

# 70 Why relationships boost teamwork, innovation & your botto...

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## SPEAKERS

Murielle Machiels, David Nour

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Murielle Machiels 00:01

A scientific study by dinner and Seligman shows that people with strong ties to friends and family, and the commitment to spending time with them have the highest levels of well being. And project Aristotle at Google was a huge research on team effectiveness. It showed that psychological safety within a team made a huge difference in performance. So in your life, and in your team, good relationships will make a huge difference. But did you know that your most strategic relationships will power exponential growth? David nur is an advisor, author and executive coach. He specializes in a rare combination, innovation through relationships. He has written several books about a topic and in his last one, curve benders, and in this podcast, he shares how your relationship management can really make a difference for your bottom line. I'm Murielle, co mom and educator. I used to work really hard and sacrifice the important things to me until I lost my motivation. Fast forward past many failed attempts and lessons learned. And I found a way to reach great results while working less. today. I'm obsessed with helping other leaders builds meaningful lives. So each week, I'll be sharing inspiration to change your life and organization. This is rebel leader with our hearts. Hi, David, how are you?



David Nour 01:48

I'm Greg Mira. Nice to see you.



Murielle Machiels 01:49

Nice to meet you from across the ocean. So can you tell us a little bit about yourself? Who are you?



David Nour 01:58

Oh, sure. So I am originally from Iran. I came to the US in 1981. With a suitcase 100 bucks, didn't know anybody and didn't speak a word of English. My parents are retired teachers, they live back in Iran Mom, mom unfortunately passed away recently. But they're still back there with a whole lot of family. And now that I'm a parent myself, I can imagine what an incredibly unselfish thing to do because they with the revolution, they didn't see a whole lot of future from Iran. So they came here I live with an aunt and uncle that I hadn't seen since birth. I finished high school here. I went to university here. And I'm I'm the quintessential, the American dream, if you will, yeah. I've spent most of my career around technology, sales, marketing, business development, product marketing, then I went to consulting route than private equity. I was president of a company and hard to believe I tell my kids, I didn't paint on the white hair. 20 years ago, I started this practice of really doing innovation consulting for global clients, very specifically around their strategic relationships. I've published 11 books, and pre pandemic, I will travel the world and speak and coach and consult. Like most of us in the last two years, I've reverted to more digital, but slowly coming back again with travel, Wendy, and I've been married 25 years. And I have two amazing kids, a 20 year old daughter whose second year in university, and an 18 year old son who's in his last year of high school.



Murielle Machiels 03:41

That's funny. I also have two kids 20 And almost 18. Would you



David Nour 03:47

like my to any chance I can send you my two? I'll come pick them up.



Murielle Machiels 03:53

Right? So I'm really impressed because I saw that you you've written 11 books, and you talk about innovation in relationship management. So I'm really curious what you mean by that?



David Nour 04:07

Sure. So I am a product of two very different cultures. And and you certainly realize this in parts of Europe, if you your audience have lived abroad or you've worked abroad, you understand my comment that in many parts of the world, we build relationships first, from which we do business. Unfortunately, when I came to the US and I grew up here, and I started doing business here, I figured out that regrettably in the US, but also a lot of Western cultures, if and only if the business part works. We'll think about the relationship. We'll think about, you know, I may not ask about your two kids until our second or third or fourth deal together or, you know, way down this project or, you know, I've known you for a year I don't know anything about your significant other or your kids or where you live, I've certainly never been to your house. And that is just unfathomable in other parts of the world. So what I've done for the last 20 years at a number of those books that come thread is, if you lead with the relationship, if you invest in the relationship, you do more than just transactional work. Some of those relationships truly become transformational, not just in your own personal and professional growth, but that of your team, and certainly in the evolution of your organization. And, and that's what I've, that's

what I've really researched. That's what I've studied. That's my consulting work. That's my coaching work. My world in the last 20 years has been how to be a student of strategic relationships in the application of innovation, growth, profitable growth, and real change.



Murielle Machiels 06:02

Yeah. Well, I have so many questions that pop up in my mind. And as a leader of a small organization, I understand this completely. I, I don't completely see it when you are in a really large organization. In particular in a b2c organization. Sure.



