 research studies and articles on why people quit a job, what attracts them to take a new job or why they stay long term in an organization. We focused quite heavily on a lot of this research. Since COVID has arrived on our shores, we can say with conviction that it becomes much easier to find and keep people at work if you're winning in three specific areas of the employee experience. We call them ideal job, meaningful work and great boss. Now, there are dimensions to each of these and I'm going to rattle them off. Ideal job is really about compensation, workload and flexibility. If my money is right, if my workload is manageable and I get a little bit of flexibility around when, where and how I work, that job fits into my life like a puzzle piece snapping into place. It becomes an ideal job. Meaningful work is about purpose, strengths and belonging. If I believe my work matters, if it aligns with my talents and gifts and I'm a part of a team where I'm accepted and celebrated, I want to do great work, that work becomes meaningful. And then that great boss factor has three dimensions to it trust, coaching and advocacy. If my direct supervisor grants trust and earns trust, if he or she coaches me regularly and then they act as an advocate for me, they act in my best interests, I've got a great boss and when those three factors hit, you check all of these boxes on this kind of internal psychological scorecard that people have that leads them to want to be a part of an organization.

Doug Smith: 7:47

Wow, so I want to dive into each of those a little bit. On ideal job, I'm curious. You mentioned flexibility and workload and what you're seeing through the research and talking with leaders. What are you seeing? What kind of workplaces do we need to create in order to attract and actually retain talent? Do we need to provide unlimited vacation? Do? We need to do four-day work weeks? Do we need to let everyone work from home remotely all the time? What are you seeing that's working?

Joe Mull: 8:13

What's working is when you improve people's quality of life, and it's gonna be different from person to person. So I'm 46 years old. When I was 26 years old, what I cared most

about was growing my financial compensation right. I had a ton of college debt and I was trying to buy a house and do all those things that you do in your 20s, but those aren't the things that are as important to me anymore. At 46, what's important to me is hey, there are two days a week when I need to be at home to get my young kids off the bus because of my wife's work schedule, so some flexibility is more important to me. So where we see organizations finding success is where they're creating a host of innovations around quality of life enhancements, and yes, in some places that's four-day work weeks, and yes, that's flexible work policies, remote work policies, better compensation, increased benefits. Vacation is absolutely a part of this, because we know that our workloads have exploded in recent years. Across the board, though, and when you talk to folks about why are you interested in changing jobs or why did you leave that organization, the answers that come out they all sound different. Doug People will say I left because I need better pay or a less toxic work environment, or more opportunities for growth, or a better schedule or a better commute, but all of those ideas actually roll up to one bigger idea, which is improved quality of life.

Doug Smith: 9:31

You talked about the seasons of life. I think this is so interesting, from my understanding where we're, in the first time in history, we have five generations in the workplace and, as you were alluding to, every one of those generations have different needs and the seasons that they're in. I'm in a similar season. You have four kids under seven. I mean it's insanity.

Joe Mull: 9:50

I have three. We're both tired a lot. That's what that means, yeah.

Doug Smith: 9:53

That's right. That's right, but can you talk about fairness? Because it's like the flexibility that I need in my stage. Same thing you said when I was in my twenties. I had no problem putting in 10, 12 hour days, going all in. I can't do that in this current season and sadly, one day my kids will grow up and go out of the house and I'll have all the time I need to be able to go all in with work again or whatever I choose to do. How do you communicate fairness in the workplace, or at least communicate? I guess you have to provide different flexibility for different seasons and how do you communicate that so the whole workplace feels like everyone's kind of on the same team, rowing in the same direction, and has the same flexibility?

