E006 – Meaningful work

Podcast Guests 0:00

Leadership's incredibly lonely. [THEME MUSIC]

Gerard Wood 0:03

Work out how our services deliver value for our clients. It's the values that bring the value I heard yesterday. Actually I don't think I'm a very good manager. But I am a good leader. You can take responsibility but without negative connotation, it's your fault. [THEME MUSIC]

Introduction 0:17

Hello, and welcome to the Traits of Effective Leaders podcast, brought to you by **SG Partners**. Each episode allows you to hear from real leaders of real businesses, with the aim of assisting you to become even more effective at what you do. Whether you're already a leader, CEO, business owner, manager or an entrepreneur. This exploration of leadership effectiveness covers a range of challenges you may already be experiencing yourself. Now, let's hear from our host, international speaker, Master NLP practitioner, and owner of SG partners Michael Lang.

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Michael Lang 0:54

Hello, and welcome to Traits of Effective Leaders podcast. I'm your host Michael Lang, owner of SG Partners, and I'm joined by Gerard Wood in this episode. Gerard Wood is currently the managing director of Bluefield Asset Management, which provides specialist and practical services to the mining industry globally. Gerard has worked in all roles from tradesperson to Global Practice Leader for maintenance. His corporate experience has been across several large mining companies, including BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto, Peabody and Anglo. And in many countries, including Indonesia, Chile, over the past 10 years.

Gerard has helped a broad range of clients including small, medium and large companies to improve their asset performance and bottom line. And I've worked with Gerard over the 10 years to help improve his team to be more effective as leaders and more effective at their engagement with the marketplace. You're going to enjoy this episode, as Gerard and I banter around effective leadership traits. Looking forward to it. Enjoy this conversation.

Michael Lang 1:55

Gerard Wood, much appreciate you joining us. I'm looking forward to having this conversation about leadership with you. To kick off, Gerard, when I look at your CV. So you started in the mining, and you spent some time in Indonesia. What a great place to start.

Gerard Wood 2:13

Yeah, started in the mining industry in central Queensland and found myself in a leadership role as a supervisor, fairly young, and fairly early in my career, probably too young and too early in my career. So made a lot of mistakes. So I had to learn about being a leader through those mistakes. And in an environment where there are some pretty aggressive sort of people, I suppose that it was an aggressive place to work, but then going to Indonesia was was absolutely awesome. And I suppose I learned a lot more about leadership over there. meeting those guys, because my role wasn't like a direct supervisor it was more like a coaching role.

Michael Lang 3:01

Okay, so going back to you getting a leadership role when you're young, was it everyone step backwards? And you're the last person standing? What how did that come about?

Gerard Wood 3:12

No, no, there was a supervisors role that came up, and I applied for it, even though I hadn't been leading hand and I got the role. And it was sort of in that time, when the industry started to change from you need to be there for a bunch of years to if you had some qualifications that gave you a leg up and I had a part of an engineering degree, I had an associate diploma and part of a degree. So that gave me the leg up over some of the other guys that were probably more qualified with in terms of experience and time as a leading hand.

Michael Lang 3:49

Okay, so the reason they chose you one of the reasons is because you had qualification.

Gerard Wood 3:55

Yeah. And I was probably one of the best electricians. So you know, the old mistake, put your best tradesman in a leadership role and I learned through some a lot more mistakes as a supervisor, I can tell you.

Michael Lang 4:10

Okay, and but why Indonesia then?

Gerard Wood 4:14

Yeah, so after I was electrical supervisor only for a year and then I became a dragline maintenance supervisor of lots of experienced fitters and a trade that I had no experience in and, yeah, so that was even more challenging than after sort of nine years of being at the same place. Or actually fourteen all up if you include my apprenticeship. You know, I was like, time to move on, time to get some other experience. And the role in Indonesia came up. So I applied for that company.

