

Bill Flynn of Catalyst Growth

Speaker1: [00:00:04] This is the Investor Connect podcast program. I'm Hall Martin and the host of the show in which we interview angel investors, venture capital, family offices, private equity and many other investors for early stage and growth companies. I hope you enjoy this episode. The Investor Connect is a 501 C three non-profit dedicated to the education of investors and startups for fundraising. Please consider donating \$100 to the program to help others in their investor and entrepreneur journey. You can find the Donate button on the Investor Connect org website. Hello, this is Hall Martin with Investor Connect. Today, we're here with Bill Flynn, CEO and chief catalyst at Catalyst Growth. Catalyst Growth helps leaders do so for the right reasons by helping them take the guesswork out of growth. Bill, thank you for joining us.

Speaker2: [00:00:52] Thanks, Holly. Great to be here.

Speaker1: [00:00:54] Great. So can you tell us a little bit more about your journey through business and ultimately how you came to be a business coach?

Speaker2: [00:01:00] Good luck to you. So I sort of two arcs to my career, if you will. I started off in doing startups, so I was a startup guy for twenty five years here in the Boston area. I did 10 of them over that time, depending on how you count my my participation, I was either five or 10 or five or seven. But either way, the numbers are pretty good since most startups fail. I've made a lot of people rich. I wish I was one of them, but I'm not, so I still have to work for a living. But it's such a blast. I learned so much doing that. I had so much fun and I really enjoyed that process. I realized that. One of the things that really drives me and gets me up the morning is I love puzzles. I love figuring puzzles out, right and more difficult puzzle, the more fun I love the Friday and Saturday New York Times puzzles. They're the hardest and their most challenging. I often cheat, but I certainly love. I love doing them. And then the second part of my career is over. The last five or six years is I became a business coach and really a business growth coach. More than anything, I'm not an executive coach. There are a lot of lots and lots of executive coaches, which I think are wonderful, but really not the thing that drives me. That's more like business therapy, and I end up doing a little bit of it anyway. But mostly I work with the team and I help them. I teach them more of a teacher than a coach. I teach them a growth framework, and I teach them lots of stuff that I know about strategy and execution and

neuroscience and feedback and whatever. So that's sort of been my two arcs, and I'm still on this one. I think this is going to be my last one. I'm really enjoying it. It's I now know what a calling is. It's I knew what it was intellectually, but now I know what it is viscerally. It's I would do this for free and often I do do it for free, but I still get paid a ton of money to do it, and I love that as well.

Speaker1: [00:02:50] Well, that's great. Well, you worked a lot in the startup world from your experience. Why do a few companies survive and even fewer flourish? And but most of them fail? Why? What is that?

Speaker2: [00:03:02] Yeah, so unfortunately, most businesses fail. There's two sets of data that I have looked at and all the data say that most companies fail. Most companies in the U.S., anyway, 50 percent of them last five years. And that's it. And 16 percent of them last 25 years. So the longer you're in business, the more likely it is. You're going to go out of business, which you'd think it would be the other way around, right? Because you'd learn and get better and smarter and wiser. But that doesn't seem to happen. So I think that's a shame because really good ideas, really good business is really good. People just just fail or struggle for preventable reasons. And and so that's the next thing, which is, you know, they the survivors are the next right. So the ones that the ones that fail, I think most businesses fail, I think from indigestion, not starvation. They try to do too many things, they go too wide and they're chasing revenue, you know, just sort of this growth paradox that Gerber talks about in The E-Myth, you know that everyone thinks that revenue is going to solve it, but then actually, it becomes a paradox. And if you're chasing revenue, it doesn't mean you're chasing cash, which is really what you should be chasing. You should be chasing finding ways to put money in the bank because if you want to grow your business, you must invest and you typically must invest ahead of growth, which is a risky business.