Joe Mull: 10:31

Yeah, it reminds me of this very interesting conversation that was taking place at a couple of the big tech companies during the first year of COVID in 2020, where a lot of employees were getting who had kids at home because they couldn't attend school in

person anymore. Non-parents were feeling like that. We were catering to the parents and really being flexible for them, but then, for employees who didn't have kids, we heard bosses saying, yeah, but you don't have kids. So, like, what's the big deal? We need you to show up differently, and so it is a fairness question in the way that you talk about there. What we do know, though, is that, for most people in the workplace, from an HR perspective, we have an obligation to give everyone access to the same set of benefits and opportunities across the board, so if you're offering a four day work week, you're offering a certain kind of schedule or flexible work option. You really do need to offer it to everybody, regardless of their station or status in life. At the same time, though, we know, for example, research tells us clearly that job crafting, where you actually tailor certain aspects of a person's positions to their strengths and to their schedule, enhances commitment. You can still do those kinds of things at an individual level, while still being equitable around certain kinds of benefits and policies and procedures. So I guess that's the way in which I would differentiate it. It would be what are the opportunities and options that are offered to everybody versus? How am I engineering a position that really allows for the unique skills and gifts of the person in that position to be leveraged and to be utilized?

Doug Smith: 12:13

Yeah, also under the umbrella of flexibility, you have remote work coming back to the office. So right, this is the big debate now. From what I'm saying, large organizations are now bringing everyone back into the office. What are you saying? Because the question, I think, is can you develop the kind of culture that you want within your organization, with everyone working remote full time, or do people actually need to be in person? Is it more of a trust issue around performance, and what do you suggest for leaders? Just out of your experience?

Joe Mull: 12:43

Yeah, there's a lot going on around the work from home and the return to work question right now, right, so a couple of things. First, I'm very much a centrist on remote work. If that's a thing, we have proven that there are a whole host of roles that can be done well from home most of the time. We also know there are some things that you get by gathering and working together in person that you can't duplicate creativity, innovation, camaraderie, et cetera. All of these go a long way to work culture, to how we serve clients, and so it's not out of bounds for an employer to want people to gather so that they can get those benefits. What I think is important in this day and age is that employees and leaders are co-creating their work from home policies together. I think employers need to have an eye on creating policies that do not lower quality of life for people. So I have a couple of friends who were just posting online about this this week, about how, after two years, their employer has moved their office building into a downtown setting and are mandating that their employees now come back full time and

they're posting. My costs for community just went up parking gas. I'm gonna spend an hour in the car, each way, every day. This is an absolute disruption that I'm not gonna tolerate, and when you enact policies that lower people's quality of life, you create a flight risk, and so really it's about that dialogue together. What I challenge employers to think about is that most of the time, work from home policies are really about trust. In this day and age, we're seeing so many employers who are trying to create really complex monitoring systems and check-in processes because they believe that if left to their own devices, employees working from home aren't gonna try as hard or care as much. They're gonna watch Netflix and do laundry all day, and it just doesn't prove to be true most of the time, and so these employers are imposing these complex systems onto a group of largely ethical people out of fear of the rare bad apple right, and it sends a really powerful message to employees, which is that we don't trust you. It also slows down their work and it lowers their quality of life, and so those kinds of approaches to work from home don't do any good. One more point, because I know I've been going for a little while around this. I love it. The work from home piece that I think is most important is really tied to flexibility. Flexibility is about giving people some influence over when, where and how they work. And what we know is if you give people just a little bit of flexibility, a little bit of control, a little bit of say in some aspect of their work arrangement, it super charges commitment, and work from home is just one kind of flexibility. Right, maybe we're just talking about giving people some influence over where their shift starts or when it starts, or who they work with, or how long it is or what days of the week they work. When you can give some of that power back to people, you create more loyalty in your organization.

Doug Smith: 15:52

Yeah, that's so good. I love. I love how you just said leaders should work with. Hey, here's a novel thought ask your employees for input before you create a policy, see how they're thinking and feeling. I am curious. I mentioned the great. What is the great? Resignation, and then it's followed by the great regret.

Joe Mull: 16:07

Right.

Doug Smith: 16:08

You know you mentioned employees who now they do have to come back to the office and they're saying, hey, I will discuss, et cetera. Are you seeing that and do you have any advice for people who may be listening to this and saying, yeah, I feel like I need more flexibility than you know I had. I don't like the direction the company's going. I want to leave. What advice do you have so people don't have great regret in transitioning?