Michael Lang 4:49

So that is a totally different environment, different culture, different rules. So what was the first thing that struck you about that environment?

Gerard Wood 4:58

Yeah, well coming from Central Queensland, you're going to a very remote of Indonesia, there was a huge amount of culture shock, and to take my wife and two little kids as well. And I thought to myself, I'll never be able to go down to that town, like it was just so different to what we were used to in Australia. But after six weeks, I was down there mixing with the locals. No, no dramas. And it was a sort of a step up from my previous level, which was as a planner before I left, but I was into a superintendent level, so bit of a promotion as well. But the role was really interesting. It was, like I said, it was more of a coaching role than a formal leadership role.

Michael Lang 5:46

Right? So you're coaching in a different culture, with different languages? And possibly not even thinking that you can get the same standards that you had in central Queensland?

Gerard Wood 5:59

Look, yeah, I just treated the people like I would want to be treated. And I learned the language. And they were very capable, they were just as capable as anyone over here. You know, the company had good training, technical training in place. And that's what I learned, you know, you can go there. And as a leader, you can blame them for mistakes, or you can say, no that they're just as capable and expect them to step up. And they did. Absolutely. And I was extremely impressed with those. Well, there was different cultural things around whether they would tell you the truth, if it was not good news, and all those sort of things. But I had to create that safe space and make sure that they knew they had to tell me the truth. And I had to demonstrate things, I had to get down and do some work to show them stuff and get my hands dirty. And they respected that.

Michael Lang 7:01

So I'm just picking up something that you shared there, you expected them to step up, right? That's a big distinction there.

Gerard Wood 7:10

Yeah, I expected them to do just as good as anyone else I didn't, just because they weren't Australian didn't mean that they weren't just as capable as anyone else.

Michael Lang 7:23

Did people give you advice before you went there that may have created that expectation?

Gerard Wood 7:31

I don't recall any advice, actually. I went in, and ploughed in, and I treat people as I find them. And, you know, there was some people that were maybe less technically capable, but that was just an experience thing, but they were just as smart as anyone else I'd been working with.

Michael Lang 7:49

And then you were in a global role, was that based back in Brisbane?

Gerard Wood 7:54

After that, I went into a superintendents role with another company, and then a maintenance managers role. And then I got into that global role back in Brisbane yeah where I went around heaps of different sites, trying to help them improve like a centralised maintenance specialist or internal consulting type role.

Michael Lang 8:17

Right? Did you see that as a coaching or mentoring? I mean, how did you approach that role?

Gerard Wood 8:23

Yeah, that's good. I just approached that as trying to do what I could do to help the sites. And to be honest with you, I was learning so much. I'm not sure how helpful I was. I learned heaps and had a great time and met heaps of people. And maybe there was some benefits out of that, those couple of years, but I'm not sure really.

Michael Lang 8:49

Well, maybe the benefits are when you start your own company. Now, you knew a lot of people now.

Gerard Wood 8:54

Oh, no, actually, the learning that I took from those years and the subsequent around in Chile, the learning that I took from those years, has enabled me in Bluefield to set up some services that do add value. You know what I mean? Because in those roles, we were doing what people traditionally do, come in and do an assessment, you know, out of the assessment comes 150 improvement actions, and no one really knows where to start, no one follows up anyway. So, you know, it's really just based on the passion of the guys at the site. So it actually taught me what works and what doesn't work. And I did a lot of years or five and a half years of what doesn't work.

Michael Lang 9:42

Yeah, yeah. So when you when you started your company, Bluefield, a nervous thing to do. I've been there, done that right. And now 10 years on, if you are talking to your younger self, when they were just starting the company. That's what we're going to explore today. Right? Your journey in a leadership perspective, because you've done everything from a bootstrap perspective by growing a company organically.

Gerard Wood 10:07

Yeah, true.

Michael Lang 10:08

So let's kick off with the first question. When it comes to culture, which I know you're really passionate about, what's the most important aspects you need to focus on as a leader, to cultivate company culture?