So you've got to have some some cash there. And then then there are those that of struggle. So the survivors of the 50 percent and the 16 percent aren't necessarily all great. I mean, most of them are struggling. Most of them are really just having a hard time. They're living month to month. They're they're guessing a lot. They survive mostly on effort, luck, timing and and will force of will, which just doesn't scale over time. And then the last is the flourish or thrive, those those businesses. So I've been studying business success mostly for 30 years and really intensely in the last six or seven. And I found that those businesses that thrive that seem to do well no

matter what or do better than most, no matter what, no businesses like Southwest or the Container Store, I mean Whole Foods when Matthew was running it. Name your business that just seems to keep growing, no matter what they focus on a few things and those few things. We'll talk in more detail, I think. But what they don't do is they don't focus on the what I love is called the tyranny of the moment. Most leaders focus on the tyranny of the moment, right? And they're just in this amygdala thing. They're always just surviving and trying to solve a problem. Too many businesses solve the problem that's right in front of them, and they don't take the time to say, Well, what created the problem? That's right in front of me.

Let me solve that problem. And then if they keep moving back and back and back, there's now starting to get to the root, and that makes everything a little bit easier. It greases the skids. So those that flourish realize that their job isn't to run the business. Their job is to figure out how to remove themselves from the business of the day to day as much as possible and think about the future. Jeff Bezos, whether you like him or not, it's run an excellent company and he is too. You know, he's not doing it anymore, but he is. He was two years ahead of where they were. There's a story I remember him telling someone said, Hey, you know, congratulations, you had a great quarter. And he said, And he's like, and he's like, kind of think about it. It's like, Oh, yeah, yeah, he said that was in the bank like a year and a half ago. We already knew that, you know, I'm working on drones and whatever right now, so. So you got to really, if you want to flourish, you've got you've got to make it so you can think more about what how to create the future. And that's coming then to run the day to day.

Speaker1: [00:06:51] Why is it so hard for businesses to get that right? What is somebody get it wrong?

Speaker2: [00:06:57] So I have some theories. I have like three or four theories, and I'd love to get your take on what you think. So the first is so I'm a first principle thinker. And for those of you who aren't familiar with the first principles, it's sort of what I said already, which is what are the fundamental things about the thing that you're doing that drives that most people don't think first principles, they think second and third principles, and then they forget first principles. So a great example, which most people will get is what has three names. Most people know it by one name, so I'm going to get to their last, which one is called the law of the vital few. It's also called perito principle, but most people know it as the 80 20 rule. That is a principle because when you apply it to almost anything, it is correct. So if you apply the 80 20 rule to

your closet, to your friends, to the food you eat, to anything. It's almost always the same. You may have 100 friends, but you hang out with 20 of them more often than the other 80. You can eat lots of foods, but you eat the same foods most often.

You read the same kinds of books. I mean, it's how we work. Our brain likes that. A brain likes the familiar. So that's sort of a first principle based thinking. So for me, there's a meaningful gap between what science knows within science has generally always is the first principle system. And what business does. For example, if we apply the 80 20 rule to customers and I've done this dozens of times with clients and I've had people do it outside as well. It's if you take all of the customers you had in the last two, three or four years, whatever the right time frame is and you break them down by profit, you'll find that 80 or 90 percent of your profit comes from 10 or 20 percent of your customers, which means if it's 80 20 that your core customer is that customer that's at the top is 16 times more valuable than all the other ones. So let's get more of those. That's what the science says, but we don't do that. We just sort of fine any customer. Did you have a question?

No, no. I think that's right. I think the burrito rule and your percent of your result comes from 20 percent of the population. So you should really focus on that 20 percent, which we don't. We chase, we chase revenue. We chase. Oh, the deal, right? The latest deal. So someone wants to work with us. Let's do that. You know, someone thinks we're pretty. We should, we should work on them. But you know, they might not be the right customer for you. They might be very expensive. They might be a customer that actually shrinks your profit. But we don't think about that as much. I also find so that's the first thing there's a meaningful gap between what science knows a business does. The second is few things truly matter, but those that do matter tremendously, and we, as business leaders don't focus on those things. You focus relentlessly on those few things, but you got to figure them out first and then you just focus on them. We know that our customers, our best customers, work with us for these reasons. They hire us for these reasons, right? This is the job they hire us to do for them. But we don't focus on that. We've already talked one. I think leaders rely too much on luck and timing to achieve success, and those don't scale profitably. And the last one I have is tiny errors compound. So we as leaders, we don't. We do a lot of things wrong, but we don't do them completely wrong.