Joe Mull: 16:28

Right. So, yes, I've seen a lot of the sort of the great regret, and I think it's being driven in a lot of ways by unkept promises from employers. So, in the last couple of years, as workers sought more quality of life and as a caveat here, Doug, I have actually referred to the great resignation as the great upgrade, because that's really what's happening in the labor market. People aren't resigning, they're switching jobs, and when they switch job, they're pursuing those upgrades to quality of life that we talked about, and we have all kinds of jobs. Data that tells us this is the case, and I think this is a really important distinction to make for leaders and employers. People aren't deciding not to work. There's not an invisible mass of people who are sitting on the sidelines. All of a sudden, we have more jobs in our economy than we have people to fill them, and so there's opportunity now and people are seeking upgrades to quality of life, and so it's been the great upgrade where we see employees leaving these new jobs quickly or even boomeranging back to employers that they left in the first place. It's often driven by unkept promises. They were told yes, you're gonna get flexibility. Yes, you're gonna be able to work from home a lot. Yes, we've got great bosses. Yes, we're gonna invest in your professional development. Yes, we're gonna keep pushing your wages higher and higher. And then they get there and the promises that were made weren't kept. And, yeah, in some cases, people end up finding that the grass isn't always greener on the other side and they go back to other places they were at before or they go looking for another upgrade in some way. My advice for employers is keep your promises and really think about those quality of life enhancements and recognize that you have to choose an identity right now. Are you a departure organization or are you a destination workplace? And if you wanna be a destination workplace, you have to understand those dimensions of ideal job and meaningful work and great boss that we just talked about. For employees who may be in roles that they're unhappy about. Right, we've all maybe had the experience where we weren't in love with a job, but we didn't necessarily know the reason why. I would argue that you could bang your experience up against that same framework of ideal job, meaningful work, great boss and the dimensions that we just talked about a few minutes ago to say, all right, which of these am I getting and which of these am I not getting? And for the ones that I'm not getting, does it turn out that maybe those are even more important to me than I realized. And now how do I go seek those out? In another part of my company, or maybe another role altogether?

Doug Smith: 18:58

Yeah, I wanna transition and talk about the great boss factor, because this is a leadership podcast, and I'm sure every leader listening to this has heard the phrase people don't leave companies, they leave people, which historically, I would say, at least in my experience, has been true. One just. You have three things that you mentioned under what a great boss looks like, but we're responsible as leaders for ensuring the

way of great organizations. What does a great boss look like and how can leaders identify whether or not they have good ones?

Joe Mull: 19:26

Yeah. So we all know that there are literally dozens of things that a leader needs to do right consistently for someone to point to them and say, man, I've got a great boss. And we also know that, even if we get all of those things right, it's still a really fragile relationship and it can be fleeting at times. Right, you could take years to build up that great boss employee relationship and you can significantly damage it in one or two bad decisions, right? And so as we looked at what leaders need to do well, consistently in order for that direct supervisor relationship to work, we kept coming back to these three ideas of trust, coaching and advocacy. So trust is a two-way street, right, I have to grant trust and I have to earn trust. And I grant trust specifically by giving people the freedom to get to their work product their way, which may not always be my way. It's trusting other people's insights, their ideas, being willing to let them try new things, being willing to let them fail, because, as a boss, when we don't grant trust, we end up becoming a micromanager, and we know that's a soul-crushingly awful experience for people who have somebody right over their shoulder. Earning trust is about being competent and being present and sharing credit and accepting blame and doing many of the things that we talk consistently about that are sort of flagship behaviors for leaders in this day and age. So that trust factor is sort of a secret sauce in the boss piece. The coaching dimension is really about a specific kind of conversation that we're having with employees consistently. Too often when we talk about coaching we think it's about giving advice or we picture somebody with a whistle around their neck standing on the sideline at a football game. But in terms of leadership that's not what we mean when we say coaching. Coaching is a very specific kind of conversation. It's asking people open-ended questions in the right order to create self-actualization, to mine them for their insights and the creativity and their potential solutions. And so when I have a supervisor who coaches me, who invites me to share my thoughts and opinions, who challenges me, who uses it as a developmental tool to not just give me answers when I ask questions but to say, well, what options do you see, that leadership behavior, that leadership skill of coaching is one of the most powerful influences of employee engagement, as it shows up in the research. And then that third dimension of advocacy if you think about what an advocate does. It's someone who acts in my best interests. So, as a boss, do I care not just about the tasks and duties of someone's job and whether they're complete or done well? Do I care about that person outside of work? Do I advocate not just for what they need to get at work to be successful, but do I care about their long-term career prospects? At the very least, do I know a little something about their story? Am I connecting with them and their humanity in a human way and

not just treating them as a commodity at work? All of those things bake into the pie to produce a great boss.