Gerard Wood 10:21

From my perspective, I really think that, you know, it obviously comes down to first setting what the values and principles are. And that when I say, values and principles, I mean, the values are the internal team values, how we how we play together, and then the principles are, you know, what we do on a day to day basis to set our culture in the eyes of our clients.

And once everyone buys into those, because they've got to be developed with the team, then it's just a matter of putting in routines and rituals to make them real, you know, and in the early days, when we develop those values and principles, initially, we didn't have any routines to make them real, they were just on a bit of paper, and the people were involved in developing them.

But I realised after about six months, I'm like, these things are just a bit of paper, I've got to do something to make them actually be real, and a real part of our culture. And I just set up our weekly meeting routines, to discuss those values and principles in that meeting, as as the start of that meeting. Same processes as we do in safety. You know, like, before we started meeting to talk about safety just embeds that as the most important thing. So we would always start with safety, but then we go into our values and principles discussion and talk about, you know, examples of us living them or not.

Michael Lang 11:51

Cool. I like that, examples. So you're setting up a cadence. So that was that was you and your team. Now, as the company gets bigger, your team now has their people they look after. So how'd you know that that was continuing?

Gerard Wood 12:07

It's the same like as the company's grown, that weekly meeting routine, is the same. And we, as we've grown even bigger, and across the country, all of those leaders of those smaller teams are doing the same thing. And we've set up in teams, just the channels where we capture examples of the principles and the actual value delivery, we capture that in the team's channels, as part of those meetings.

So we can go in and have a look to see what we're capturing, to make sure that what we started that routine or process we started is actually being executed, you've got to make sure it's executed properly. There's been times where we'll have a bit of a talk about the value delivery. And, you know, some people will just say some stuff, which really isn't what the intent of that discussion was meant to be. So we just go, Hey, look, we Are we committed to this, let's actually do it properly.

You know, so you've got to monitor that to make sure it's being done properly. But it's just rolling it out. The other thing we did is put it into our performance review process. So every time, every six months, we do a performance and development review with the guys. And it's more focused on just a performance discussion. We're not rating anyone, but it's, it's about, okay, what development they need to grow, and all those sort of things. And they've got to bring some examples of, of those principles and how they've demonstrated those in the past six months.

Michael Lang 13:45

So during throughout the 10 years that you're at now with the company, has any of those values changed? Or has your expectations of behaviour changed?

Gerard Wood 13:58

No, the values haven't changed, we have reviewed them, and maybe a couple little words here and there. And one, you know, we did do a little thing just to simplify them, for everyone. So there was like, five or six different areas of core principles. And just we did that sort of process a couple of years ago, and it's just refreshing them, but they're still applicable, they still mean the same. And it's, you know, with a new leadership team, they weren't involved in the original development of them. So they get to own them by putting their slight slant on it or whatever. So we've done that, but they haven't you know, in any way markedly changed at all.

Michael Lang 14:42

Cool. Thank you. So you've got your basic living and breathing them by the cadence of your meetings.

Gerard Wood 14:49

Yep.

Michael Lang 14:50

Let's then talk about strategy. What are the key activities needed to consistently apply to ensure people aligned to the strategy? See, when I come up across many companies and have a strategy, but when I'm looking into their company, I think you know, your people aren't aligned to that. So what do you do to keep your people aligned? Consistently?

Gerard Wood 15:10

If I approach this question with a cultural slant on it, rather, you know, there's all those things you can do with your strategy, you can document it at the high level and have the cascading actions and everyone checks in each week on those cascading actions. Yeah, we do that. But that's not the bit that gets that alignment. So if our, for us, the initial thing that we really had to do was work out how our services deliver value for our clients.

Michael Lang 15:48

The interesting thing too is actually to just appeal back about what gives you that dopamine?

Gerard Wood 15:55

Yeah.