We just do them a little wrong. But when you do a lot of things wrong, just a little. Eventually, that becomes a heavy, heavy weight to pull. It gets heavier and heavier. And I think if you if you look at a lot of businesses and a lot of the leaders that I talk to, they say I hit a wall, you know, I got I can get to like \$10 million and I can't get past 10, and they can't figure out why they were

doing great up until then. I think because they've had they've just hired a little bit wrong. Got one or two people that aren't in the right spots. They don't quite know why their customers buy from them, and they're working too much with the customers that that aren't the most profitable. They keep C players on board way longer than they should. There's all these little things that had up that add up that then slows the business down. So those are sort of those. I think that's why most businesses to get those things wrong, those are for, you know, I'm sure that's not comprehensive, but that's that's my take on it.

Speaker1: [00:10:48] Sounds like a little bit of each one happens in many businesses, and so it's the combination that must come together in my thoughts. Have you ever done any analysis in this area?

Speaker2: [00:10:58] Yeah. So we've done I've done so. I've been a sales guy for a long time and I've done a lot of analysis of customers and and I would I would often break our customers into segments, right? So one company we said, you know, what are the ones that are just big and we need to take care of them? Not necessarily growing, but you know, they're the big companies. I worked in high tech. So these are these are Dell and Wal-Mart and, you know, big companies that paid us a lot of money. We need to pay attention to them. And what was the next down below which is what which ones had headroom? Which ones had room that we could sell them more things? Or we could work them in more ways, or we could work, we could go in and go deeper with them. They're a big company. We're only in a section of them. And then what were the ones that were just don't really need attention are going to be fine? And what are the ones that we should just ignore or mostly ignore and hope? Either that or fire them, and my team would constantly go over that. And we found that, you know, as as we mentioned earlier, if you can find the ones that are in the top two categories, find the next one that adds so much so quickly to your business, to your bottom line and your top line, which gives you more stuff to work with and allows you to invest more in the company and the organization. And that, you know, that example is something that I've seen worked really, really well.

Speaker1: [00:12:16] So you talked about those that flourish. Did you find any similarities among those that did so?

Speaker2: [00:12:22] Yeah, so the ones that flourished are the ones that I think focus on three things, which is really what my book is about. What I found is that I'm sure there are other things, but these seem to go to the top. Most of the time, the ones that flourish focus on three things team because performance is a team sport. There's a study done by ADP a number of years ago, but 19 twenty thousand people were asked over 19 different countries and asked a simple question How many are you on a team or do an individual contributor? And over 80 percent of the people said, I'm on a team. At least one team, a large majority of those people were on two or more teams, and many of the teams that were in that third and fourth layer down weren't even in the organizational chart. So these were just ephemeral teams or just teams that came up and happened and then went away, right? Yet we don't teach people how to be a really good team leaders, and what we're finding is that anyone at any time could be leading a team, even though they're not, they don't have a title. I mean, they not may not have anyone reporting to them, but all of a sudden they're leading a team. We've given them no skills. It's like, you know, it's sort of like being parents like, good luck.

You know, there's books and stuff, but you know, everyone's a different kind of parent, right? And there's no one way to parent, but there's certainly some fundamentals you can do. And you should do that as team leaders teach your people how to run really good teams, how to organize a team, how to run a team, how to make sure that everybody's heard all this. There is science behind how to run a really good team. Amy Edmondson studied teams Marcus Buckingham and study teams. You know, Stanley McChrystal, the team of teams, which is a book of, you know, showing what he did and how he made teams better. So teams are really, really important. The next thing is, if you want to run a business that grows and grows relatively steadily, you have to look at it as one big system because that's what it is. It's got multiple subsystems and components in those subsystems, but you have to understand what is the system that I have? What are the three? What are the things that are involved in that system? The two main ones are strategy and execution. Right? Team has already been mentioned, so we'll put that aside, but strategy, execution and most people. It's interesting how I've asked people about strategy, and I say, So what is your definition of strategy? And I typically would talk to CEOs of, you know, hundreds of millions of dollars of size, right? And they've been at the business in the business for dozens, if not more years.