Doug Smith: 22:38

Yeah, so if those are the things that make up a great boss is the leaders of the organization were responsible for actually training up and raising up great bosses. I'm curious from an HR perspective and from a leadership perspective From the top of the organization. What are best practices that you would say when it comes to onboarding, training and equipping the leaders within our organization to actually be great bosses?

Joe Mull: 22:59

Yeah, so there are. There are two big ideas that research tells us consistently influence the performance of leaders and then, downstream, influence the engagement of their teams. And a lot of this research has been driven by Gallup in recent years. They found consistently in organizations with the highest performing levels of employee engagement. So you've got low turnover and, right, higher retention. You've got people who say this is a great place to work, people who who part with what is called discretionary effort, right, that space between doing the minimum and giving it all. They've got in organizations where we see that consistently, we see managers have two characteristics in common. The first is that they are a part of a peer group of managers where they regularly get to meet and discuss and share help and information. The second is that they demonstrate an ongoing commitment to professional development. And so this is really interesting to me from a leadership development perspective, because sometimes we think, as as employers or as companies, that we need to create really sophisticated leadership development programs, and maybe we don't. Maybe all we really need to do is make sure that leaders get some time to confer with other peer leaders and to talk to each other about the challenges of being a leader, and maybe the other thing we just need to do is make sure that we are helping these leaders engage in an ongoing commitment to professional development. So it's so making sure they can attend conferences, making sure that they occasionally can can read a book about leadership or listen to a podcast like this one. Right, just making time and space for leaders to talk about what it means to be a leader and to help each other do it well Turns out that's maybe the most effective way to do it. Maybe those are the best practices.

Doug Smith: 24:51

That's so good. I wanted to have a little bit more into being a great boss and creating a great culture. You wrote another book. I just think this ties into great bosses and the book is called no more team drama eliminating the gossip, clicks and other crap that damages team. First of all, unbelievable book title, thank you, but I'm super passionate about this. So gossip is rampant in our world. It's crazy. It does damage teams, it

damages organizations. How can, how can leaders do some of the things you mentioned eliminating gossip and clicks because if they don't do that, we're never going to thrive and have a flourishing culture, in my opinion.

Joe Mull: 25:26

Yeah, it's funny, this book was born out of work that I've been doing for years traveling into organizations, doing, you know, like full day long leadership masterclasses, and coming back a couple times and working with frontline and mid level managers about what do you, what are you struggling with the most, what are the the biggest people management challenges you face? And consistently, we would get back all of these ideas about well, we can't just people just don't play well together in the sandbox sometimes. And how do we like, what do I do? What kind of conversations do I have? How do I fix that? And so we decided, all right, like why do some teams become high performing, close knit, no drama work groups, while others just get mired in debate and dysfunction and drama? And so we started doing a lot of again research. I kind of talked about nerding out around the social science I'm really interested in where, what, what leads to clicks, what leads to gossip, what are the triggers, what are the environmental factors, what are the beliefs, what are the cognitive biases. And so we married all of that together into this book and what we found is that most of the time, team drama comes from people more favorably judging themselves and we're harshly judging others because of some shortcuts our brains take and the stories they make up about why people do what they do. And so the book really argues that there are four things teams have to work on together in order to cut down on us more favorably judging ourselves and more harshly judging others, and we call them courtesy, camaraderie, conflict and cause. Now you can tell, doug, because you just asked me about the other book, that we like frameworks, right we? When we we talk about this stuff, we like to try to translate some of these complex ideas into simple concepts, right? So courtesy is about the quality of interactions that people have. What are the expectations for how we talk to and treat each other? Camaraderie is about giving people a chance to form sophisticated relationships with each other and to access each other's humanity, because, it turns out, we judge each other less harshly when we know some things about each other. We find things in common with each other that don't have anything to do with work. Conflict is about teaching people how to avoid unhealthy patterns of conflict. We write in the book about something called drama triangles, right, where if I'm upset with somebody else, I actually end up going to a third party first. Right when you're frustrated with somebody, you got to go talk to that person first, and then cause is really about our mission and our purpose. Right when we, when everybody is rowing in the same direction and when you identify a mission that is so powerful and worthy of people's attention that it cuts down on the high school BS and noise, that kind of creeps

into work sometimes. So those four things courtesy, camaraderie, conflict and cause are sort of the recipe for a low drama work team.

