

## LeaderImpact Podcast - Ep. 39 - Jason Demers - Begin with the End in Mind

**Lisa Peters** 00:07

Welcome to the LeaderImpact Podcast. We are a community of leaders with a network in 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 this show even better, please let us know. The best way to stay connected in Canada is through our newsletter at [LeaderImpact.ca](http://LeaderImpact.ca) or on social media @LeaderImpact. If you are listening from outside of Canada or anywhere around the world, check out our website at [LeaderImpact.com](http://LeaderImpact.com).

I'm your host, Lisa Peters, and our guest today is Jason Demers. Jason has spent the past decade in the non-hydrocarbon upstream gas space with a focus on helium, and is the Tacitus helium development concept and vision originator. Jason established a strategy and brought together the initial team to implement the vision and carry it through to successful operations. Jason has built key relationships with top-level Navajo State and federal officials in the House and Senate and senior political and regulatory influencers. Jason initiated and continues to lead efforts to enable long-term development of America's untapped helium resources and provided testimonial before the Congressional Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, leading to the introduction and passage of the Helium Extraction Act of 2017. This testimony has given Jason the unique honor of being the first Canadian to testify before a US Congressional House Committee. In October 2021, Jason's company was acquired by the Navajo Nation via the Navajo Transitional Energy Company, where he continues to support their transition efforts to a clean energy, future and economic independence.

As Director of Strategy Development, Jason has been married to his wife for 29 years and together they have two grown children and recently became grandparents for a second time. He enjoys playing his acoustic guitars, touring with his wife on their Harley and spending time playing with his grandchildren. Welcome to the show, Jason.

**Jason Demers** 02:07

Thank you Lisa. It's a pleasure to be here.

**Lisa Peters** 02:09

That is quite the intro.

**Jason Demers** 02:12

It's a mouthful.

**Lisa Peters** 02:13

Wow, yeah, I'm impressed I got through that one. So you are originally from Balgonie.

**Jason Demers** 02:21

That's right. I'm a small-town, Saskatchewan kid.

**Lisa Peters** 02:24

Oh well, we grew them up well out here. That's how we do it here.

**Jason Demers**

Big vision, big view

**Lisa Peters**

Big vision, big view, good, I love it. Now this podcast, for anyone listening, is going to be a little different. I have prepped Jason with four questions. We're going to talk about pivotal turning points, principles of success, failures and mistakes, and how they're actually a good thing, and then just how you want to grow personally, professionally, and spiritually. So, Jason, are you ready?

**Jason Demers** 02:52

Sure, let's, let's dive into it.

**Lisa Peters** 02:54

All right. So we are looking for your professional story and how you got to where you are today. So give us a couple snapshots of if there were to pivotal turning points along that journey.

**Jason Demers** 03:07

Well, the journey started it. I was not one that did well in the academic side, so going to through schooling just wasn't an option for me. I learned that I learned better by doing things and just books didn't work the same for me, so I was trying to figure out what does my career path look like? There's not a lot of great paying jobs or career paths that tend to run for people who are not degreed.

But I found that one of the things that was sort of natural for me was finding an opportunity in the gaps between the information. I would do a lot of reading on what's going on out there in

the world. I started off, my first big step in the career path was establishing an electrical regulatory company in Alberta when I saw that the government had privatized the permitting business and so I started an inspection business that kind of filled that gap and made me a specialist in the oil and gas industry in the electrical regulatory world, because nobody else was doing it. And so it was easy to be an expert in a field where you are alone. And I built that company up to what a 35-man company and brought in some partners and it was actually very successful and continues to operate. Today I sold my position and I went out We'll call it on my own to get ,I wanted to get closer to the wellhead. I wanted to be more part of the energy side of things versus the supplier side. And I would say that as I stepped out and kind of rebranded my career, getting into the upstream business, I was faced with that, with a hard truth, and that, as I like to say, was served cold is, if you're, if you're really going to go after something, you've got to be prepared to do it without the safety net or understand that there's not a safety net.