And I will ask a group of them and everyone will have a different, different definition of the word strategy as a word. What does it mean? And often I'll say what is strategy and they'll just sort of blurt out, Well, it's the plan. I said, well, is it the plan or is there something else? It's like

a strategic plan, I said, but how did you come up with the strategic plan? And basically, what I'm trying to get them to do is strategy is about thinking. Right, it's really the thought that goes into it, which then helps you make a better plan and the plan is what you execute. So those are the two things you want to be focusing on. Strategy and execution and strategy is really, you know, there's a bunch of definitions. I'm really a big Michael Porter fan. And I love his definition of strategy, but I've sort of modified a little bit. So basically it's it's a it's a unique market position that combines a set of interdependent variables that focus on what the customer your core customer wants and values. And if you can figure that out. So for instance, there's a there's a joke, which I don't know if ever happened, but supposedly when Herb Kelleher was running Southwest, he got a letter from a woman that said, You know, I'm leaving Southwest.

I don't. I think it's terrible. I don't like what you did. I like to get my own seat. I want to have first class. You know, I don't I don't like the fact that I can't pick all these things. And supposedly, he wrote back, We will miss you because you're not my customer. I didn't make this airline for you. I'm not trying to fix this and make you feel better. Go fly somewhere else because my customer was someone who used to ride the bus, and I've created a situation where they have now an option to take a plane versus a bus. This is, you know, the 70s and 80s. So you have to really understand those kind of things really picked a unique position. So like, I would fly Southwest all the time when I fly for myself, when I get flown by customers or if I do speeches and stuff, I'll fly whatever's easiest, most convenient. But if I'm spending my own money, I'm going to. I'm going to spend as little money as I can and have the shortest amount of time in an airport or on a plane. That's generally how we do it. So, so that's sort of our strategy.

And the execution is execution is is simple but hard to do, really good execution. Simple is it's only three things, which is what are my priorities? What are the things that I think are going to get me further faster, right? Move the company forward. Well, how do I know I'm doing it one of my metrics or whatever you want to call those words right KPIs or Oscars or whatever the heck, the thing is, you want to call it, I don't care what you call it, it's some way to know, are we actually making progress? And the last thing is meetings. Meetings are the best way to move your company forward, and we suck at them. We are horrible at meetings. They're usually a disaster. I read somewhere that we've wasted in the United States alone. We waste thirty seven billion dollars in useless meetings. That's a lot of money. And then lastly, from an investor perspective, is cash cash should be a primary financial metric. Because it costs money, we've set the cost money to grow business, and you need to have cash to do that and you need to figure out how to generate the cash in order to make that happen. So those are the three things team

create a system that focuses on strategy execution and using cash as your primary financial growth. Those are the similarities. I found

great when your book further faster. You talk a lot about how a leader, you know, specifically as CEO, has fired himself from the day to day. Why is that?

Speaker2: [00:17:51] So as we've already said, companies that endure that last decades, generations and centuries typically make a handful of decisions and they make them right and they focus on a certain, they focus on what they're really good at what they love, this sort of convergence of purpose and passion and their economic engine, how they can differentiate themselves in the place. And then is it driving them closer, more to their vision where they're going? There's actually a company in Japan that is a thousand years old. And they've been in business, it's a family run business, and all they do is make mochi. Now if you know what Mochi is, but Mochi is basically frozen rice for lack of a better term. It's it's a dessert and they've been in business. They've been through wars, they've been through everything, right? And they're still in business. There was a business actually in Japan that was 900 years old. We made pagodas, but it just recently got bought by a private equity firm in the last 10 years or so. But it lasted 960 years or something. It was made pagodas, right? They focused on what they did. So these are organizations like Southwest Airlines, IKEA, Container Store, Amazon, Honda, you know, name your company that's been around a really long time. The Royal Ballet has been around since nineteen thirty one. They focus on certain things because, you know. The leader's job is, as we said, is to not run the day to day, but most businesses, most businesses, when I ask leaders and I've asked hundreds of leaders this question how much time you spend in the business versus on the business? And I will tell you, the majority of the farm, far majority, the large majority say that they spend 80 to 90 percent of their time in the business running it and 10 to 20 percent on the business, which is making it better, which is, I think, when they hit that wall.

