



JIM HARSHAW, JR.

Clarity of Action. Peace of Mind.

Success for the Athletic-Minded Man Podcast

Action Plan Episode #524

Doug Conant

When a Fortune 500 company is literally ringed in razor wire, you don't pep-talk your way out— you do the hard, specific work of rebuilding trust.

In this "Success for the Athletic-Minded Man" episode, I sit down with Doug Conant, the CEO who walked into Campbell Soup with plunging sales, a disengaged workforce, and a headquarters in one of America's most dangerous cities, and left it with the highest employee engagement score in the Fortune 500.

Doug's a student-athlete-turned-CEO who learned early that discipline matters. He played tennis at Northwestern, coached there, survived the LBO chaos at Nabisco, and then dug in at Campbell.

He tells the story straight, how Gallup called Campbell the worst engagement case they'd seen, how Doug's first day included firing the CFO, and how he and his team rebuilt an organization by showing up with consistency, respect, and tough-minded compassion.

We unpack practical moves: measurable engagement targets, replacing leaders who can't buy in, the "living, loving, learning, leaving a legacy" playbook Doug used, and the daily habits: the morning reflection, the commute rituals, the weekly appreciation, that let him be present for both the company and his family.

If you run a business or a team and want concrete, repeatable methods for turning disengaged people into relentless team members, this episode is your field guide. Don't miss it!

After you listen, if you're thinking, "How do I use this in my day-to-day?", Doug just launched [STEPS \(Success Through Empowering Professional Support\)](#), a leadership course built specifically for administrative professionals, taught by Doug himself. Use my code Harshaw10 for a discount.

Top Quotes From This Episode

"To win in the marketplace, you must first win in the workplace."

"Living with intentionality [would] be the single most important thing you can do."

"In everything that you do, you have to have an ecosystem that's built on the backs of people and their thinking and their collaboration with a performance profile that's dedicated to excellence every day."

Show Notes

This episode touches on the following key topics and ideas:

- **[Share this episode! \(2:24\)](#):** Share the podcast on social media by tagging me and using the hashtag #SAMpod:
 - **YouTube:** [@jimharshaw1](#)
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- **Student-Athlete Foundations (2:45):** Use your athletic background as a performance baseline— discipline, teammates, shared suffering, and long-term relationships translate directly into leadership stamina. Schedule regular training-like rituals (daily preparation, consistent practice) to keep that competitive edge in business and life.
- **First Day at Campbell (5:12):** When you step into a failing organization, do a brutal reality assessment: people, processes, trust levels, physical environment, and optics. Identify the immediate morale and safety issues and prioritize small, visible fixes to stop the bleeding and re-establish credibility.
- **Living, Loving, Learning, Leaving a Legacy (14:40):** Operationalize this four-part framework: secure working conditions and tools (living), weekly authentic appreciation (loving), formal pathways for development (learning), and mission-driven projects that let people contribute beyond tasks (leaving a legacy). Embed one tactic from each quadrant into your next quarterly plan.
- **Tough-Minded and Tender-Hearted Leadership (21:55):** Lead with high standards and clear expectations while demonstrating fairness and support. Build an "emotional bank account"— acknowledge wins frequently, give tough feedback with support, and offer transition help when changes require exits.

- **Personal Routines to Sustain Performance (30:52):** Build micro-habits that protect presence and energy. Design boundary rituals that mark transitions between roles so you show up fully in each part of your life.
- **What's an action item the listener can take in the next 24-48 hours? (38:41):** Schedule a focused planning session (2-4 hours) to extract lessons from your life story: clarify purpose, values, roles, and non-negotiables. Use that output as your leadership blueprint. Post it visibly, review weekly, and run a quarterly "productive pause" to recalibrate priorities and actions.

List of Resources Mentioned in the Episode

["The Blueprint: 6 Practical Steps to Lift Your Leadership to New Heights"](#) by Doug Conant

["7 Habits Of Highly Effective People"](#) by Stephen Covey

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