I was told that by one of the guys that was an advisor a friend of mine along the way When I thought, well, if I step out into this other venture, going into the CO2 business which eventually ended up in the helium business, that well, if it doesn't work out, these other guys will help cover me, and I'll be fine. And I was informed that, son, you're on that tightrope by yourself. You got to decide if you want to turn back or keep going. So I was given that dose of reality very early on and getting into this non-hydrocarbon upstream space and that was a moment that I really had to do some self-reflection. Was I prepared to walk away from the comfort that I created in the business with partners? I had a very solid network that all would go away if I took this step, and in the sense that it's a completely different business that I'd be getting into. So it was scary, it was very exciting, but it was terrifying. But it started my journey into the upstream non-hydrocarbon space, which eventually became my helium interest.

**Lisa Peters** 06:22

I find it...You know you talk about exciting and terrifying and no safety net. It is exciting and terrifying to be in that position, but if you weren't, you know like I think you're not gonna grow. You know taking those big chances and you know there may not be a safety net. You are on the tightrope loan. I love that. That was really good. Really good comments. I'm taking from that. So can you give us your best principle of success and tell us a story that illustrates this?

**Jason Demers** 07:00

I think my best I've got a couple and they go hand in hand and one and this I learned through the work that I did with US Congress and trying to get some legislation changed is that influence is ultimately more important than control and it's actually more achievable. And the

second part to that is and it sounds a little more of along the cliché side is honesty, and integrity is really all you have control of at the end of the day. Everything else belongs to others and how they respond to you.

So I would say that the influence over control aspect of that is understanding I was starting as a Canadian starting out very fresh in the US marketplace and particularly the political marketplace. And so understanding how to influence legislative leaders in the United States state and tribal leaders, you can't control how they respond to you. You can only be sincere and open with people and allow them to respond how they respond. So I would say that the ability to influence the US Congress to pass helium legislation in a record period from it was introduced and passed within two years and that was done by influence.

**Lisa Peters** 08:27

Wow, okay, I'm going to step back maybe I don't know how many years and I'm going to go to your education because, listening to you, you made a comment earlier about you were a doer, so I'm not sure, did you graduate with an engineering degree? You know, you taught us, like I'm not. Was it a trades? Because you are at a position of influence and I just wanted to. What did you take? What did you do? Is it just all the work you've created? Give me a little insight on that.

**Jason Demers** 08:56

Well, let's just say it took me a couple of tries to get through grade 12. So, honestly, like I was a low-level grade student, I did graduate high school and that's my highest level of education. The rest of it is based on networking, on creating real relationships and not just transactional relationships, which has at times burned me and hurt me. But I've been accused of having an over-inflamed sense of fairness when I deal with people, that I deal with people the way I expect that they should be dealing with me. And that's in the business world that's not always the case. Even in personal life that's not always the case. So it was, you know, to your question. There is no academic path that I don't even know that you could take an academic path, maybe political sciences and things like that, but it was more about understanding who you need to know and getting to know them.

**Lisa Peters** 10:04

Yeah, thank you for sharing that, because I think sometimes we listen to leaders like yourself and we think, oh, you know, they're masters, they're engineers, they're masters of this, and just to hear your story, I mean, it was, it's grassroots, I love it. So I just appreciate you answering that question. So third question is we learn more from our failures and mistakes

than successes. Would you share one of the greatest failures or mistakes that you've learned from? And you're laughing already?

**Jason Demers 10:36**

On that question. I mean, I've been through this interview process on the LeaderImpact before and, and every time I come to that question I have a whole new list of failures and so or learnings, right, yeah, and so it's always which one do you share on how it leads in? so I think one of the biggest learning opportunities I had was knowing, knowing your deal, knowing what you want out of it, and I'm beginning, with the end in mind, to use that I was able to navigate and set up meetings with some very big, corporate, high-powered companies that were very interested in what I had to say and that, in what I was presenting and in the opportunity that I laid out. One of my skill sets or strengths is sharing a vision, is getting people to see the vision of what I'm working on, and that's helpful in building interest and excitement. And I had seven of the top VPs and executives of a large US corporation at the table looking at my, looking at my deal. I laid out all the pieces of it at the end of the conversation over a period of hours in a conference room in Houston, they said so what are you looking for from us? And I had no idea what that meant. And I got to a point where they were all eating from the trough, but I didn't know exactly what I was looking for from them and I didn't even have anything to propose. So that I was sent home with my tail between my legs and understanding that, boy, next time you get in front of people and want to present a deal, make sure you come prepared with what is it you want from them, what is the desired outcome? And that's where the Begin with the End in Mind has become my mantra in most meetings and businesses.