Because eventually, if you're if you're running the business and you're running day to day, you're just solving the problem in front of you on a regular basis. And leaders think, Well, my job is to solve problems. I ask people all the time, I like to help people with their problems, and it sounds like a great answer, right? I think it's a horrible answer. You should help people prevent problems, try to avoid problems, not solve them after they happened, right? You want to you want to be in front of the problem. So and we don't do that. We think we're doing a good job.

You know, we have this sort of hero thing. So in order to do that, you have to you have to fire yourself from the day to day so you can focus much more in the future, which is really an act of creation and innovation. And this is about getting new ideas from yourself and others. And so I ask people this all the time, so I'm going to ask you all, which is when you get your best ideas and get these insights. So you're like, Oh, you know, whatever. Be it personal. Professional doesn't matter. Do you sort of recall what you're doing? When those happen.

Well, usually you're away from the desk, you're taking the dog for a walk and an idea comes to you because you're not distracted from the business, you now have time to think and mull, and that's when good ideas or new ideas seem to pop up.

Exactly. Yeah. And so people say in the shower on a run, walking the dog. So it's actually when your brain is quiet, because when you get a new idea, you actually change the wiring of your brain. There's there's there's neurons that weren't connected, that now connected, and that's when you get the insight and it's called the edge effect. It's these little things have pieces of data, and they're usually what's called weak signals. They're not something that you're always thinking about. They're just something maybe you saw or read or heard from somebody. And then all of a sudden they connect. That's that's what happens when you get the insight your brain is actually rewiring. A tiny little part of your brain is just rewiring, which is just the coolest thing. So you have to slow your brain down and you can't be doing and thinking. At the same time, we cannot focus on more than one thing at a time. Our brain was not designed to do that. We think we can, but it's called context switching. It's not multitasking. We actually do one thing rapidly after another. It just feels like multitasking, right?

Speaker1: [00:21:31] So one of my favorite chapters in your book is Create a culture of psychological safety. If you could give a crash course, copy leaders out there and how to create that culture, what would you say to them?

Speaker2: [00:21:42] So this psychological safety comes from a professor at the Harvard Business School and author, her name is Amy Edmonson, she coined the term years ago, I don't know, 10, 15 years ago, and she has been studying teams for two decades. And interestingly, she she did some work where she had a premise was the best teams seem to make the fewest mistakes. And so she went, and she sent some research people to a hospital. It was actually she was doing surgical teams and she wanted to study it. So tell me, tell me how that works. And when they came back and all the research came back, what they found was that wasn't true.

The best teams actually admitted their mistakes more often, so it looked like they made more mistakes and the worst teams didn't admit their mistakes. So they didn't actually learn and get better. And since you found like, well, how did that work? What's that environment? This is how she came about psychological safety. And she said there were a number of things that you can do if you're a leader of a team. This again, how do we teach people to be good team leaders? One is to create this safe environment where people feel OK to screw up, to come up with a crazy idea to admit that they don't know something. This actually creates an environment where you learn faster and get better because people, you know, Simon Sinek has this great, this a great line, which he says people have two jobs at work, their regular job and lying, hiding and faking.

And that's their second job because they don't want to look stupid. They don't want to look like they're the troublemaker. All these things. And so we're constantly thinking, you know, we're trying to dodge whatever this bullet, the psychological bullet that I might get hit with. We're always trying to do that. And if you create this environment, people are open to just saying, you know, I have no idea what I'm doing. It could be the leader. And I'm not really sure what I'm doing. I know I want to go here, but you know anybody have any ideas or I totally screwed up. Here's how I screwed up, you know, and and you support them, et cetera. So those things that you can be. This comes from teaming, which is one of Amy's books, is, you know, you can be accessible and approach it. Approachable is a leader, right? People feel like they can come to you and say, Look, I'm just stuck. I used to have a leader. He's actually a friend of mine. And, you know, he learned because this was conventional wisdom. You grew up in large companies, HP and Dec and whatever. And he'd always say because he thought this was the right thing to do is, OK, if you have a problem, do not come to me with this problem unless you have an answer. Which sounds great, but it's wrong, because if then people won't come to you with problems. And guess what happens to the problem? It never gets addressed, right, because they're afraid to bring it up.