David Nour 06:27

So if you think about any organization is comprised of teams, and the teams of comprised of individuals, there's a reason the airline safety videos tell us to put the oxygen mask on ourselves first, before we help somebody else. To build and nurture great relationships, you have to start with a healthy self, right? So you have to know who you are, you have to know who you're not ideal if you have some sort of a growth journey for yourself in mind. So I work with a lot of individuals and their teams and team dynamics. So I talk a lot about truly high performing. Relationship centric teams are comprised of some individual attributes, for example, those individuals are competitive, but they don't try to win at any cost. There's some team dynamics, like candor, which is badly missing from a lot of large organizations. I don't want to say anything, because it could be a career limiting move. Yeah, and yet, and yet Worldspan, that team will burn \$10 million, or 10 million euros on a project that nobody believes in. But because they don't have a culture of candor, nobody says anything, right? Yeah. And then as an organization, how well do we identify exceptional talent in the bowels of the organization, and really nurture those to go explore. So I talk a lot about creating a culture of experimentation. That's something the organization can do. If you think of the common thread between those individual attributes, team dynamics and organization, I would submit its relationships. And one of the misperceptions about relationships is that as purely external customers, vendors, investors, media, everybody outside our company, and I would submit to you and your listeners, just like a family, if is this functional on the inside, everybody sees it. So one of the biggest things you can do is invest in relationships inside the organization, that then will take care of your customers and partners and investors in the market at large.



Murielle Machiels 08:43

Yeah, I completely agree. And yet, in my previous role, I was the CEO of an organization. And we put human people at the center of everything and because like you say, you need this candor, this psychological safety, but also these great relationships in your management team, I meet leaders or in your management team or in every team. But it's it's so important to build these relationships and what I see now, and it's getting worse and worse with the pandemic and working from home, the remote working, is that people are even more focused on the transactional parts of the relationship and not on the How are you doing? And really checking out? How are you feeling?



David Nour 09:39

You're exactly right. And it's a testament to something I deeply believe in, which is again, one of those myths and misperceptions is that we need more. We need more customers. We need more people partners. If you think about the last two years, we haven't spent more time with more people we've had. Spend more time with fewer people. Yeah, so I actually believe in fewer relationships, but more meaningful, more depth, right? Really investing time and effort to get to know them. So something that I'm coaching leaders to do is invest double down on invest in more one on one time. Invest in what I call hybrid relationships. So if you and I know each other from the physical world, and that's kind of how we've met, make sure you leverage digital to touch base and interact on a regular basis. Conversely, if you and I'm only have met digital, you have to find ways to meet them in person safe distance, I get all that, but nothing replaces you and I'm meeting in person and shaking hands. And it full disclosure, I'm a hugger. So so so as I meet clients, I'm asking them, are you? Are you okay with handshakes? Are you okay with with hugs and, and as human beings, we're highly tactile, we need that human touch. And also what we found our research points to an elevated level of trust, when you and I can, in fact, spend time together in person. Because the nonverbal communication, the nonverbal cues, that get lost on Zoom, or team or virtual, is front and center, when we're together. And that will either enhance your credibility, repute and our relationship, or it will dilute it. But you can't replace that in person. Unfortunately, virtually.



Murielle Machiels 11:39

Yeah. I completely agree. And I noticed that because we are, we are animals, we are animals. And so we have basic needs and touching and watching each other in the eyes are really, really important. There are people and especially single people that don't experience the touching anymore. And of course, I mean, it's in, in a proper way touching the arm or the shoulder or if it's okay, but it's so important because then you the trust is is built through that.



David Nour 12:18

And let me let me give you and your your audience a perfect example. I refuse to believe anyone shows up at work on any given day decide to fail. John Prine just is not himself today. Well, it's because his wife was just diagnosed with breast cancer. And are you really just talking to him about that project? Because he could care less about the project. And you and I've seen this people who are physically there, but they're mentally not there. There's somewhere else. And if you don't, if you don't build that, that culture, if you don't build those relationships as a leader, where John can come and talk to you? Are you really going to get the best out of John in that role? Exact um, firstly, if you do have the relationship, and John can come and say, Listen, I've got some family issues, or my wife was just, by the way, do you even know John has a wife? Or that her name is Beth? Are you just worried about John and, and there's some leaders that that don't honestly don't care, and they don't want the thing that's drama. And they don't want to get dragged into that. That's certainly their prerogative. But increasingly, and again, I need your leaders to hear this. We hear a lot about right now, great resignation, a lot of people are quitting their jobs and leaving and I would submit, they're not leaving a job, nobody leaves a job. They leave a leader, they leave an organization, they leave a culture, and they leave because they're not being heard. They don't feel like they're valued. And by the way, this pandemic has demonstrated to them, that they would much rather spend time with their kids and their parents and their friends than they would sitting in a car in traffic commuting into the office, they've realized their value. They've realized that their values, the things that are

important to them is misaligned with the values of the organization. And increasingly, they're figuring out that it isn't just about work. It isn't just about making that money, I can go make that money somewhere else. And real wealth is discretionary time. Real wealth is my ability to take an afternoon off and go spend it with my kids or go be a sports coach or go be involved in dance, or music recitals and other parts of my life that makes up who I am, not just what I do.



