

LeaderImpact Podcast - Ep. 38 - Jim Johanik - The Importance of a Healthy Organizational Culture

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

culture, leader, people, jim, leadership, organization, impact, work, mission, led, fail, empowered, great, christ, group, put, find, behavior, part, tolerating

Lisa Peters 00:00

And welcome to the LeaderImpact Podcast. We are a community of leaders with a network of over 350 cities around the world dedicated to optimizing our personal, professional, and spiritual lives to have impact. This show is where we have a chance to listen and engage with leaders who are living this out. We love talking with leaders, so if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions to make the show even better, please let us know. The best way to stay connected in Canada is through our newsletter at LeaderImpact.ca or on social media @LeaderImpact. If you're listening from outside of Canada, check out our website at LeaderImpact.com.

I'm your host Lisa Peters and our guest today is Jim Johanik. Jim began his career in the capital market trading industry in the eurodollar options pit at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. He eventually worked for the exchange in its rollout of their electronic trading systems and then moved to the London International Financial Futures Exchange to lead its US Technology Division. During this time, Jim also completed his Masters of Business Administration.

In 2010, Jim heeded God's call to transition from trading technologies to enter into full-time ministry, working jointly as the chief marketing officer in a trading technologies company while co-founding a media-based outreach ministry. Jim's ministry involvement since then has been through leadership roles with Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Campus Crusade for Christ.

Jim leads three of Chicago's 14 LeaderImpact groups and writes curriculum for LeaderImpact. When not leading groups or LeaderImpact staff, Jim and his wife Heidi are committed to their five children and two grandchildren. Jim is currently on the board of LeaderImpact in the US and now a Pastor of Evangelism at College Church in Wheaton. He is also the head football coach and wrestling coach at Wheaton Academy in West Chicago, Illinois. Welcome to the show, Jim.

Jim Johanik 01:56

Thanks, Lisa. It's great to be here with you all.

Lisa Peters 01:58

It is nice to have you last time I saw you we were at a LeaderImpact Summit. And you were engaging, and I loved everything you talked about. So I brought you back to talk about culture today. You had some great words of wisdom. So thank you for just agreeing to be here. We're very appreciative.

Jim Johanik 02:18

My pleasure.

Lisa Peters 02:19

So my first question always, usually starts off with a little bit about yourself. If you can tell us a little bit about yourself. And if there was ever that, that moment, that pivotal moment in your life or that point in your life where things shifted or changed in your personal life, you have a story.

Jim Johanik 02:33

Oh, sure. Well, you know, to answer that I actually wore a shirt that represented that pivotal moment in my life. And I think we're going to talk a little bit about culture today. And it was one of those situations, I came to faith in Christ because of a culture that was established in an organization in this in this case, it was a college football team. So I'm wearing the shirt from my alma mater, Wheaton College, where I'm at right now it's right across the street. And when I was in high school, I came from an unchurched background, parents were not believers, hard-working mother was a baker, my dad was a carpenter. There was not much of an opportunity for, for me to ever make my way or find my way into a church. But it was the culture that was set at the, in the Wheaton College football team where they took it upon themselves to go into the area high schools, and to befriend students to put their arms around them to, to walk with them, to mentor them. And well, there was a gentleman named Steve Ryan, he was the one that was assigned to my high school, befriended me, invited me out to an athletic event, where I got to know him more. And over time, over the course of four years led me to faith in Christ.

You know, from that moment, my whole life changed. The people I, I walked with the encouragement that I received the fellowship that I was a part of, it just changed everything to the woman I married. And it was a result of the culture that football program, having of all things, you know, a football program that reached out into my community and reached me. I'll say one last thing is I went through that program myself and was part of that culture. And now, I have two sons who one has just graduated was part of that culture as well of being part of that football team. And I have another one who's a rising sophomore at Wheaton College. So, you know, that legacy continues on in the culture today is exactly the way it was when I was there in the 80s.

Lisa Peters 04:38

That's good to hear. I can see now why you are so passionate to speak of culture. I mean, it was a life-changing moment for you. So I'm asking you, I would like you to define what is culture for you.