So in some problems are hard and they don't have an answer. So that's actually the wrong advice to give. It's like, you know, let's just bring problems out. And then then you say, great, let's solve the problem, but let's not stop there. Let's say, OK, what? What's the problem that's creating that problem? Right, and then oh, then what's the problem is creating that problem, that's what you should be doing. And again, you keep moving back to that first principle, thinking in the roots, you have to be accessible, accessible and approachable to do that. You have to be willing to display your own fallibility. I'm a human being because when you as a

leader say, show that your human being, guess what? You give permission to everyone else to be a human being. But we've been taught that leaders don't admit weakness, right? You have to be the answer man or the answer person, or you have to have everything. You can't show that you don't know something because then you'll, you know, people will take advantage of you and whatever. As it turns out, they don't. They actually work better together. So this is sort of the science, what science does and the science knows and business does. We do this? There's a whole bunch of other stuff you can do as well, but those are some of the things I'm a huge fan of. So Marcus Buckingham and Amy Edmondson are really the two people that I go to a lot for teams, and I highly recommend people look at some of their work.

Speaker1: [00:25:24] All right. Well, so what leader has most inspired you and your leadership journey so far?

Speaker2: [00:25:29] Yes, this is the same guy. He's still with us. His name is Alan Mulally. Do you know who Alan Mulally is? No. Most people did not, which I think is such a shame. So Alan Mulally is not as famous as Steve Jobs or Herb Kelleher or Sam Walton or, you know, name your iconic Bill Gates, Warren Buffett to whatever. But I think he's better than all of them. And let me tell you why I think it's better than all of them. So Alan Mulally was it ran Boeing commercial aircraft through the 90s in the middle of 9-11. And they came out of his tenure better than they went in through nine 11. Then Bill Ford asked him to run Ford, and he did the same exact thing through 2008 to existential economic crises aimed at that particular industry. And he fixed them both in the middle of it. Well, no leader has ever done that once, forget twice. Right. So and what I love about Alan Mulally is the reason we don't know who he is, is he's an extremely humble person and he doesn't want the limelight. He's not doing it for that reason. He loves people and an Alan and I are now friends, which is really cool. And I asked him, You know, sort of. And I've heard him say, you know, sort of. Here's my mantra, which is. He's like, how do you do it? And his little quip, quippy little answer is you love them up. Love your people up, he says, but you hold them to the standard. So he set the standard. And if they didn't meet the standard or weren't willing to meet the standard, can he still loved them, but he loved them and help them to work for another company? Because he's like, This is what we're doing, and it's OK that you don't want to do this. But but you probably shouldn't work here. And that's what he did, I mean, he turned a macho, insular culture at Ford into an open, caring and loving loving group. And they they became the number one car seller in 2015 for a

year, the year after he left, so he was there for about six years. The UFC left, they were number one again. The last time they were number one was when Henry Ford was running for it. And then Mark Fields took over and Mark unfortunately didn't continue Allen's work or of of of facsimile of Allen's work. And and Ford has gone back down, which is just too bad. But I just I think I love that because you can be a really good, strong leader, firm leader without being a jerk. You don't have to be Elon Musk or Steve Jobs. The reputation to be a good, strong leader. You can still be a really nice human being. So that's why he's my he's my top guy.

Speaker1: [00:28:07] Great. I appreciate you sharing that. I have a few questions that I always ask every guest. First is what online information stores do you find most helpful in your work?

Speaker2: [00:28:17] Yes, so I have several. I'm a I'm a huge book reader, you see behind me and get lots of books and stuff. Mostly, I read on my phone and I read probably. I typically read between 30 and 60 books a year. Actually, in the last year and a half I reread. I've read probably about a thousand books over the last several years, and I went back and what are the ones that I really like the most and I actually put them on my site? So when we talk about where my site is, I have a resource area on my site. There are about 70 or 80 books on there. I break them down by category and then I say, Here are the ones that I think you should absolutely read. These are the ones that most, most the best for me. And those are again, first principles, books, right, I love the books about shoe dog and and you know, anything about the story, the Amazon way those are great for stories, but they don't actually teach you anything because you can't copy what someone else did and have it work for you because you're not them and you don't and and they don't know. They write some stuff down, but but they don't know that actually, they're not telling you everything.

