

LeaderImpact Podcast – Episode #12 – Cross Cultural Heritage Creates Challenges and Opportunities – Jonathan Friesen

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Episode Summary:

Jonathan Friesen was raised in a small Japanese coastal town during the rapid economic growth of the 1960s, attended boarding school in Tokyo in the 70s, and University in Los Angeles in the 80s. After graduating, he settled in Vancouver and began a career in property development, building high-rise communities in the Vancouver downtown core and resorts in the South Seas.

The Friesen family eventually retired on the island of Grand Cayman and took part in a charitable housing organization. By 2002, Jonathan was ready to move back to British Columbia to re-engage with the property development world.

Jonathan currently serves as CEO of Mission Group Enterprises, which is one of the largest developers in the Okanagan, where he sets corporate growth strategy, casts vision and cultivates strategic partnerships. Jonathan also serves on the board of several organizations in BC. With the broad perspective gained by global experience, he has learned that success comes not from fitting in, but by being different.

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Show Notes:

3:00 – Jonathan shares his personal story

- Father grew up in Saskatchewan and was a missionary in Japan where he met Jonathan's mother.
- Was raised in Japan. Grew up with a third culture mindset – you are not from where you think you are from and not where you are from, but somewhere in the middle.
- He used this mindset to his advantage in university. Gave him a different perspective to the world around him. He is bilingual and bicultural. Given him insights, more sympathetic to ethnic issues with diversity and equality

11:45 – Story of the picture of his mom and dad's wedding

- His dad was in the middle and the father-in-law was in the back corner which went against tradition

12:55 – Jonathan sharing his professional journey

- Started as a chemical trader in Vancouver after university. Thought he had made it.
- The company was very traditional, and it was very unlikely he would lead an organization like that. Took a risk, left the company, and started his own trading company as well as doing some import/export consulting. Found a client in the construction industry being the intermediary with Japanese companies.
- Soon realized he could set up his own company doing this.
- When he was growing his business, he was gone up to 6 months a year. One time he was returning home and his toddler sons did not recognize him.
- He sold that organization, moved to the Grand Cayman Island, and focused on his family.
- He wants to be present for his family even now.

“When you believe the lie you are doing it for your family, and the sacrifices are for your family, you are robbing them of what they need most...you.”

~Jonathan Friesen

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20:50 – Jonathan’s comment on those who feel they are caught in the money trap

- Stop telling yourself those lies. A recalibration may be necessary.
- He sees how more effective people in his organization are when they have a happy family life.
- He wants the community to benefit from the activities of his organization and not just focus on making money.

25:00 – Failures Jonathan has learned from

- Coming down the walk way at the airport and his sons not recognizing him.
- Early on in his career, he thought he had the answers or could figure things out on his own.

28:15 – Jonathan’s spiritual journey

- Was individualist and rebellious growing up
- Had a pivotal moment when he was 16 or 17 while he was working at a Bible camp, and saw the staff praying

31:25 – How he combines his faith and his work

- Not a questioning of integrating anything, but living out what he knows to be true where ever he goes

32:45 – Values he has that he takes into his business

- People often think Christians principles are contrary to good business outcomes. However, things that should define a follower of Christ are good business principles.

35:45 – How he took care of his team after a work place accident

- Most affected were the men and women who were onsite when the crane crashed.
- Brought in professional counsellors to talk to groups and individuals.
- Bonuses due to the accident were not affected
- How to show compassion and love to the individuals affected? Many people were affected even those who did not work on the worksite.
- Their brand became stronger because of the accident
- Incidents like this can make us stronger and better based on the strength God gives us and how we respond to it.

“There are things to learn and ways to get better when the tough things happen in life.” ~Jonathan

Friesen

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40:20 – How he cares for himself as a leader

- Tries to be less guarded than what people think a CEO should be. Has a daily huddle with his team and what is the top of their mind, either business or personal. Leads with honesty and transparency.
- Has a peer group of CEOs where what they share is not repeated.
- Number 1 support is his wife where he can express what he is feeling without feeling judged.

43:25 – How he has been involved with LeaderImpact

- Was studying a book, mainly with people from his organization, but there were some people from outside the organization.
- He is involved in a men’s group not associated with LeaderImpact.
- Any group that is faith based will be of benefit.

44:50 – What he wants his faith legacy to be

- His children and his granddaughter have a meaningful relationship with God.

46:45 – What brings him the greatest joy.

- When he walks into work or at home, he feels a sense of unity.