Murielle Machiels 14:40

Exactly, and where I help a lot of teams also and lately we have a lot of discussions because they miss meaningful conversations. But they don't take the time to do that. And I tell the leaders you really have to plan time for these things. meaningful conversations. And if you want a deep connection, you need a deep conversation, you cannot get a deep connection by talking about the weather and sports.



David Nour 15:12

Right? That's exactly right. And, and by the way, just to add Yes. And to add to that, it's very difficult to have deep conversations in a zoom with 75 people, or even five people. So the one on one is critical, particularly when we're remote and virtual. This is I'm amazed of how much I learned from my wife and my kids. Wendy and I, for years have asked each other, how's your head? How's your heart? And you'll be amazed at how many executives I'm coaching with just that question. Reach out to individuals that are critical to your success that are critical to your organization. And just ask them that one question. How's your head? How's your heart? And then be quiet and listen? Exactly. And I talk about listened louder. Again, not just for what's being said, but what's not being said. And by the way, if you don't care, don't ask. Because if you ask, you better be ready for whatever the answer might be. And then you need to demonstrate empathy. So the empathetic leader talk about relationships. Empathy is the connective tissue. Empathy is at the core of every relationships inside your organization or outside of it. So it's not, it won't suffice for me to just ask that question. I need to be able to listen, and really figure out if this person is important to me, how can I help? How can I be an asset? How can I sometimes it can be just listening. And I've learned that from my wife, I don't want you to solve it. I just want you to listen. Sometimes that could be the best best path forward. But you better be willing to invest in that relationship if that talent is valuable to you.



Murielle Machiels 16:56

Yeah. And what I see now is that a lot of people are empty, they're exhausted. And they're feeling like empty insides because they won't this meaningful connection they're craving for that. They don't have it at work anymore, because it's going from one team's meeting to another virtually, without having the time and it's so important. I, I see people will going in burnout or even resigning or, or becoming robots, just



David Nour 17:35

You're exactly right. Yesterday, yesterday mural, I had 12 Zoom meetings in one day. End of the day, you're drained, you're just emotionally and and just physically and I wasn't lifting heavy boxes and I wasn't you know unloading a shipping container. I'm this helped me that's

heavy boxes, and I wasn't, you know, unloading a shipping container. I'm this helped me that's healthy. You're moving and you're that labor. I'm sitting here but but you have to be increasingly we have to be on. And we have to be on on these cameras. And on these interactions. And end of the day, you just feel emotionally drained. So again, I'm coaching a lot of people. I don't know, any leader that can burn the candle at both ends. So I ride motorcycles, I, you know, I could have the worst day I get on a motorcycle, I go one or two kilometers. And you know, my worries melt, right? By the way, nobody's dying on our shifts, but drove nobody, Nobody's life in that way is in our hands. So keeping things in perspective, keeping yourself healthy, not cramming, not adding way too much to anybody's plate. So one of the things that I'm really proud of is several clients I've worked with, the leaders have actually, in the last two years, have taken away a lot of that busy work that we used to have a lot of those, you know, one one client had more pilot project pilots going on than I think United Airlines. Can I tell you, we just we've stopped a lot of that, to focus on how do we do fewer things exceptionally well? How do we do fewer things? amazingly well, taking care of our employees taking care of our customers, making sure and this supply chain nightmare. We're all stuck and that we kind of deliver on those commitments or certainly recalibrate expectations. All of those things are the few fundamental things that by the way, tend to strengthen relationships and and help you even be seen in a greater lens than trying to do a lot of things that ended the day do more to burn people out that actually keep them engaged.



Murielle Machiels 19:53

Yep. Yeah, well, I'm a huge fan of focus. And I also note is that every extremely successful person says no to almost everything.



David Nour 20:07

On that note, isn't it fascinating that we all make to do lists, but very few people make stop doing lists?