Michael Lang 15:56

Because I remember I was at, I saw Brene Brown down in Melbourne a couple years ago, she was doing some basil istation. And it was about, I really have to think about, what is it that I do on a day to day basis, that actually gives me the dopamine?

Gerard Wood 16:11

Yeah.

Michael Lang 16:12

And when I figured it out, I then had to reframe and re process that so it changed accordingly.

Michael Lang 16:23

A lot of the dopamine was about what I'm getting out of it.

Gerard Wood 16:26

Yeah.

Michael Lang 16:27

All right. And then I realised actually, well, my clients getting something out of it and they're growing, then I'll get my dopamine hit.

Gerard Wood 16:34

Yeah, yeah, that's it for me, too. It's about solving problems. And actually seeing that, you know, that makes a difference. You know, ever since I was a young fella, doing some work that was meaningless, and never gave me any satisfaction at all. So doing some work that created some value for someone or made actual real difference. That's what I always felt good about. And solving those problems and seeing real outcomes is is what's always driven me. You know, and there's actually a worked out that in mining, maintenance. It's availability, you know, may not be the right metric. But when I see availability numbers, and I see them going up, I feel good, yep, you've seen something move. And in business, it's about revenue and profit. And obviously, not hurting anyone or anything like that in the right culture. But it's those numbers that come out at the end, which tell you, you're doing something right, you know, and the revenue profits got, that comes from setting up the right culture and all those sorts of things. So, yeah, it's the values that bring the value I heard the other day.

Michael Lang 17:56

And the value. Well, you know, and is a machine that we are setting up. And our clients have a machine as well. So it's the oil, the grease, the moving parts, right? By maintaining it. Who's pulling the levers, it's a complicated thing.

Gerard Wood 18:12

Yeah.

Michael Lang 18:12

And to me, you know, someone says, Oh, you know, leaders are born, no leaders aren't born, you just have to figure it out along the way.

Gerard Wood 18:21

Yeah.

Michael Lang 18:21

And the journey along the way is once you figure it out, then it's how do you transfer it?

Gerard Wood 18:27

Yeah. 100% Yeah, that's a good point. And you've got to want to transfer something as a leader, in my mind, what it's always worked for me or, you know, the way that my brain works is, I need to demonstrate that I'm willing to go further to help someone out. And I make myself demonstrate that I'm prepared to do whatever it takes to help someone out. And I didn't know I've always been like that, but I didn't know that that actually creates, puts you in a leadership position because people follow that, you know, when people see someone doing the right thing, not for their own benefit, but to help someone else out. You get thrust into a leadership role, like I've never really wanted to be in charge or the manager or anything like that. I actually don't think I'm a very good manager. But I am a good leader. That's because I will demonstrate by my own actions, you know what's right and but I expect people around me to do the same.

Michael Lang 19:39

And yet here's the distinction though, Gerard, you've always been like that. So something… there was a seed there and it just expanded right? But if you look at everyone in your organisation, they're not exactly like you.

Gerard Wood 19:52

Yeah no, it's about becoming consciously conscious of what those things are in your your own personality that enables you to be a leader, you know, if it's just, it's, you might have something in you, and everyone probably has that, right, everyone probably does want to help other people out. But when you become conscious of how that can translate to being able to lead a team and influence people and make a difference, that's what enables you to become that leader, you know, it really is that conscious competence or conscious understanding of what makes a difference.

And I actually did see a quote, many years ago, something like, I can't remember it now. But it was really good. And it basically said that, you know, understanding or listening to other people is great. understanding other people is even better, but understanding yourself. Now that's the ultimate. You know, it was sort of those phases of being able to work with people, influence them, all that sort of stuff, starts with listening to people, then understanding other people, but most importantly, it's understanding yourself.

Michael Lang 21:08

And I think when you're understanding yourself, and that's a journey, it actually wires other people to take that step forward as well.

