



JIM HARSHAW JR.

Revealing Failure as the Path to Success

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #174

Jeff Eggers

Jeff Eggers is Executive Director of the McChrystal Group Leadership Institute, where he focuses on organizational performance and leadership.

Jeff was a Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and worked at the White House from 2010 to 2015.

He retired from the US Navy in 2013, after serving over 20 years as a combat veteran Navy SEAL.

Jeff received a Master of Arts from Oxford University and a Bachelor of Science from the United States Naval Academy.

Along with former General Stanley McChrystal and Jason Mangone, Jeff co-wrote the new book, "Leaders: Myth and Reality" which we'll talk about here today.

Quotes

"Most of what I've learned about leadership, I learned from failure."

"Leader has to be very much in-tune with the contextual requirements and signals around them and modulate their leadership style accordingly."

"The only way you're going to move a mountain is one shovel at a time, so you might as well get started."

About the Digital Environment 09:05 - 09:50

"In this digital age where information is flowing so much more quickly and readily, there's so much greater awareness of all the things that are going on around us, what others are doing. It makes it a lot harder to see the relative beauty in just slowing down and trying to re-balance. Everywhere you look, you have more visibility and more awareness of people doing other things. That "fear of missing out" factor is very real and very prevalent. So in addition to all the usual pressures that

are somewhat timeless, I think there is something new in this digital environment that makes us even more of a factor for us."

About the Book *Leaders: Myth and Reality* 17:20 - 18:30

"We know that leadership matters. We know it's important. Because it's important, we want to make it more accessible and more easily applied. So we do seek that formula but it's elusive. So instead of trying to write a book that's prescriptive, we start by profiling these 13 historic leaders. They're from a wide-ranging set of cultures and backgrounds and so forth. Frankly, some of them are not what you would hold up either as a typical leader or as a good leader. Some of these leaders like Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, or Boss Tweed, the corrupt New York political leader. These are not good leaders but we wanted to understand how it is that you can find effective leaders who are either at the fringes of what we would call being a good leader, even across the line of certain ethical or moral standards."

About the Two Myths of Leadership 19:34 - 21:10, 26:47 - 27:30

1. "The formulaic myth. It's the idea that leadership can be boiled down to a prescription because it is so contextual because it has to be responsive to its environment. What works for one instance in one leader can't be lifted up and dropped into a different instance for a different leader because it may not fit that system.

2. The attribution myth which is the idea we typically see leadership as a process enacted by the leader, meaning we attribute what's around us back to some sort of leadership process i.e. a leader. The myth there is there's much more that went into that outcome than what any single leader did or didn't do. If you can point to a leader and say, 'That leader did X, and then we saw Y result,' it makes for a much simpler universe than if we allocate the outcome into a system of many different actors.

3. The results myth. Typically we think of leadership as being important because it's the way that we get a group of people to achieve this outcome that's really important that otherwise, they wouldn't achieve. Whether it's the military leader that gets the soldiers to charge the hill, notwithstanding the personal risk themselves, that it's achieving some well-defined objective. Truth be told, that's important to us. We want results and outcomes for good reasons. But the reality is you can find lots of case studies of popular, effective leaders who weren't that good at achieving their stated results."

Action Item

If you put a little bit away into your retirement account every year over the course of your life, during your retirement, you've actually got a lot there saved up. It really is a miracle because compounding interest is much more significant and impactful than people give it credit for. If you take same idea and you apply it to your life, the process of getting through life and moving mountains, knocking down obstacles can sometimes feel overwhelming. If you've got this big challenge to get to, where do you start? The only place to start is with that very small incremental first step.

Successful Habits

I found it's really effective - particularly as our lives get busier and we're trying to find that balance, so to speak - is to live by a calendar, a schedule. It sounds mechanical. It sounds overly-engineered and micromanaged. But that's actually the beauty of it. It forces you to think what needs to get done, and that forces you to prioritize and be clear about what needs to get done and what doesn't. It forces you to think about that and put it in your calendar. It also makes you more accountable and better at getting those things done. It also allows you to then live in the 'white space' which is to say, when you're unscheduled, stop worrying about work. Stop checking your email and be present.

Website and Social

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