Murielle Machiels 20:13

Exactly. That's what I say to my customers, I want you to make a stop doing list now. And you need to stop, you need to stop to pass.



David Nour 20:24

But I'm gonna actually carry that one step further. I often tell people that all these relationships you want and you have and which relationships are no longer relevant, which relationships, let's be honest, you no longer need. So I don't know about you. If if people still have clothes in the closet from the 1970s. Right, it might be time for a little, you know, clean up or clean out. And you cannot make room for any new clothes in your closet if you don't clean out and donate some of those older ones that you haven't worn in a while, right. And same thing relationships, believe it or not, some relationships have a very logical life expectancy or lifespan or where they're relevant. Just like that next door neighbors in the home used to live in your best friend's when you live there. But when you move to another city, a lot of times you may not stay in touch with them because of that you've lost that proximity. Yeah, same thing with with

organizations, they go through a maturity lifecycle. They go through teams do as well. And the relationships that served you well, the relationships that were relevant, the relationships that are important in the early stages of forming this team of organization may or may not be I'm not trying to paint with a broad brush. But you need to certainly do some introspection and keep asking, just like our stop doing list, which relationships, am I going to deprioritize. So then I can prioritize other relationships that I can invest in? Yeah,



Murielle Machiels 21:57

agreed. And on that point, what I also tend to notice is that a lot of leaders they give too much attention to the people are resisting the change. So they're investing in the wrong relationships. I also I also, I always say no, you have to invest, listen to them, but then invest in the people that are willing to go your way you're the that are willing to do the change and the transformation and showing the behaviors you want to see.



David Nour 22:28

You're exactly right. So so I coach, similarly, leaders to be hard on performance, but soft on people. By that I mean, relationships, in my experience go bad with misaligned expectations. You said you were going to do this, you did something that lower level. Now the lower level might be fine, but the gap between what you said you were going to do and what you delivered is where we have a problem. So that empathetic leader, that servant leader is not going to punish, it's going to go inquire. And I'm always interested in not just what happened. But why did it happen? So you understood the change, you agreed to the change. For whatever reason, the change we agreed to didn't happen. I want to know why. And as a servant leader, I work for you. So what what do you need, what resources, what bandwidth? What people what skills, what knowledge, show me the willingness, and I can always raise your ability. But if the willingness is not there, neither me you or anybody else is going to be able to make a difference. So I go inquire, and I ask, and I provide the resources, and I recalibrate expectations of the change that needs to happen. If it doesn't happen, and I realized that that individual has chosen, it's a choice not to do that, then what they're choosing is not to be with our organization or with our team. But you have to understand and you're exactly right, it's an investment in that individual. And I always, by the way, rather deal with the devil I know versus the devil, I don't know. I'd rather invest in the people that I have versus the disruption and the time and the distraction and to try to go find you know, other people. But along those same lines, what great leaders can do is build a culture that is candid, build a culture that's unafraid of retribution, build a culture. I'm a big fan of Amy Edmondson, and the whole whole book on fearless organization and you brought up psychological safety, build an environment where people can raise their hand and say, I'm respectfully but I'm, I disagree with this or I'm struggling with this or I need help with this or I'm afraid of this or those conversations are not being had in a lot of teams, because the Courage isn't there. And the leader hasn't developed an environment where people feel courageous enough to say something.



Murielle Machiels 25:00

Yeah, yeah. And also, I think it's, it's a nice balance that you describe. But I think this is something that a lot of leaders struggle with, is being tough or challenging. And at the same time empathic, often you have people that are very empathic, and then it's hard to say, Yeah,

but you know, there, I was really disappointed there. Because we agreed that you would do this and, or you have people that are really tough without the empathy, but having this balance, that requires also, knowing yourself, and going beyond your own fears of disappointing or not being liked, or not being respected, or whatever

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David Nour 25:52

comes up, you're exactly right. And that's where, again, another friend, Peter Bregman has written a book called leading with emotional courage. And he talks about as a leader, if you don't allow yourself to feel, you got to feel frustrated, you got to feel angry, you got to feel disappointed. Those are all natural feelings. And by the way, if you don't allow yourself to feel those things, pretty soon, you're not going to feel anything. The key is to feel those things, but maturity and leadership, evolution of leadership comes in separating those feelings, from your actions from your decision making some you're problem solving. And I'm in awe of great leaders, you and I've met, we know we work with, who are just as calm and collected as PA, it seems like nothing bothers these people. But what they've done is they've figured out how to disconnect their emotions from their decision making. So I could be very frustrated with that individual. But that empathetic that servant leader in me says, everybody's fighting a battle, you don't know you don't understand exactly. So if I jumped down their throat a fight, what the hell is wrong with you? Why can't you get this right? And you see people do that. And I've never seen a leader Brading someone else. Really result in long term loyalty and performance improvement. And yeah, you can rule within the