Gerard Wood 21:15

Yeah, well, sometimes I suppose the scary bit is to understand yourself, you actually have to face some things that you don't want to know about yourself, and address them.

Michael Lang 21:28

You don't want to know the clarity. That's right. That's right. Cool. So, so in this journey, as a leader, and you're now very conscious about what you do, which is fantastic. Let's go back to that strategy, right? What's the key activities, that you need to do consistently to ensure that people are aligned with the strategy?

Gerard Wood 21:53

Yeah, like I said before, around the setting the values and principles, in my mind, strategy is about… setting the strategy is about how you're going to add value for whoever you're providing a service or a product for, right. So that's the strategy. And once you understand, you know, those values and principles that do add value for your client, and like I said, Before you set them up as rituals, you lock those elements into those principles, you know, so once you've understood, okay, these are the things that we're going to do to add value, that's our strategy, to add value to people put those, lock those into those principles, put them back in, they become your principles of service delivery, or, you know, product quality, or whatever it is.

And when you're talking about those principles on a daily or weekly basis, when they're locked into the other routines, like performance reviews, and things like that, then everyone becomes aware of them, you know, it's not just the old strategy cascading down, you know, the technical side of strategy and communicating strategy, you'll see a lot of that, you know, here's your strategy plan on a page, and you cascade that down. And all those sorts of technical things, you cascade down documents, lock it into the principles that are talked about in those routines and rituals, makes it real in everyone's mind, and enables the whole culture to adopt those, you know, the core parts of that strategy.

I'll give you an example, in our business, for us to add value for clients, sometimes it's about, it may not be about reducing the cost, it might be about delivery on time, or a good quality product, which is generally perception based. So in our principles, it's about, you know, never be late. Or if you got to be late, you got to let people know about the schedule. And then in terms of the value perception, you know, that's all about communication. So there's a lot of elements in our principles, which are about how we communicate with clients, and all that sort of stuff.

Michael Lang 24:12
So guiding principles are really important to you.

Gerard Wood 24:16
Yep.

Michael Lang 24:17
Some of the organization's you assist are big mining companies, right?

Gerard Wood 24:20
Yeah.

Michael Lang 24:21
Can you see with clarity that they have guiding principles that they live and die by?

Gerard Wood 24:27
Some do, you know, and if I look at the work we do with clients to help them change and turn around, and all those sorts of things around maintenance performance, what we help them do is embed a set of principles. We call them working agreements. And we help those teams, we're talking on a micro level here. We're not talking at a company level. But at a micro level, we help those teams work effectively together by focusing on a set of principles which we call working agreements. That overcome the issues that they're having in working as a team, you know what I mean? So, yeah, that works. And you know, you were going to ask a question there later about change management.

Michael Lang 25:13
Yes.

Gerard Wood 25:14

You know, what's the most important thing to focus on when doing change management or transformation programmes. And we've done a lot of that. And I've personally, I started that journey many, many, many years ago back in 2003, helping people improve, or transform. And I've come down to, the most important thing is allowing people to say what they will do to overcome the problems that they see, that we all see. And then holding them accountable, and setting up those structures of mutual accountability, to actually do what you said you're going to do, and do it properly.

Michael Lang 26:01

So don't come to me with a problem, come to me with the solution, and be responsible for enacting that solution.

Gerard Wood 26:07

Well, if we're facilitating that transformation programme, we will all agree on the problems. And we'll show them with sometimes data, sometimes photos, because sometimes things, problems that you see are not presented in data, you can't measure it, they're just physically in the world, when you're looking at mining equipment, you just got to look at the condition of it. So you all agree what the problems are. And then you allow the teams that are responsible for overcoming those problems to come up with a solution, you might give them suggestions, but they must own that solution.