**Lisa Peters 12:36**

Oh, that's great. I think too many times we...It's funny because I'll get asked to go to meetings and I'm like what, what is the point? What do you need from me? Get to the... You know and to not to go into the meeting and not know? Did you just go in thinking they're not, they weren't, they weren't going to give to you or they weren't going to. Was just listening, like how was the meeting set up? How did this misunderstanding happen?

**Jason Demers 13:02**

Yeah. So it sounds simple when you're on the outside, but when you're living it, it's it's a little more forest in the tree scenario. I went into this meeting thinking, believing that they know more about the business I'm in, than I do, and that they would have some ideas as to how we could work together and then how they, how they would want to structure a deal. So I left that door open without having any sort of backstop to say This is, this is what I would like to see us

do. So when that, when that question came up, I expected that they would have an answer. And I was wrong.

Hard failure That that was skin the knees and the nose and the elbow is all at the same time and you know in high in retrospect I go. Well, duh Like you, you should go in knowing the answer. But yeah, that was a big failure.

**Lisa Peters** 13:53

Yeah, yeah, I don't think you've done it again. I mean, there's probably other mistakes, but you haven't done that one again.

**Jason Demers** 13:58

That one I have not repeated.

**Lisa Peters** 14:00

Yeah, so are you the type of guy that asks for help? I'm just asking.

**Jason Demers** 14:04

Yes, actually, I actually find that none of this stuff that I've been able to do I would ever be able to have done on my own, and it's all help from people in all different aspects, whether it's mentors to help me really evaluate what I'm thinking or the direction I'm thinking of taking, or people that I have the opportunity being I'll call it that. The lesser educated side is that I don't believe I know a whole lot. In fact, I believe that I know very little about a lot of things. So there are people who know a lot more about most things than I do and I'm more than happy to engage.

**Lisa Peters** 14:46

Yeah, I'm happy to surround myself with those people. Right, I don't have the answers. I've got a great support group around me.

All right. So at LeaderImpact, we want to grow personally, professionally, and spiritually for increasing impact. So would you be willing to share an example of how the spiritual makes a practical difference in your life as a leader?

**Jason Demers** 15:10

It certainly does, and I've found that faith is something to be practiced, and I feel like I've had an immersion in the situations that require faith to be able to provide direction and guidance.

It's like speaking another language. If you're immersed in the culture of it, you learn it faster. And I think faith is the same when you're in situations where you do need to depend on a power greater than yourself. And so I don't really have a single-point example, but I'd like to say more of an ongoing journey of experiences that test and temper your faith, and I think that probably one of the greatest opportunities I've found is that the network, the business network that I've created today is I'm surrounded by people of faith, of Christians, and the power of being able to build a relationship on sharing your faith. The vulnerability that comes with sharing your faith, especially in business at times, really builds some foundational relationships, and I think that's where a lot of my solid network connections are made is through just being vulnerable and sharing your faith.

**Lisa Peters** 16:32

And are you referring to your LeaderImpact groups, because I know you're involved, I think.?

**Jason Demers** 16:37

Yeah, I've been involved with the LeaderImpact here in Calgary for well, since LeaderImpact came to Calgary and prior to that. So I mean that's a great place. That's also a very safe place, I find. But I'm actually referring to the broader business community.

Some of the number of the business network contacts that I have, we've built a relationship to a point where we know each other's faith. We talk about our faith. So it's outside of the safe group setting and it's in that open business. We talk about it with people on Capitol Hill. I talk about it with people in meetings. And it's not so much a soapbox profession as just making sure that I put myself out there and they know that I'm a Christian. And some people try to use that as a negotiating point. But I found most people will open up with their faith or their perspective or have questions, And that's a great place to build a relationship from.