Murielle Machiels 27:24

short term it works may be built on the long term pool. No,

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David Nour 27:28

and you're exactly right. So again, I talked about lighting a fire within people instead of under them, because motivation is intrinsic, it has to come from within individuals exact want to do want to change want to reach a different level of performance, and the investment in understanding what makes that individual tick, what makes that team really perform at a high level is one of the best investments in that internal relationships every leader can make.



Murielle Machiels 27:56

Yeah. And those feelings are so important, because often we do things to escape our feelings. And usually what we then do will not serve us, or sometimes it might, but very often, it doesn't.

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David Nour 28:13

And you're right, so we all grew up in old school leadership, where feelings please keep those at home, or you know what, go talk to a shrink or yeah, go talk to a psychologist. And, and the evolution of all of us as leaders, is incumbent in figuring out understanding the balance that



you brought up between their emotional well being their psychological safety. And by the way, I'm not running a childcare service here. It's also we have performance measures I'm being you know, I'm accountable to delivering results to higher ups and organizations, or shareholders or executive committees, and so on, and so forth. So that's why I say, get crystal clear expectations on the outcomes, invest in individuals invest in the relationships, invest in their personal and professional growth, you need their whole self to come to work and become the best version of themselves. So create an environment where people are willing to talk to you, they're able to talk to you without that fear of, am I gonna lose my job? If I bring up things that I don't feel well, or I'm burning out? Or whatever the case may be?



Murielle Machiels 29:24

Yeah, exactly. And that's what I also like in in holacracy. They have these tension meetings. I love that concept. You are fascinated by and you bring your tensions. So you and you bring your attentions and at the end, you solve great business problems, but by bringing by each of us bringing our tensions and that also means that you notice what your attentions are



David Nour 29:53


one of my favorite clients, me the senior executive in a very large company prepended endemic, he would travel to different offices and locations, and they're in the manufacturing business. So different plants. And he, I, I've traveled with him several times just to observe his interactions and his relationships. And I love questions like, what frustrated the heck out of you today? He would actually ask individuals, what took you entirely too long to accomplish? If you're a king or queen for a day, what's the one thing you would fix about this place? If you were the plan manager, if you're the branch manager today, tell me who you're cheering for. Tell me who you're not cheering for. So he would ask these amazing questions. Which back to your comment about, you know, connecting and investing in those in those those those employees in those relationships? Great relationships come from great conversations. Great conversations come from great questions. Yeah, so every leader listening this podcast, you want to lead more effectively, you want to lead more impactfully, you want to lead with greater results, start asking better questions. And by the way, convey your credibility to the questions you ask, not necessarily the solutions you provide. Because there's a very quick story, there's a movie called Evan Almighty with Steve Carroll. Yeah, when he's blogs, he builds an ark. And, and Morgan Freeman is the is God is the character of God. And he's having this conversation with this guy's wife and kids in a restaurant. And it makes this statement that if you ask God for more patience, he doesn't give you more patience. He gives you more opportunities to practice patience. Yeah, exactly. we so desperately need employees to be able to think and you giving them the answer isn't going to help them think you asking better questions creates an opportunity for them to think, what am I what problem I really solving? What am I possible solutions? What's the pros and cons of these different solutions? And if you build an environment where people think, which I actually believe we don't do enough of, I think you can raise the bar on themselves on the team and organization.



Murielle Machiels 32:23

Yeah, completely agree. But how do you start? So imagine now you have a team, where everyone spends, like, 80 90% of their time in back to back meetings, they're exhausted. They


are listening to you, they're hearing you they agree with you, then they think okay, but where do I start? Let me I'm, I don't have to listen to the people.

 David Nour 32:52

Right. Let me let me let me let me try to let me try to help with three ideas. Number one, particularly as knowledge workers, particularly in the last two years, we've all immersed in this incredibly overwhelming sometimes digital life, right? We're on our computers, we're emailing we're zooming we're doing, we're FaceTiming we're doing all this digital. My number one step, believe it or not, for most leaders I work with is everybody needs a digital detox.