It's sort of like I would say, like this 400 hitter in baseball can't really teach someone else how to be a 400 hitter because they just do it. It's like, OK, but you did this thing. What do you do there? Like, I don't know. I just swing. It's like, No, there's probably like six separate things you do before you swing, the way your eyes move, the way your elbows are or whatever. And they don't know that because it's part of them. So it's really hard for someone to teach you how to do it. But first, principles books can do that. And there are three sites that I look at that I think are help in first principles. One is I love HBR. Harvard Business Review. But I focus for the First Principles articles when there's like science behind it, there's a lot of research or studies that have done, and it's been proven over and over again that it works those kind of things. I love a

company called Neuro Leadership Institute, which is about creating a brain friendly organization, which I think is super critical, especially if you want to learn to run teams. Because, as I like to say jokingly, we're all crazy. Human beings are inherently nuts because we're impulsive, irrational. We actually are highly emotional beings, and most of our most, if not all, of our conscious decisions are not conscious, and they're driven by emotion. First, when we make decisions, the parts of our brain that are considered the emotional centers of our brain light up before we are consciously aware of the decision we made, which means we feel it first and then we make up reasons after the fact. So in essence, we're lying to ourselves as to why we why we decide this is a good idea, an ally. There's like one hundred and fifty unconscious biases that we have. They break them into three or five different categories and they tell you what they are and I know what they are. And it doesn't matter that I know what they are. I still do them. Guess what? Because they're unconscious. You know, you're not aware that you're doing it. You can mitigate it a little bit. And there's some work from Daniel Kahneman and other folks in the psychology world to help you that, but it's still hard to do. And then lastly, Marcus Buckingham has the Free, Free Thinkers guide, and he does a lot of stuff, a lot of resources that he has on there. Those are probably the three that I go to more often than anything else. So Ali Akbar and Marcus Buckingham become great.

Speaker1: [00:31:22] And if you could start a business tomorrow, what would that business be?

Speaker2: [00:31:26] Yeah. You know, I thought about this a lot, and I don't other than like sounding like Mother Teresa or something, you know, like I could save the world. I already started it. I think it's a shame that really good idea is really good. Business is really good. People fail or struggle for completely preventable reasons, and most of us work at a company, you know, that's going to change, you know, especially, I don't know you and I are going to see it, but that's the world of business is going to be completely different in the next 10, 20, 30, 50 years. Right. Because. Technology and other things are going to allow people to be much more fluid and how they do things and companies will look different. So I think we're going to see a lot of things, but until then, most of us work at a company. Most of us are miserable at the company. If you if you believe these statistics that they say in terms of engagement, you know, we're looking at the United States of being like twenty to twenty five percent engaged workforce, which is horrible. That means seventy five percent of the people who work for you are either just coming in for a paycheck or actively disengaged, meaning they're working against

the company. They are sabotaging their own company on purpose. That's just crazy. So that's that's what I'm trying to do, I'm trying to teach the leaders how to create this environment where people want to come to work and create and, you know, teams that that love what they do and flourish as opposed to, you know, trying to get through the day so they can get home or whatever. So that's I'm continuing to make that hopefully a better and better business for myself. All.

Speaker1: [00:32:55] Well, the last few minutes that we have here, what else should we cover that we haven't?

Speaker2: [00:32:59] What I think we didn't cover, we touched on a little bit is so we're in this, we're in this situation right now, we're in this great resignation or whatever you want to call it. There's like six hours that we've we've used to call this thing. Whatever the reduction, the realignment, I don't know what is right. Whatever it is. And so people are looking outside like I got it's really hard to hire. I got to hire people and we've been doing this forever. And I think that's a mistake. I think there's there's a ton of magic hiding in plain sight. There are people in your business that if you engage them differently and create a different environment for them, they would flourish. But we don't do that. We think, Oh, we'll just solve it with the new person. And there's this guy, Ron Lovett, who wrote outrageous empowerment he does, speaking all around the world. He's got a podcast about scaling culture and such. And he tells a story of, I can't remember the guy's name. It's like Ashanti and Ashanti. So so Ron was running a security company at the time, and it was around the world, and he just had quite another company in another country. And he had this really disgruntled employee whose name was Ashanti, and Ashanti was not really happy. It was probably going to leave as soon as he could, et cetera. But but Ron engaged him and said, You know, Hey, I need we need to buy a vehicle. And because it was a security company, they drive around parking lots and stuff and he's like, We need new vehicle, et cetera, you know? And he looked to a shot. Look, I don't, I don't know. I don't work there. I don't know the environment. I don't know the vehicle world. I said, I'm just going to give, you know, \$3000 or something. It was. It was, it was in India or somewhere. So \$3000 was a lot of money. This was 10, 15, 20 years ago. And he said, you know, you seem to know a lot about what this is. Why don't you go and buy the car and whatever, whatever money that you save, as long as you get the car, that makes sense for you and whatever money you save, just pocket it. And Ashanti went out, bought this great car and whatever, and then three