Own that, what they've got to do to overcome that problem. And then it's just simply a matter of coming back and making sure they do what they say they're going to do. Every person on the planet believes that they should do what they said they're going to do. You know, so if you just focus on that, you said you're gonna do this? It's not been done? Are you gonna do it or not? Do we need to change it? Is it still right? Or have things changed, we can change it. But we've got to make sure it's non negotiable to overcome those problems.

Michael Lang 27:17

And have you found that in the clients you work with, them embracing that responsibility, or accountability framework?

Gerard Wood 27:25

Obviously, it depends on the people, people are different, but the ones that embrace it, the ones that get into that, they get such good results, and they work so well as a team, that it's almost like refreshing. That the stuff that wasn't being said that everyone knew was a real problem, they can get that out in the open, and they, being at work, you'd spent such a long time. You don't want to be stressed or worried about things that you can't say, you need to be able to just say it as it is, work together. Like any team, you know, and it's so much more relaxing to have a culture where you can just say things as they are and you're committed to working with each other and you work through how we're going to continue to work with each other. It's relaxing.

Michael Lang 28:20

Yep. If we look at core leadership traits, it sounds to me like and I know you well enough, that this responsibility is huge, taking responsibility, right? In my time in doing change management transformation with companies, I've found out a real gap in leaders really embracing accountability. Right? So how do we, how do we get them to shift their mindset around accountability to obviously being a negative, that's why they don't embrace it, to being a positive?

Gerard Wood 28:54

Yeah, that's, that's a good, a good question. And the way that we, when we work with our clients on this, it's, it's like, you have to take responsibility for the results, you know, the ultimate results. So if the business isn't performing the equipment isn't performing whatever. If you don't take responsibility for that, then you won't do what's necessary to fix it. And there's a difference between taking responsibility and feeling personally bad about your own performance or upset or feeling negative, you know, you can take responsibility, but without that negative connotation, it's your fault.

You know, okay, yep it's my responsibility, but I don't have to feel bad about myself. I'm still a good human. We're a great team. We didn't get it right this time, but we're going to do it better. You know, it gives us an opportunity to continue to improve. So if you looked at poor results or poor outcomes And they make you feel bad about yourself.

That's where people avoid it I believe, you know, but if you can look at bad outcomes, negative outcomes and still believe that you don't feel bad about yourself, but you do need to take the actions necessary to get better, get better results, then that sort of, it's a good way of looking at it. And I think that's why people avoid.. at least in mining maintenance, you know, where I see where people, the equipment results aren't there, maybe they think this could hurt my career or whatever, blame the OEM, it's the OEMs fault. But if you blame the OEM, you won't do what's necessary to actually fix the problem.

And that might be getting someone other than the OEM to come in or, you know, say if you just keep doing the same thing and keep blaming the OEM, you don't get the results in the end. But if you've got something to blame, you still feel good about yourself or your career doesn't get impacted. Whatever it is, you're fearful of. You have to overcome that fear, accept the results. And then you'll do what's necessary to fix it.

Voiceover 31:08
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Michael Lang 31:19
I myself, Gerard, many years ago, I learned that I had a fear of failing. Somewhere throughout my life, I had created these emotions around failure.

Gerard Wood 31:35
Yeah.

Michael Lang 31:35
Therefore I avoided it.

Gerard Wood 31:37
Yeah.

Michael Lang 31:38
And but also to grow, you need to take risk, to take risk you're going to have failure. So it sort of hampered me. So it was me working through those emotions around the fear of failure.

Gerard Wood 31:50

Yeah.

Michael Lang 31:51

So maybe I myself, and I'm taking this from this conversation, really need to have conversations with people about how they feel about failure.