 Murielle Machiels 33:23

Agreed.

 David Nour 33:24

Particularly during holidays to disengage, I promise you Earth will still revolve. Right? You start the company, guessing game, not much most of my clients write in their heads are into the holidays and time with their family disengage. So not out of office, and I'll get back to you. I'm out of the office for the holidays. I will not be checking email. I will No, I will not be returning your calls when I get back. If you want me if you need me.

 Murielle Machiels 33:55

All the notifications. Yeah.

 David Nour 33:59

Disengage my comment of nobody can burn the candle at both. That's, I think if you do that, I think you you kind of help people reset, kind of reset their mental health reset their commitment reset, to use this time to kind of reset number two. One of the things I love about a new year is the potential for people to create what are called New Year's resolutions. And it's not about what you're going to accomplish. It's about who you want to become.

 Murielle Machiels 34:39

Yeah. There. So I agree. Yeah.

 David Nour 34:42

Right. So the opportunity in embarking on a new year is as I said, How do we focus and I call this technique I go on a listening tour. So I think leaders can do a better job of embark on a

listening and really focus on how do we get the team, as I said earlier to focus on doing fewer things. But let's become world class, let's become exceptional at doing those. It's amazing in every organization, you see it, I see it, we do all this busy work. And I think a lot of people confuse vibration with forward motion. We have meeting after meeting after meeting, let's have a meeting for meeting,



Murielle Machiels 35:26

running, running with agility.



David Nour 35:30

Right? We have meetings for a meeting that's coming up for a meeting. I'm like, it's, if I can add value, please don't invite me. I just don't need to spend more time in meetings. So again, fewer initiatives, fewer fundamental kind of company or team makers will allow you to focus. And what I'm trying to do is and the third one is how do we balance performing with learning? Mirror one of the things that I deeply believe in is the day you stop learning and growing, is the day you become complacent. And the day you become complacent, you're no longer valuable to your biggest asset, which is actually your portfolio relationships. So if you don't make the time to capture, internalize, synthesize, analyze, and then let things emerge.



Murielle Machiels 36:25

Also,



David Nour 36:26


course correct? course correct. So one good example, I work with clients on something called First Friday. So first Friday of every month, we not only look at last month's data, but we start to talk about what we call, we don't fail, we have learning moments. So so what were our learning moments this past month? What will we choose to do differently this next month? And you go around, and you talk about what went well? What are the struggles? What are the challenges? What do you want to do more or less stuff? And you come up with a set of really prioritized pursuits for this next month, based on not just gut feeling opinion, but based on data, that you know what, here are the things that went well, here, the things we struggled with? Here are some ideas, and I'm opening up the room or the team to how do we raise the bar? How do we elevate what we're doing how we're doing it. But if you're getting a regular cadence to listen to all the voices, I think you might be really surprised about where great ideas can come from, and help you see those potential blind spots that you're just not pervious to. So I think those three might really help leaders think differently about how to invest better, more intentionally in their internal relationships. Yeah, yeah.




Murielle Machiels 37:46

Okay. And so you've written a book, a last one, or at least last one up until now, about curve


benders? Is it? The topic of relationships? Also, I'm curious, what is What do you mean by curve benders?

 David Nour 38:03

Absolutely. So just very quickly, for your audience, I want them to think of a stair step. So people you meet inside outside your organization typically contacts, as you exchange value, they become relationships, as you exchange value over some time. And that relationship exchange creates material impact, they become strategic relationships. So that was one of my books called relationship economics, where where you quantify the value of those relationships. Over time, a few of your relationships, you two or more parties come together and CO create something that none of them could do by themselves. And it creates exponential value. So those are your co creators. Above and beyond that certain individuals come into our lives that have a profound impact on not just our direction, but also our destination. I call those relationships curve benders. Mm hmm. And what's fascinating is imagine that Professor of yours, you know, of course, you just graduate from university just a couple years ago, but for me, it's been very young, very young. So imagine that Professor 2030 years ago that you still remember you, we all had a lot of professors wide that person, or that first manager or early managers that took you under his or her wings and didn't just teach you a product or service. They taught you how to be a more empathetic leader. They demonstrated what servant leadership is all about. Those individuals leave an indelible imprint on our lives, and they shape not just what we accomplish, but who we become. And again, I call those relationships curve vendors.

 Murielle Machiels 39:54

Okay. And so in the book, you talk about how you can meet more vendors and the impact it has done on your life and your business.