Jim Johanik 04:50

Well, you know, if character guides the actions of an individual, you can say that culture guides the actions of a group of individuals. So it's the automatic behavior of a team, a group, an organization, a society. And, you know, this is why culture is so critical to establish as a leader is that if you want a group of people who are going to operate automatically towards achieving a mission of the organization.

And so there's that automatic behavior, you know, I'll just as a football coach, I've watched things happen amongst athletes, where they self-correct, they, they take ownership of the team, and they, they begin to do things that that I had no involvement in. And it ultimately drives us closer to achieving the goals of the organization and the goals of the team itself. And I've seen it happen in missions, I've seen it happen in a lot of different places. It makes me think about an adage that athletic coaches will use often. And it says this, it's a bad team has no leadership, a good team is managed by the coaches. But a great team is led by the players. And that's really what we're talking about as culture, you're establishing as a leader, as a coach or as a leader of an organization, you're establishing an environment where people are empowered to lead. And when that happens, then you're only going to be limited by the talent level of the people that are part of that organization, you're not going to be hindered by adverse culture, or things that detract away from that potential.

Lisa Peters 06:32

So what does a healthy work culture look like?

Jim Johanik 06:37

Well, if you were to use the definition that I just, you know, this automatic behavior mechanism. Then a healthy culture would be that automatic behavior working towards in alignment with the mission of the organization, or the goals that a leader sets, that's a healthy culture. Whatever, whatever the leader sets is the goal or the target, and you have this, this automatic behavior occurring amongst the people have that organization all working together towards it, that's when you have a healthy culture. So then, you know, it goes to say, Well, what, what's not a healthy culture? Yeah, I'm guessing that's gonna be your next question. Right?

Lisa Peters 07:18

And I think it's like the healthy like, not healthy, but even do the word toxic fit in there? Or not safe? Are those the same words for not a healthy culture?

Jim Johanik 07:29

That's exactly right. And I'm sure in some of the other podcasts that you've had, you've talked about or discussed what those things might be, well, culture lies at the root of it all. It's the thing that guides those actions or those behaviors. So I mean, there's an infinite number of ways that a culture can be sick or unhealthy. And here's a couple of them, you know, when, when an organization or parts of it are intrinsically behaving in a ways that that are counter to the goals or counter to the mission of the organization. You know, that's a sick culture? Or how about an organization that doesn't even know what its goals are, or even its mission? You know, and there's plenty of them, believe it or not out there that, you know, leaders failed to explain what we're what we're trying to drive at. Or it could be, that we're distracted with things that are unimportant. And we got our eyes off the main thing, or we're chasing something that's, that's not what we should be chasing? Or here's the big one, self-interest, you know, what if we are a group of people who are in it for ourselves in not in it for the mission or for each other? You know, every person for themselves? Those are just some of the ways that you can, you could develop a sick culture.

Lisa Peters 08:48

You know, there's so many great companies out there, and they're led by really great people. And unfortunately, we see some of them fail. I mean, they are our best and brightest leaders out there. What do you why do you think even they fail at culture? What happens?

Jim Johanik 09:04

Well, I'm gonna pick up on my last point when, when you're when you're in it for yourself. I think that that there, you know, like I said, there's a lot of different reasons why a culture can be sick. There's a lot of reasons why leaders can fail at establishing good culture. In my experience, it's been this one, you know, there's one that surfaces to the top. And instead if people sense if people sense for let's just I'll use me as an example, if they sense that I'm in it for myself, they're going to the people are very perceptive. They're going to see that I'm in it for them for myself and not in it for them. What do you think they're going to do? They're going to either not want to be a part of, you know my ego trip, and they're going to leave, they're going to self-select themselves out of the organization, or they're in turn going to be in it for themselves, and they're going to get into a preservation, you know, self-preservation mode and then what we begin to do is we start creating an environment where all the people who are left are, are basically mercenaries. We're there to do a job, and we're getting paid for it. And that's our only motivation. And if I have to continue using this example of a mercenary, I'll use a military example of mercenaries in war, they can only enjoy the money that they receive for the battle that they're fighting, how? Only if they stay alive, right? They have to stay alive. So they're gonna, they're gonna preserve themselves, they're never gonna give everything to the cause. Because the pause is receiving money. And so if a leader is in it for themselves, and not about a cause, they're going to have a group of followers who are going to be in it for themselves. And not about not about the cause. And I think many intelligent people fail to inspire and sacrifice themselves for others, and fail at this culture.