Gerard Wood 32:00

I would agree with that actually. I think it's a really good idea. And that's the same for me, it's a fear of failure, no one wants to feel that they're failing. And it was a big problem for me, you know, I never want to feel that I was wrong. Fear of being wrong, fear of failure. Same, and I had to overcome that, you know, I had to move past it, and accept it and admit it, you know? Yep. You know, like, even when, in our business in 2012, when the mining industry fell off the cliff, and our business was in a really tough situation, people would say Oh well, you know, you're still doing well, compared to others in the industry. I'm like, that doesn't mean anything to me, that's just an excuse. I've got to work out how we can do even better, you know, if I, you know, I've got to accept that businesses failed, it wasn't failed, but I'm failing on my own expectations. You know, we can do better. I needed to accept that as my responsibility, not it's not the industry or whatever, it's my responsibility. When I accept that, then I'll do what's necessary to fix it.

Michael Lang 33:11

Yeah. And that is accepting the acceptance of this is what it is, right? What can I control?

Gerard Wood 33:19

Yeah, yeah. 100%.

Michael Lang 33:21

And I remember that time you just pulled on your boots and said, Okay, you know, because the industry was still doing stuff. They were still operating.

Gerard Wood 33:29

Yeah. 100%.

Michael Lang 33:31

And they needed more out of their assets. So they needed you even more.

Gerard Wood 33:35

Yeah.

Michael Lang 33:35

You had to get your head around that.

Gerard Wood 33:37

Yeah, that's right, you helped me get my head around it.

Michael Lang 33:41

I remember those conversations. And I suppose, that's where people are also challenged, because to move forward means you now are going to get uncomfortable. Right, and that's painful, and people would rather stay comfortable. And that's why they blame because it helps them stay comfortable.

Gerard Wood 34:00

That's a great, there's a motivational video on YouTube somewhere in you got to get comfortable with feeling uncomfortable.

Michael Lang 34:10

And I think in the environments we grow up in, either allows us to understand that or it creates an environment where we are going to go the opposite. So you know, where if someone needs to be liked, is seeking approval, then you're not going to step into that.

Gerard Wood 34:29

Yeah, no, that that was definitely one of the weaknesses I had is is that need to be liked. I've got a huge need to be liked. So sometimes you have to overcome that you know, and because if you got to grow, you got to get outside that comfort zone. There's no doubt about that.

Michael Lang 34:49

And I think just talking to you, thank you as always, when we say I need to be liked, we're also looking at what the opposite is. So I need to be liked because the opposite means I'm disliked.

Gerard Wood 35:03

Yeah.

Michael Lang 35:05

No one wrote that equation. But you make it up yourself and say, Well, I definitely don't want to be disliked. So I better be liked.

Gerard Wood 35:10

Yeah, true.

Michael Lang 35:12

Right, then in my model of the world I don't need to be liked. Everyone knows that. But I don't come across as an asshole either.

Gerard Wood 35:19

Yeah.

Michael Lang 35:22

And the interesting thing, I was listening to a speaker and he says, we think about opposites, when in reality, it could be alignment.

Gerard Wood 35:30

Yeah.

Michael Lang 35:31

But when we pull it apart, we then have to choose a side. But if we don't pull it apart, then we just need to seek alignment.

Gerard Wood 35:38

Yeah, yeah. That's a really good way of looking at it. I'll take that away from this conversation.

Michael Lang 35:44

All right, one each. So okay, we were talking about failures. So what's the number one lesson that you learned from a failure?

Gerard Wood 35:54

Well, I suppose if I think about in a business context, I think it's about this, this lesson around how you add value, understanding how you add value to someone else. Like every business has to add value to someone else, whether it be, you know, you're selling a software product, or a service, you know, or any physical product, there's got to be some value equation for the people who are purchasing that. And, for me, the mistake that I made early on is not understanding that value, and then measuring your success at generating that value.

You know, and you see that cropping up a lot more these days, you know, all the companies are doing some sort of survey or whatever, post a purchase or anything like that, and they got that customer satisfaction rating. So they're measuring that. I think the ones that are successful, actually change or, or take action to the feedback that they get, because I have also seen some people that measure it, but then don't do anything to change. And but the successful companies really do action that feedback and those responses. And I didn't do that, in brief, I didn't really understand that.