 David Nour 40:04

You're exactly right. So it's about like the subtitle of it is how strategic relationships can power, your nonlinear growth in the future of work. So what that means is, if you think of this pandemic, this global pandemic is an example of 15 forces we've researched. And it's the entire chapter to this is an example of something called a black swan event where we knew what pandemics were, we knew they were going to happen, we just don't know when they're going to happen, or the impact they're going to have. But if you think about all of our lives in the last two years, it has an impact of just the way we work. It's also impacted the way we live, and the way we play and the way we feel, we feel but also the way we give and serve others. So I was really curious about in the face of all this kind of disruption. And again, we've identified 15 different types. How do I, how do any of us as knowledge workers remain relevant? And that the solution, that the answer that I came up with, was really you have to both accelerate your learning, accelerate your growth, but also use that growth, to really map out this journey, your own personal journey from now to next. And it's not that I want to become a vice president or Senior Vice President tomorrow, it's, I want to become the best version of me. And, and the path or the way to get there is for most of us, if we grow at all, it's this 45 degree what I call linear curve, think of as a truck ramp, right? And a really good example of that is our

universities today, right? Learn, learn, learn, and maybe at some point in the future, you're applying it right. I don't know about you, it's been a while since I've looked at differential calculus. Mm hmm. I don't believe that model will be good enough will suffice in the future? No, not at all. The other example is, I don't need a four year degree from MIT or from Oxford. I just want to learn how to code. And I can do that in 30 days, and believe it or not, I can do that for free. And I can use that knowledge to solve a problem, then I can learn something else and solve the next problem. And I can learn something else to solve the next problem. So now what I'm doing is I'm daisy chaining these shorter learning sprints, to create more of a hockey stick more of a nonlinear growth, that keeps me relevant. And the best way up that hockey stick up that hill, or a few relationships that again, I call your curve vendors.



Murielle Machiels 42:40

Yeah. And what I also see is that if you want at accelerated growth and personal growth, you need to slow down first. And it's the difference between the, when you look at the exponential curve, it's like an S. And so yeah, in the beginning, you don't see the progress immediately. But that's, that's where the magic is happening inside of you. In fact, and when that magic happens, that's when you get the exponential growth.



David Nour 43:13


You're exactly right. And in the book I talked about and others have as well, this idea of your personal S curve. And you're right early on, if you think of the shape of an s early on, as actually, you're declining, because you're investing, you're investing in yourself, you're investing in education, but then you kind of hit your stride. And you you really excel, by the same token, you're going to reach a plateau. And our research shows that the arc of any job is about three to five years. So I'm going to reach that plateau, but you're going to figure out where to go and what to do and how to do it. And at that plateau, you have three options, and only three options. If you do nothing, you're going to decline. So the s actually becomes a downward curve. And it shows up in the way how you show up, you don't prepare as well, you're not as sharp as you were, yeah, try to you try to wing it, and everybody sees it. If you stay the same, somebody better jolts some excitement in your life, new job, new opportunity for you to kind of recalibrate kind of what you're doing. The best case scenario is if you find that next S curve, that next growth trajectory, to really then elevate your thinking, your perspective, your impact. If you do nothing, you become stale. You're no longer relevant. You're going to see your other colleagues get promoted and become, you know, take on more responsibilities. Increasingly, I'm seeing my clients sell off divisions or parts of the business that they don't believe is core to their future. So these are all examples of that plateau of that top of the S curve, where the leader unfortunately either didn't see it, didn't recognize it, or did nothing about it. And it just became stagnant. became less valuable to others.




Murielle Machiels 45:03

But the same is happening when you grow old. I've read a study that shows that the people that keep learning new things, when you keep learning new things, you keep creating new cells. And so you remain longer. And, and also healthier for a longer time. As soon as you stop


learning new things, your brain starts to shrink. And you are also more at risk of a lot of diseases. And that's when you, you really go down as a person.

