

What led you to the work you are doing today with SIMPLE Leadership?

Lily: Michael, what inspired you to choose leadership?

Michael: Like most people, I feel like my path to leadership is unique. I think what we find, the more leaders that we talk to, the more people that we talk to, we find that everybody has a very unique and very interesting path to leadership.

My dad helped me start my first business when I was 11 years old. At that time, I thought he saw some kind of creative genius, some entrepreneurial genius in me. I later realized that it was just trying to keep me out of trouble, because I was an active little boy.

Lily: Smart man!

Michael: He helped me start this business which eventually helped me to pay my way through college. I got out of my undergrad work with no college debt which, even at that time, was a pretty amazing thing.

After college, I went to work for a non-profit for several years. In the course of working at that non-profit, we started helping other non-profits with outreach, and with marketing. We became so busy doing that, that we had to make a decision: either we would stop helping these non-profits, some of them faith-based, all of them doing transformational work in their local communities or in the marketplace around the world.

We would either pull back on that or we would really have to launch a full-time consultation business to help them. We made the decision to go full-time, started a marketing consulting firm in the Washington D.C. area, and was there for a couple of years and then realized we could save a significant amount of overhead by moving to Jacksonville, Florida, which is where we were doing a bunch of publications and printing at that time.

I relocated there and met my wife in Jacksonville, Florida in 1999. Then a few years later one of our largest client which was a university asked us to come on full-time. From there, it was full-time in higher-ed for a while.

About 9 years ago, I realized that some of the dysfunctions that I was experiencing both in my own leadership and within organizations that I was serving in, I started writing about them. I

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thought I was the only one experiencing some of these things, nobody could relate to the things that I was experiencing.

What I found at that time was the community of people that were experiencing many of the same things that I was. I'm sure, as you've started the podcast and you've been communicating with people, even our listeners today they're like, "Yes! Yes! That's what I found, too! There's people out there who're struggling with the same things that I am."

Over the last several years, we've started walking a path where we just began helping leaders and serving leaders and supporting them and resourcing them. Today, we're so incredibly humbled and honored to be consulting and training with leaders and teams from organizations like Mercedes, Boeing, Staples, and CNN. We're hosting thousands of people every year at our retreat center here in the Atlanta area. Just incredibly rewarding work, creating memorable experiences for people.