Lisa Peters 11:05

So when you have this sick culture, you have a leader that comes in is all about themselves self absorbed, and people are either self selecting in or out, is there a way that you can set or reset the culture? So maybe you're a new leader coming in? Maybe you're within? But how do you start? How do you how do you reset?

Jim Johanik 11:25

Well, in my experience, culture is a long game. And I think we have to go into the mindset that we're what we do, and the behaviors and the decisions that we set early on, and the expectations we set are going to take a long time to establish. In depending upon the organization, and the capabilities of being able to enact change, the culture will either take longer or shorter based upon how quickly you can move. If you're in a church environment or a ministry environment, it could take years and years and years for a culture to change. Because the decisions to be able to hire or fire are much slower, the process is much slower. If you're, if you're in a hyper competitive environment, where decisions are made quickly, well, you could probably shorten that timetable significantly. But it's a long game. And I think we have to recognize that culture setting is a long game.

But there's probably a few things that you can, you know, pick up on that consent culture of the things that we've already discussed, one, you know, a leader, and these are all things that we've talked about before, a leader has to establish what the mission is, and what the goals are. And the mission needs to be inspiring. It needs to be something that people wake up and say, I want to be a part of that. And I'll never forget the, you know, Ritz Carlton is a great example of a company that over the years has established the good culture of leadership and they've created a culture that allows everybody on the team to solve a problem up to a certain dollar amount down to the bellboy or the bellhop who is empowered up to a certain dollar amount to fix whatever service issue is a problem at that moment. And if they can't fix it themselves, they can elevate it to somebody who has more authority, and then more authority and the more authority but nobody is left powerless from being able to handle or be empowered to fix the problem.

So in addition to setting a mission, in the case of Ritz Carlton, its service, they're also empowering the people to be able to fulfill that mission, that they're not just being micromanaged or they're not just being told what to do, but they're empowered to make those decisions themselves. That lights my fire, I want to go to a I want to work for a place like that, where I have the authority to help advance that mission. Then we go back to...go ahead.

Lisa Peters 13:53

I was just thinking we last a few weeks last week, we interviewed Carrie Schwebius, a leadership coach, we talked about psychological safety. And you know, this just I hear that so much is that people can, they feel safe to say something a culture that they feel safe to give an opinion, you know, what that isn't right? Halt the project, it's not safe. You know? What if you

don't feel safe to say that if you're you haven't created that culture that can create disaster. In some cases.

Jim Johanic 14:24

you're absolutely right. In fact, you know, this goes back to a previous point that a leader needs to be about others and less about themselves. And this speaks to that safety issue. If I am following somebody that's all about themselves, and I find myself entering into unsafe spaces, whatever that might look like in this world, there's plenty of them, right? If I don't think that person is in it for me or my well-being I'm not going to give it my all. In fact, I'm going to begin thinking about how do I protect myself. How do I find or maybe have self-select out and find a place where I do find that, that safety.

So again, it goes back to the leader needing to be less about themselves more about others, you want to talk about resetting your culture again, then what about promoting people who are not just performance hawks, but people who are in it for others as well. So you know, don't just reward success, but reward success, reward the right success, people who are in it for others, and also the success of the company.

There's one last thing is that a culture is going to have to be defended, you know, you want to reset a culture, you should be doing all the right things. But inevitably, there's going to come a point in time when someone challenges that culture, and you're going to be put to the test as to what you do. And if you fail at defending it, it all comes crashing down. So a leader is going to have to defend it as well.