Doug Smith: 28:27

I love these frameworks as we start to wrap on the conversation around employer employee. The third bucket that you talked about was just meaningful work. Yeah, and I think this is huge. Now I work at a rescue mission. We serve the homeless. Everyone's like, wow, there's so much meaning behind your work. I wish I had meaning in my work. How, how do we help people find meaning and significance? And what they do in the day to day? Because all of our jobs, no matter what the purpose of the organization.

Joe Mull: 28:56

Yeah, have mundane parts of them. Yeah, I do a lot of work at healthcare and it's easy to get romantic about healthcare. To right, we're saving lives, we're curing the sick and there are a lot of professions where you can point to the difference your work makes in the lives of others, right, quick. But there are other jobs where maybe that's harder to do. I've had a lot of conversations with people who work in call centers and collections and things of that nature. I think every job in one way or another, either reduces suffering or imparts joy or in some form or fashion makes a difference to somebody in a positive way. I think we as leaders, if we can shine a light on that and become better storytellers, we can actually help people find that purpose and that meaning more easily. I always give the example of the ticket taker at the movie theater. Right, this is, this is my dream. Backup job dog. If I just get tired of thinking at work, I might just go tear tickets at the movie theater because it feel like it's not that hard, right, you just tear the ticket on your left, on your right, there's the restroom, thanks for coming. But if I ran a movie theater and I had, you know, high school kids working for me tear in tickets. I wouldn't want them there just like slouching and thinking that their word work was meaningless. I would want them to believe that that doing that really matters, and not just because we don't want people stealing free movies. And so I probably do something like this. If I hired a high school kid, I would say, hey, you're tearing ticket to the movie theater, and I know that probably feels meaningless, but it's really not. Who do you know who has been married the longest? And we'd probably hear maybe about their grandparents or an aunt and uncle, or maybe their own parents. And I would say I want you to go ask them to tell you about their first date, and I want you to come back and tell me about it. And when this kid came back and told me about it, I would probably get a lot of detail right and I would probably say something like isn't it remarkable that they remember in such detail a night that happened like 40 years ago? Isn't that remarkable? Hey, guess what? The people walking past you every day that you're tearing tickets might be that couple. They might be on their first date and we get to be a part of that, and isn't that amazing? And then, doug, I'd say now, do you know anybody who has kids, say, under the age of three? And if they do, maybe it's a neighbor, maybe

it's a cousin. Okay, I want you to call them up and I want you to ask them what would it take for you to go to the movies tomorrow? And I want you to figure out all the things that they would have to get into place, to get out of the house without the kids to go see a movie. Right, you said you got four kids, I got three. If I want, if I wipe and I want to go see a movie, right, we're out 50, 60 bucks for a babysitter before we pull out on a driveway right, yep, yeah, I'm with you. And so then I would have that kid come back and tell me. I would say every day you're tearing tickets, you've got people walking past you who had to move heaven and earth just to be there, and so let's make this nice special for them. So you see what I'm doing right, I'm connecting.

Doug Smith: 31:55

I'm ready to go work for you at the movie.

Joe Mull: 31:59

The difference that we make in the lives of others and making it personal and making it emotional.

Doug Smith: 32:04

This is huge. I mean you just made it emotional for me my wife and I's first date at a movie. We saw Lord of the Rings 2, I think in like 2002.

Joe Mull: 32:10

That's a good one.

Doug Smith: 32:12

And yeah, date nights. We just saw Mission Impossible 700, whatever.

Joe Mull: 32:16

Right.

Doug Smith: 32:17

But hey plug for the movie. It was incredible. But I mean that's so good. And, as leaders, our job is to communicate vision and repeat and repeat, and repeat, and repeat and repeat, and I think sharing stories like you just shared, that's our job. And so leaders communicate vision, keep saying the same thing. I have a friend that always tells me repetition leads to retention, which is so good.