 David Nour 45:39


You're exactly right. So one of the first steps that I talked about in seven steps to meeting potential curve vendors, is really a personal Foundation. And that is fundamentally a growth mindset, an entrepreneurial mindset, regardless of the size of the company you're working for, and a digital mindset. And one of the fascinating things about a digital mindset is that it forces you to continue to learn, think about how many organizations were in a video culture before this pandemic, right? Well, we quickly figured out how to have meetings and use Zoom or Teams or WebEx or whatever, right? So as long as you continue to learn and grow, you're exactly right, that the neurons, synapses are going to keep firing, and you're going to remain sharp and relevant. And at the moment, I think a lot of leaders are ignoring, you know, Bitcoin, and they're ignoring blockchain, and they're ignoring NFTs. And the comment is, well, that's just not relevant to me. The single largest global patent holder of blockchain technology is Bank of America. It's 100 plus year old bank, what why would they care about blockchain? Because they realize

 Murielle Machiels 47:02


it is replace traditional banking probably. Yeah,

 David Nour 47:07

absolutely. And they're betting on they're doubling down on. And it's not just entrepreneurs, large organizations are realizing that, as I said, we all of our research believes we're going to face more disruption in the next decade than we ever have in all life. Yeah. And if all of this is coming at you, how will you as a leader in a larger organization or otherwise, how will you remain relevant?

 Murielle Machiels 47:35

Exactly. And it's not by working harder? That's not possible anymore? Yeah. Okay, so thank you for this. So I have still two questions, because this is a rebel leader with a heart so I'm curious to know what is your rebel leader or your rebel sides? And what is your heart sight?

 David Nour 47:56

Oh, boy, ah, I have I've long been accused of not being patient. So I want that thing or I want that next step or that hill as quickly as possible. And also, in some ways, visionary to a fault, right? I am optimistic. I believe in a better future for my kids than we've ever had. Ever since you're gonna laugh at this one ever since I think I was four years old. I dreamt of being an astronaut some fascinated by space exploration so that that potentially could be the rebel and and I'm also on apologetically candid. So as an outsider, you and I may be

able to tell leaders things that inside the organization, they may not, but I always tell every client you either gonna love my candor or you're gonna hate my candor. So that's, that's the rebel side. The hard is another client described me as Nora, genuinely, authentically wants the best version of you. And, and, and I'm reminded of a conversation, you know, someone had with Peter Drucker. And Peter Drucker was asked, Do you want to be remembered? Or do you want your ideas to remember, it's less about my coaching or mentoring or my consulting or those, it's having these ideas, heard, internalized by by leaders who want to learn and grow and evolve, and really the application of these ideas in their own lives. I'm grateful for you having me on this podcast, but I don't, I don't need to hear myself talk. The goal is plant a seed with if I if I change one of your listeners, if I have them, hear this message, start internalizing it, maybe read the book, maybe apply some of these ideas in their own lives. And if they're better off because of that, My job is done. So that's what I want in my heart is for these ideas to make a difference in the lives of other people.



Murielle Machiels 50:07

Great. Thank you for that. Thank you. So where can people find you?



David Nour 50:14

Very kind of you're asked. So probably the easiest places our website nor group, no U R. group.com. I don't know about you. One of the things that I've noticed in the past year or so the popular social networks have become very political. They've become very polarizing, and they've become very promotional. So one of the trends we're seeing are this idea of micro communities I belong to for five different ones, think of your favorite Baker, or butcher or deli that you go to in your life. Similarly, you belong to these different communities for different reasons. So we've built one, we call it the Nora forum. And it's free, it doesn't cost anything. So for you and your audience, if you go to Nora group.com/forum. You can join us there. It's a private community. And that's where I talk more about relationships and innovation and real change and a lot of what we've talked about so far, there's roughly about 2500 people there. And it's just, I'm there every day. And I'm sharing ideas and engaging other members. And it's just a really cool place to continue these conversations.



Murielle Machiels 51:23

Great. Wonderful. I will check and join your forum then. Portfolio. Really great. It was really great to have you in this podcast. I was really curious about your relationship economics. And it's, it's funny because it always comes down to being human being a human being talking to another human being. And in the end, it's all that matters.



David Nour 51:51

So thank you for having me. You're exactly right. It's ended the day, it really is that one on one connection that makes an enormous difference in all of our lives.



Murielle Machiels 52:03

Yeah. And that's the ones that you will remember later on, and not the project you worked on. For so many hours. Yeah, that's right. Okay, thank you.



David Nour 52:15

My pleasure. Thanks for having me.



Murielle Machiels 52:17

As always, I really enjoyed this conversation with David's. And I hope it inspired you to stop wasting your time on more work and start investing your time in great relationships at work and in your life. They will have a bigger impact on your results and happiness than a couple of hours extra work. So thank you for listening to this podcast. I know there is so much choice out there and you choose to listen to this one. So thank you for that. Don't forget to subscribe if you haven't done so or to leave me a review. Bye