

What type of leader inspires you?

Lily: Michael, so tell us what type of leader are you inspired by and why?

Michael: This is a great question and my answer is probably not the typical answer that we would even expect because people, even great leaders, and some of this goes back to what we've been talking about here today, people make mistakes and sometimes they're colossal. Sometimes they're huge; they derail us. Here's somebody that we respected and we trusted and they make mistakes. I've made some significant mistakes, and that lets us down, it makes people wonder if leading is even worth it.

In fact, I heard this week of a leader of a large non-profit, after 14 years he started this non-profit, grew it to multi-million-dollar organization, helping tons of people, now he's stepping down. He has this huge platform nationwide, if not internationally, and for whatever reason he's stepping down.

It makes us wonder, "Is it even worth it to get into leadership, are we going to get burned out just like the next person?" That was this guy's reasoning for stepping down. He's just done, he's burned out. And for us, we and some of this is semantics, but some of it is something really for us to consider.

We're trying to focus less on the type of leader and more on the principles and purpose that are necessary for transformational leadership in the marketplace. Some people would say, "Okay, that's a cynical perspective or you're parsing words or semantics." But, we know the value in preparing people for failure; both their own failure and the failure of other people, because failing is inevitable. We're going to make mistakes; we're going to do things that will hurt people. Preparing them to pick up, to repair those relationships, to right the wrongs, to not get derailed by those things and many cases to limit those things as we go forward, it has become so important for us. Helping them be prepared so when bad things happen we're able to handle them. As we think about the type of leaders that inspire us, we're looking for people who are doing principle-based work, purposeful work and helping others do transformational work in the marketplace.

Lily: I've never heard that where you're preparing people for failure and it makes so much sense because if you give people tools, they won't fall apart, they won't hurt as many people because they're able to recover.

Michael: I can tell you a funny practical story about this and where it really became early in my career when we moved to Jacksonville, Florida. We purchased a commercial building. We used a lot of the space, but we didn't need all of the space. And so, we started a property

management company to help us run out that space and we did that for several years we're very successful with it, several other people saw our success and wanted to get into real estate and so I helped them, our team helped them get into real estate. And after the first few tenants, in fact the first time that they had a tenant that didn't pay or they had a tenant that would tear up their property and they had to go and spend thousands of dollars. They came back to me and said "Man, I'm not cut out for this." For us, the property management thing, it really just become part of what we do, people mess stuff up, you go and you fix it.

I realized that my mentality was nearly the opposite of their mentality. My mentality was, "Plan for every tenant to be a deadbeat." If you're renting today, I'm not saying you're a deadbeat. But it's like you plan for every tenant to be a deadbeat and if they're not, it's a bonus.

The silly little story has stuck with me. I worked with executives who are dealing with challenges with their direct reports, these people who are at high levels of organizations. It just blows their minds that this person acts this way, and I'm like, "Well it's a person, we're dealing with people." It's like us driving through Atlanta traffic or L.A traffic or Washington D.C traffic and getting ticked off every day. When it happens every day why are we getting upset? It happens every day so, why not figure out how to prepare yourself to make the most of the situation that we find ourselves in?