We probably did it just because we wanted to be good people. And good contributors. We did it ad hoc, maybe. But when we actually understood how to systemize that in our business, and build that into our principles, and part of the way we work, so it would become part of the culture, that's when our business started scaling. So you know, not understanding that initially was probably, you know, that was a failure. And if I look at other businesses that I had before Bluefield, that did actually fail, that's core, core to that, those values.

Michael Lang 38:01

And I think along the journey, Gerard, sometimes, that value may change just a little bit in the consumer eyes.

Gerard Wood 38:09

Yeah, 100%, which is why you've always got to measure it, you know, you always got to go back and get feedback from clients, we do it after every job, we formally get feedback and make sure that we did deliver in their expectations, or if their expectations are different, because a lot of people have, you know, they're all different in terms of what they expect. We get their feedback. And that's how we improve that. We learn from that, you know, and we do action it.

Michael Lang 38:39

Well done, sir. So, if you're talking to yourself back when, what advice or what would you do differently as a leader?

Gerard Wood 38:50

To be honest with you, I would let go earlier, there's a mindset that I'm the only one who does it the right way or my way, you know, will always be better. But you've got to get over that. And I had to say to myself, Well, okay, it's gonna be different, people do it different to me, doesn't mean it's wrong, you know, let people go and, and deliver the results, you know, that it's up to them to deliver the results. So probably, you know, letting go earlier. And just understanding that people will do things a different way to you, but they, as long as they get the results for the client. That's all that really matters.

Michael Lang 39:37

And we see this a lot, don't we? I mean, it's, it's just part of being a human being. You've got that ego.

Gerard Wood 39:43

Yeah.

Michael Lang 39:44

You know, having that humility to say, is this serving me?

Gerard Wood 39:48

Yeah.

Michael Lang 39:48

So self awareness piece in leadership. That's number one, self awareness. It's about saying, I'm controlling because…

Gerard Wood 39:56

Yeah, yeah.

Michael Lang 39:58

And we'll rationalise it because I want the best quality, I want the best outcome. But really, it's about because I want something in return. This is my ego we're talking about.

Gerard Wood 40:08

Yeah, yeah, possibly. And you have to let it go, let people move on, and they've got to get the satisfaction, they've got to get the, the feeling of, you know, I did that, you know what I mean, even when we work with our clients, it's important that we let go, as well, of the, we don't get any ego, serving satisfaction from the results, you know, our clients get those results themselves, and they're the ones that get that feeling, we just facilitate that process for them. And, you know, they know that we were part of that journey. But in the end, they have to know that it was them who created that, that outcome and those results. And that's, that's what's most important.

Michael Lang 40:52

Ultimately, in what you and I do is about ensuring that they don't need us anymore.

Gerard Wood 40:58

100% In some ways, at least until they've got all the areas cranking, so initial phases, getting rid of unscheduled downtime, and all those sorts of losses. You know, you can work yourself out of that in six to 12 months. And then later on when they're ready to go to the next level. They want to extend machine lives or whatever. And they know you did a good job, they'll come back to you then.

Michael Lang 41:26

Because the smallest wins then are the hardest to get. They're not as obvious.

Gerard Wood 41:33

Yeah, yeah. Especially, you know, if you look at reactive maintenance environments, you know, the big wins up front actually are all based around this execution, culture, and all that sort of stuff. And then to get the next 5% of improvement, it comes from those other processes and lifecycle management and stuff like that.

Michael Lang 41:59

I really want to thank you for this. Thank you. Just in this discussion I've had some refreshes. And I've had some learning. So thank you.

Gerard Wood 42:09

Thanks, Michael. I love talking about this sort of stuff too. And as you know, I love the work that you do. And you always challenged me and always put me outside of my comfort zone. And yeah, that's always been good. I've always grown from the interactions that I've had with you.

Voiceover 42:32

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