Joe Mull: 32:36

And personalizing it, because that's what we just did. Sometimes, when we talk about, here's the difference we make in the lives of other. We cure the sick and we feed the homeless, and that's true. But when you can bring that down from the many to the one

we made a difference in James's life, or we made a difference in this couple's life it becomes even more powerful.

Doug Smith: 32:55

Yeah Well, Joe, we've spent a lot of time talking about the employers, the leaders of the organization and what they need to do. I just want to give you free reign and I'll just leave this really, really open ended to employees. We have young leaders listening to this who want to grow and develop. They want to be leaders one day. They want to advance, they want to do well. What advice do you have for employees and future leaders? What do they need to do in order to thrive in today's workplace?

Joe Mull: 33:24

If you want your employer to be devoted to you, then we have to show up devoted to them, we have to care about their mission, we do have to care about their bottom line, we do have to care about the quality of the interactions that we have with clients, with customers. And so showing up at work and just going through the motions isn't going to get us very far and it's not going to motivate our employers to create a better employee experience. What we wrote about in this book, employalty is really about reciprocity. Commitment is a two-way street. I'm banging the table on all kinds of media really employing employers to treat people more humanely at work, to stop treating employees like a commodity, to teach leaders how to show up in such a way that they care not just about who the person is at work but that they care about their life outside of work as well. And we need to return that commitment with a commitment of our own to join an organization, to give that organization a chance to teach us and then to bring our whole selves to that work and to care about the quality of our work. When that commitment truly is a two-way street, you end up having an ideal job, doing meaningful work for a great boss. In general, we know that people generally do a great job when they believe they have a great job, and so if you see an employer who's trying to create a great job for you, do what you can to do a great job for them.

Doug Smith: 34:53

So good, Joe, it's time we have left. I want to dive into the lightning round. A bunch of fun questions I ask in every interview.

Joe Mull: 34:58

All right.

Doug Smith: 34:58

And the first one is what is the best advice you've ever received and who gave it to you?

Joe Mull: 35:03

Can I swear?

Doug Smith: 35:06

We'll keep it out.

Joe Mull: 35:08

PG-13. One of the first pieces of advice that I got after grad school in my first job from this crotchety old guy who had been a leader for about 100 years was don't wear you eat. And he talked about for years watching young graduates go to conferences and get drunk and do stupid things and they're professional networks and that always resonated with me right From a professional level don't bleep where you eat.

Doug Smith: 35:35

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

Joe Mull: 35:39

If I could put a quote on a billboard for everyone to read, I would probably be what I just said. People generally do a great job when they believe they have a great job.

Doug Smith: 35:52

What books, either all time or recently, have you read that have made the greatest impact on your life?

Joe Mull: 35:57

Well, my favorite leadership book since that's the theme of this podcast is Daniel Pink's book Drive the Surprising Truth About what Motivates Us. He just writes so brilliantly about a lot of that social science research on intrinsic motivation, and I think it should be required reading for leaders at all levels.

Doug Smith: 36:14

You've done a lot of research. You've spent time with a lot of leaders and organizations. I'm curious when you get to spend time with a great leader that you look up to or admire, do you have a go-to question that you always ask when you get time with them?

Joe Mull: 36:25

I ask for scripts and turns of phrase. What scripts or turns of phrase have you found have had the biggest impact on your work? If you have to have a difficult conversation with somebody, how do you say what you want to say? Learn a lot of really interesting approaches with that one.

Doug Smith: 36:40

What is it scripts and what.

Joe Mull: 36:41

Turns of phrase.

Doug Smith: 36:43

Turns of phrase. What are some of?

Joe Mull: 36:44

yours Turns of phrase yeah, Turns of phrase.

Doug Smith: 36:47

What are some?

Joe Mull: 36:48

of yours. Help me understand right, Instead of why do you?

Doug Smith: 36:52

You just started using that, that's so good, or tell me more about that.

Joe Mull: 36:57

I try to use we versus you whenever possible. Yeah.

Doug Smith: 37:02

I love it. What's your biggest leadership pet peeve.