**Lisa Peters** 17:44

Wow, that is a great story, a good example. I think it's a tough one to not come out but to talk about it. I think in a business. I struggle to just bring it up. I try to, like wear the cross might start the conversation. Of course, it's how I act, it's how I treat people, that I hope you know I'm a Christian, but the conversation I can struggle with. I will freely admit that. So listening to you share this is a good inspiration. So thank you for sharing.

**Jason Demers** 18:21

It's definitely not one of those things that comes naturally. We tend to, I think, as people. Certain people are really called on this, but I think as people, we tend to be very guarded about sharing our faith, and especially in today's society where there is such a polarization

that between Christianity and the rest of the world sort of thing, so it's a scarier place to be open.

**Lisa Peters** 18:44

Yeah, well, I appreciate you being open. All right, well, I have two final questions. I ask these questions of all my guests on my show. You know that LeaderImpact is dedicated to leaders having a lasting impact. We've talked about that. So, as you continue to move through your own journey, have you considered what you want your faith legacy to be when you leave this world?

**Jason Demers** 19:06

You know, when you pose that question, it's one of those that I don't often think about but, funnily enough, my wife and I were just talking about it over the weekend in that, with our grandchildren, with our children and our grandchildren, it's instilling the word and the faith of God in our grandchildren and helping be those guides. I think that as a legacy, for as a faith legacy, knowing that another generation after us is grounded in their faith is about the greatest legacy I could have.

**Lisa Peters** 19:46

Yeah, that is a wonderful legacy and I completely agree. We are here to lead our children. So my last question is what brings you the greatest joy?

**Jason Demers** 20:01

I asked my wife that this morning I said what brings me the greatest joy, which she said her. And you know she's not wrong. But so that's a broad-spectrum question. The one component of it is the greatest joy is hearing my two-year-old grandson, when I walk in, go it's Papa and be all excited, and hearing that in his voice just brings me joy every single time. And on a more, on another level, I find what brings me a lot of deep joy is being given the opportunity to serve somebody, help somebody who is really in need, kind of in a spontaneous way, and that I always come away from those experiences just filled with joy in the spirit.

**Lisa Peters** 20:49

Yeah, that is great answers, Jason. That was really good. So I want to thank you. Just it has been a quick 20 minutes. It has been a pleasure to meet you again because I know we've met. I don't could have been long time ago, because somehow there was three or two years of our lives that just I think it was this way because it was the Zoom that we met, so it must have been somewhere in there. But I just want to thank you for taking the time out of your day. You are a very busy guy to catch up to, so I just want to thank you for joining us. Your answers are



so just high-level leadership and for me it's like a servant leadership. It's just. It was really great to talk to you and to hear you with your answers. I appreciate your time.

**Jason Demers 21:38**

Thank you, Lisa, it was a pleasure.

**Lisa Peters 21:40**

All right. Well, this ends our podcast with you, but if anyone wants to connect with you, what is the best way to find you?

**Jason Demers 21:46**

The only social way to social platform to connect with me is on LinkedIn.

**Lisa Peters 21:51**

All right.

**Jason Demers 21:52**

You can find me there under the critical mineral side.

**Lisa Peters 21:54**

All right, well again, thank you. Thank you, Jason.

**Jason Demers 21:57**

Thank you, Lisa.

**Lisa Peters 21:58**

Well, if you're part of LeaderImpact, you can always discuss or share this podcast with your group. And if you're not yet a part of LeaderImpact, and would like to find out more and grow your leadership, find our podcast page on our website at [leaderimpact.ca](http://leaderimpact.ca) and check out our free leadership assessment. You will also find on our webpage chapter one of Braden Douglas's book *Becoming a Leader of Impact*. It is an amazing leadership book. You can also check out groups available in Canada at [leaderimpact.ca](http://leaderimpact.ca) or, if you're listening from anywhere else in the world, check out [leaderimpact.com](http://leaderimpact.com) or get in touch with us by email at [info@leaderimpact.ca](mailto:info@leaderimpact.ca) and we will connect you. And if you like this podcast, please leave us a comment, give us a rating or review. This will help other global leaders find our podcast. Thank you for engaging with us and remember Impact starts with you.