or four months later, Ron said, Ashanti came back to me and said, Hey, you know, I've been thinking about our business a little bit. And I, you know, I think if we did this and he put up like a ten page, 10 slide PowerPoint presentation and like did research, now this is a disgruntled employee. Months earlier, Wright, who's wanted to leave the company and now he's working with him to grow the business that he's in.

Why? Because he trusted him. He gave him. He valued him, right? And we don't do that now. Ashanti, who was going to leave in a horrible employee, is one of the the best employees, at least in that region. So there's magic hiding in plain sight. We just don't take the time to do it. So, you know, I think focusing on that and I have I have exercises like just looking at the business from functions as opposed to titles or or jobs. You know, function is what actually gets done. Marketing is a function, sales is a function, operations as a function, you know, that kind of stuff. And you organize them in terms of a flow map of how they work together. You can do stuff like Mark Marcus Buckingham like love and loathe, which I love that exercise, which as you go through the day when you find out the things you love and you loathe by how you feel about them, right? You load something that that that it's usually about time. It's time goes really, really slowly when you load something or you ignore it, or you or you put it off or, you know, you're just distracted all the time doing it, you know, and then love is the stuff. The time goes really fast. You know, an hour feels like five minutes and you're energized and you can't wait to do it again.

You know, I said, just make a list of those things, anything that doesn't fit into those two. Don't do it. But you're going to find that your love list is short and your load list is long. And then your job is to figure out how to do less of the load. Sometimes you have to do it, some of those things, but a lot of the stuff you can automate or delegate or get rid of or whatever give to someone else, you know, switch jobs with someone. There's so many things you can do. So there's a whole bunch of tools and things that I have and coaches like like that that like me have to help people to do practical things of all this. I'm doing a lot of theory here, but there's a lot of practical stuff, and that's sort of all that's in my book. My book is a do it yourself book. You don't need me for the book. I'm not selling a lot of lot of coaches write books and to sell their, you know, and you should hire me to do this. I mean, you can hire me, but my book is designed to help you without any need of me there. I have exercises that go with it. A lot of these are in there.

Speaker1: [00:37:12] That's great. So how should listeners get back in touch with you?

Speaker2: [00:37:16] So through my website is Catalyst Growth Advisors. My book is on there. It's actually for free. If you want to download my book as a PDF, it's free. You can also get it on Amazon or Audible or whatever. My contact info is there. You can set up an appointment with me. You can see what I do. I've got a ton of resources. Like I said, I have books and other resources on there that you can download. I write on our blog post twice a month. I have one hundred and fifty of them on there and they're all super short. Well, the first few I did were too long and then my my readers said, Hey, this is great Bill, but I don't have time to read seven or eight minute blog posts, so they're all one to two minutes now. It's always, almost always something to do to them. So all of that is that Catalyst Growth Advisors dot com, right?

Speaker1: [00:37:58] We'll include that in the show notes. I want to thank you for joining us today and hope to have you back for a follow up soon.

Speaker2: [00:38:04] Thanks, all. Happy New Year!

Speaker1: [00:38:08] Investor Connect helps investors interested in startup funding in this podcast series, experienced investors share their experience and advice. You can learn more at Investor Connect.

Speaker3: [00:38:21] Paul T. Martin is the director of Investor Connect, which is a 501c3 nonprofit dedicated to the education of investors for early stage funding. All opinions expressed by hall and podcast guests are solely their own opinions and do not reflect the opinion of Investor Connect. This podcast is for informational purposes only and should not be relied upon as a basis for investment decisions.