Joe Mull: 37:07

Biggest leadership pet peeve. I am known for ranting against exit interviews that exit interviews are stupid and we should stop doing them. They're a colossal waste of time and resources because, if you think about it, it's absurd, right? So the person has decided to leave. They've got no skin in the game anymore. They've got one foot out the door. Now we're going to ask them hey, what do you think we should do differently around here? It's absurd. It's stupid. We should do interviews. We should be asking the people who stay those questions.

Doug Smith: 37:41

Yeah, preach, I don't know if you have an actual bucket list or not, but what's something you've done in your life that you think everyone should experience before they die?

Joe Mull: 37:50

Oh man, I think I don't know if it's a bucket list thing, but I think everybody should have to work in retail or a restaurant or both at some point in their lives. I did both in high school. It really teaches you to care for and respect people in those roles.

Doug Smith: 38:10

What was your favorite retail or restaurant job that you had?

Joe Mull: 38:13

I worked at, so if you know Brookstone and shopping malls, they've got all the cool gadgets and stuff. I did that during a holiday season. That was a neat place to work.

Doug Smith: 38:22

Coollest gadget in Brookstone that you've experienced.

Joe Mull: 38:25

The massage chair. They had a fancy massage chair before you could get them in, like April's and Lobby's and things like that.

Doug Smith: 38:32

That's so funny. If you could go back and have coffee with yourself at any age and you would have actually listened to yourself, what age would that be and what would you tell that version of Joe?

Joe Mull: 38:45

My first plus reaction is I would go back to myself in middle school and I was very small and I was very smart, which is a pretty brutal combination. In those years, middle school was awful and I got picked on a lot. I think I would just probably encourage myself that it's going to get better. Part of me now as a dad would want to teach me to fight back and probably say some of the things that even my parents were saying at the same time. I don't know that I was able to hear it, but I would tell myself that it's going to get better.

Doug Smith: 39:16

It's going to get better. At the end of your life, one day, looking back, what do you want to be remembered for and what do you want your legacy to be?

Joe Mull: 39:24

As a father and as a husband and as someone who moves through this world with compassion and kindness and a giving spirit to others, would probably be the most important. Second to that, maybe something about improving work, making work, work

for all. I think everybody deserves to be treated with worth and to have a job that they love, and let's figure out how to do that together.

Doug Smith: 39:47

Yeah, and you're giving your life to that. Now For those listening, if people connected with you. What are some ways people could connect you with you? How can they find you and how can they work with?

Joe Mull: 39:55

you. Thank you for asking, man. I'm at joemullcom or, if it's easier to remember, you can go to bossbetternowcom and you'll find our podcasts and books and all sorts of other materials.

Doug Smith: 40:12

Awesome. Anything you want to talk about, anything else you want to say to leaders before we hop off?

Joe Mull: 40:17

Just keep caring about people and just giving the time and effort into one-on-one learning about people and building that relationship.

Doug Smith: 40:26

Joe, thanks for the interview, thanks for the conversation and all that you do to create great workplaces and keep making a difference, my friend.

Joe Mull: 40:32

Oh, thank you, Doug, this was a blast. Thanks for having me.

Doug Smith: 40:35

Well, leader, thank you so much for listening to my conversation with Joe. I hope that you enjoyed it as much as I did. You can find ways to connect with him and links to everything that we discussed in the show notes at l3leadershiporg. And, as always, leader, I want to challenge you that if you want to attend extra growth this year, then you need to either launch or join an L3 leadership mastermind group. Mastermind groups are 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. For me personally, mastermind groups have been the greatest source of growth in my life over the last eight years, and so if you are interested in launching or joining a group, go to l3leadershiporg, forward slash masterminds or email me at dougsmith at l3leadershiporg. And, as always, I like to end every episode with a quote, and I'll quote Henry Cloud today, who said this. He said a successful person is not

offended or afraid of their faults. They see them as opportunities to grow. This is difficult and requires humility, but it brings problems to the surface that can actually be solved. So much wisdom in that. Well, leader. I hope you enjoyed the episode. Know that my wife Laura and I love you. We believe in you and I say to every episode but don't quit, Keep leading. The world desperately needs your leadership. We'll talk to you next episode.