Lisa Peters 15:51

So what do we as leaders need to stop tolerating? I don't know if that's if that negative question, but like, people are coming at us with their own thoughts and challenging us so or I don't know. But what do we need to stop tolerating?

Jim Johanic 16:09

Well, you know, we live in an interesting world, we, you know, the issues that we face 20, 25 years ago, are very different in some ways, because we have this creature out there called social media, right? And we have this whole cacophony of voices now that are reaching in. And what's interesting is, in the past, if you were a voice that was to be heard, you usually had to have a message, usually had to have something that elevated you to a place where certain gatekeepers, whether it was, you know, a book author, or a newspaper or radio or something would put you in a position to be able to broadcast your voice. Well, think about it, anybody with a computer, and a social media account has a voice. And the way I attract followers is by appealing to their self-interests.

So if I just speak, self-interest talk, and I, and I'm attracting followers, because I'm speaking, just things that are going to puff you up and make you feel good about yourself. Well, now I have a voice and now I have power in this world of social media. Well, it's horrible from a

leadership standpoint, right? Because now, we have a whole group of people out there who are, you know, they're in it for themselves. It's the me culture. I need me time I take selfies, I blog about what I think. And it's me, me, me. I deal with this on the football field, someone scores a touchdown, and what's the first thing they do? They start patting their chest? Look at me, look at me, look what I did, as opposed to look what we did. Right? And I will say what we need to stop tolerating is there, it may take you longer, but you know, you can find the right people who are going to be culture builders. They're out there, it's just going to take longer to find them, it's going to take longer to build that culture. Because, you know, the bell-shaped curve of distribution of the entire population, the vast majority people are getting sucked into this social media meanness. And at the top end of that curve, are those trendsetters, the ones that are gonna say, You know what, that's not me. There's a better way up there. Yeah. And those are the people you need to find,

Lisa Peters 18:36

So I want to know what you did to the football player that went made me like, is that something you do? Is it you in front of everyone? Or do you take him aside, just as a leadership lesson?

Jim Johanik 18:47

I would like to say embarrassed him ruthlessly in front of everybody, no. Now, there are moments where you make an example of them to the whole, there are moments where you bring them to the side. And it's got to be absolutely clear to everybody in that environment, that that's not who we are. You know what, the fact is that you score the touchdown, I'm gonna you know what I'm going to do. And we're going to run the same play, and I'm going to take the other 10 players off the field, and I'm going to watch you run the play by yourself. And then we're going to ask you, can you do it? And they can't.

Lisa Peters 19:21

That's a good lesson in itself. So obviously, in this podcast, we transition to the spiritual side. And, you know, you are recently your pastor of evangelism at College Church in Wheaton. So I'm sure these questions won't throw you but keeping on the culture subject, what would you say is your faith culture? And how do you define that?

Jim Johanik 19:47

You know, I think I have to share a story about my wife because she's informed me she instructed me on this one. And, you know, when we were newly married, I've been married now for 27 years to Heidi, and early on in our marriage, you could say that our faith culture was one of idolizing the other, you know. So believe it or not, you know, she idolized me, right. And inevitably, when something like that happens, I'm going to, I would fail her in one way, I would fall short of being that perfect husband. And it became such a cycle, you know, because I would put my focus in my career, I would put focus on everything else, but her for certain periods of time, and it didn't quite meet up to her expectations. And then vice versa, I would put my expectations on, this is the way, you know, a perfect wife should be. And we would

always consistently fall short of those expectations. It was she took the lead. And she, when I failed her enough time, she began to understand that, you know, what, there is somebody that she can put her focus on, who's not going to fail her. And it's not going to be me. And then when she learned about, you know, learned about Jesus, for example, and compared him to me, let's just say that she chose to worship Him, and less than me, and I'm thankful for it. Because, you know, this has led me, you know, to not make my faith culture about her, or my career, or my bank account, or my good looks, which are fleeting every day, you when I saw the confidence that she had and making Christ, her focus it took, it took the pressure off of me.

And when I followed her lead, and I started to make Christ, my focus, it took the pressure off of her to have to perform or to have to be the perfect individual. And so now with the pressure off of each other, we began to celebrate each other a lot more, we celebrated each other's work towards the mission, you know, to glorify the Lord. We celebrated raising our kids together and serving the church, our careers, our careers now were a celebration of what we were doing for the Lord and less about having to perform for each other, being a good neighbor, you know, and, and we were doing it together. So, you know, it's like, you think about faith culture, it goes back to what we were talking about overall culture, getting our eyes off of ourself, and, and on the Lord. Jesus even said, or God said, you know, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your mind, your soul, and your strength, love your neighbor as yourself. Well, just take those two things. And if we were to play them out in one marriage, or in the workplace, measure what our leadership would look like, that's what, that's what when we want to talk about faith culture, that's what I think about.

Lisa Peters 22:51

Oh, nice. So I always ask our guests two questions to end the show, or to end the podcast, LeaderImpact, we're about leadership, integrating our personal, professional, spiritual. We want to talk a little about faith legacy now. So when you leave this world, what do you want your faith legacy to be when you leave?

Jim Johanik 23:11

Simple. You know, Jesus said, I have come to give life and to give it to the fullest. And if you really think about that, life in the fullest is found in Christ. Nothing, I don't think I want my faith legacy to my children, their children, and to have as many people as possible than to know, and to come to that faith in Christ. And it's at that moment that we receive, I mean, it's a promise, we receive life to the fullest. You're talking about somebody who in the marketplace, just I mean, it was about climbing the ladder, who was my favorite day was bonus day. And my least favorite day was the next day because it was 364 days until the bonus day again. And I had a wait. And, you know, I already spent the money in my mind. It was thinking about the next, the next the next. And that's not life to the fullest. Watching the light bulb turn on for somebody to see what Christ does for a person in their life. This is one of the reasons what brings me great joy is being part of a LeaderImpact group where I get to interact with I mean, there's some of our groups that we need to split we have some of them are over 25 people

and we've got to kind of work through that. But even in that environment, to see the light bulb turn on for somebody and to see what this life to the full looks like. I mean, that's what I want to both leave and that's what my greatest joy is.

Lisa Peters 24:44

Yeah, it's funny. You talk about your groups being at 25 and you need to split you'd need to split. Same things are happening here, but you begin to care for each other so much, right? You just you become best friends you don't want to leave but That's not the Great Commission, you know, we are to, you know, break up and bring more people. Yes, you're not alone. So really, you should have about 20 groups in Chicago.

Jim Johanik 25:16

We were just don't go tell. Tell the leadership that.

Lisa Peters 25:21

Well, I want to thank you for joining us, Jim. It has been a fabulous 25 minutes. I, I enjoy talking about culture, the safe workplace. I think a lot of lot of times we think, but how can we take being a Christian into the workplace without being judged? You know, and I think you talk about it, there's so many ways you can and not speak Christianese, I think is where I'm going, you know, you can be kind and you can you know, your culture. There's so many ways. So, I don't know if you have any final thoughts, or I will end this right here.

Jim Johanik 26:03

well, and, you know, it was once said, by a sage that when sharing the gospel use words only if necessary. All right. And, and I think a lot of people are tremendously observant, you know, a lot of things we talked about culture today are just things that people observe just by watching us and watching us operate. One of the greatest things a leader can do is just to be in a faithful loving relationship with Christ, and then watching how that flows and permeates throughout everything that they do, whether it's verbal or nonverbal. So, thanks for having me.

Lisa Peters 26:42

Now, if anyone is listening and want to engage with you or find you, what is the best way to do that?

Jim Johanik 26:48

Yeah, well, you can always email me that's a real simple one is real simple, too. Because you know, give me my personal email, Jim@johanik.com. Easy, or you can tap me on LinkedIn, I'm on there as well. So either of those two will work.

Lisa Peters 27:05

All right. Well, I want to thank you for joining us and best of luck in your season, whatever season coming up and training season. Go get them Tiger. All right. Well, we hope you enjoyed our time together. I want to thank Jim for joining us.

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