



Sally: Welcome to another episode of People and Management. I'm delighted and actually a little bit lucky to have with me on the call a gentlemen by the name of Mike Storkey. Now, Mike is the International President for Toastmasters, and so I want to give you a little bit of my background. Then we'll drill Mike for all his wisdom. How does that sound? Welcome to the call for starters Mike?

Mike: Thank you Sally.

Sally: All right. Who is Mike Storkey? He is a business trainer and coach at Storkeys' Team, which is a business that he co-founded in 2005. Mike helps small business and local government, and other organisations to do strategic business planning. To do change management, time management. He gets right in there and helps them build their leadership. As well as this business, Mike also is a licenced real estate agent. He is heavily involved with a lot of service organisations. He was a forming, founder president for a local Chamber of Commerce in Northern Queensland, the Whitsundays. He's also been recognised with a Paul Harris Fellow for his work with the Rotary Club in Airlie Beach. When we talk about Mike Storkey we also talk about service. I think it's just an amazing background and congratulations on being Toastmasters International President.

Mike: Thank you Sally. It's an honour.

Sally: Yeah. I feel privileged to have you particularly in my head and in my imagination. You are an incredibly busy man already, but even more so as part of your presidency.

Mike: Yeah. I like to be busy. I'm a person who gets bored very quickly, so I like to be occupied. For me a good day is a busy day.

Sally: Oh fantastic. What got you into Toastmasters, because you've been with Toastmasters for more than 26 years?

Mike: As you mentioned earlier, Leslie and I lived in the Whitsundays. The Whitsundays is a fabulous place during the daytime. Apart from when cyclones happen you can go swimming, sailing, snorkelling, beautiful. But in the evening when the sun goes down, there's very little to do other than go to bars and nightclubs. Leslie and I with five kids felt ... so that really wasn't really our scene. We heard that a Toastmasters Club was forming, so we went along to see what happened. We didn't actually join then we waited another two years. You can honestly say we went for social activity and interaction with people, rather than anything else.

Sally: Fantastic. I get asked the same thing about why I joined and I say, "Fun." People look at me like I am a little bit weird, but that's why I

joined, so yeah. I think one of the things that I really want to dig into, because you help businesses. In your business life, you help businesses to build their capability, their leadership and be strategic. Now, in your presidency what are those leadership lessons that you've learnt from being in the role of international president so far?

Mike: I think the greatest thing that I have learnt is to listen. I think far too many of our leaders have their own agendas and ambitions, which is fine, but you need to listen to your team. You need to listen to your customers. You need to listen to the members of your association, because your vision has got to include their visions. You need to hear what they're saying. I think too often we try to think how someone is going to end the conversation when we're listening to them, and we answer what we think they were going to say, rather than what they actually said.

Sally: Yeah. That's the tape that's already playing in their head isn't it to some degree?

Mike: That's right.

Sally: Yeah. I guess, and I want to just tap into that a little bit deeper, I'd love to know your insight. What can people do to actually stop the tape, our leaders to actually stop and be present and listen?

Mike: I think if you look in people's eyes when you talk to them and stop, just suspend thinking what you think they're going to say. Really listen, because usually what they have to say, the important words are in the last six words they say. It really takes a conscious effort to start with. Even if there's a little pause when they finish before you start speaking, there's an old saying in sales that, "Whoever talks first after the salesman has given his pitch will end up buying the product." So, the salesman should never be the first person to speak, it's always be the client.

Sally: Oh that's gold. Thank you for that. I think that's excellent. There's a concept at the moment that's getting a lot of popularity called, self-leadership. I think it's probably an old concept with new language around it. How do you see this concept of self-leadership showing up?

Mike: I think to be an effective leader, you need to know yourself. I think if you can't lead yourself it's going to be very difficult to lead others. You have to temper your enthusiasm with a little bit of caution. You've got to be prepared to listen to others. I think self-leadership is probably putting the emphasis where it should be. Before we try to lead others, let's make sure we can lead ourselves. That we are aware of our strengths, but also aware of our weaknesses. Build our teams accordingly, so that we have people with strengths we don't have to help us achieve the goals.

- Sally: I think that's a challenge for some people, because at some level there's a little bit of threatening that can go on. That if you've got something, a skill or ability that I don't have, how do I get over myself so that you can actually shine in the skill that I don't have?
- Mike: I think the biggest thing that lacks in leadership today is delegation. So many people feel they have to do it all themselves, and "Nobody can do it as well as I can do it." You only have so many hours in the day, there's only so much time you have. If you have an effective team who you trust, and who have skills you can rely upon, then delegate to them. Because delegation not only means you'll achieve more, but you're giving others an opportunity to grow their leadership skills, and become effective leaders. If you do it all yourself, knowledge is only worth something when you share it. If you keep it all to yourself it means nothing, but if you can pass it on to others and they can develop their potential. Then how much more effective would your team be, than if it's just a one man band?
- Sally: My ears are just loving everything you just said. I'm a big, big, big advocate for delegation so yes, I totally agree. I can imagine that in your role currently as Toastmasters International President, delegation plays a big part?
- Mike: As you know, our organisation is based on volunteers. All our leaders are volunteers. We wouldn't be in over 136 countries with over 1,600 clubs, if it wasn't for volunteers. Each one of those leaders does or performs because they have delegated tasks. We only have a staff of a 160 odd people worldwide, you just couldn't run an organisation our size, if you didn't delegate. We are where leaders are made. Part of making leaders is delegating responsibility or authority to do jobs so that they can learn by doing.
- Sally: Yeah, yeah. I think that begs the question then, you're an incredibly successful businessman who has focused on local government, small business. Now you're stepping into an international role, what's been an unexpected challenge for you in taking on the other role, the international role?
- Mike: I think the biggest challenge is, you have to have global perspective when you go into something that's international. When you're running your own business, it's your own business and your customers. It's the same in an organisation or when you are in a club, it's safe four walls. You know the people in the club, but the challenge is to step outside your comfort zone. That's really for me, moving out of thinking North Queensland or what have you, and starting to think on a global perspective with other cultures, other customs. That was a huge learning curve for me, but I'm so thankful that I did it.
- Sally: Again, I'm imagining that challenge to push, the thinking more globally has an impact on your ability to also strategically think, and how that's

come back and will help your clients in your own business.

Mike: Oh exactly. I mean if you can see the big picture of whatever sphere of influence you're in, it allows you to make decisions that are far more rational, effective. Take into consideration a lot more items or things that you didn't think of before. Sometimes it's like a little aha moment when you suddenly think, "Why isn't this working?" Then you think, "Oh I'm only looking at it from my perspective, not from their perspective." Suddenly you find that maybe something you held very strongly to be true, it might be where you live, but it isn't in India or in England or wherever.

Sally: God that's gold, that's gold. That's really fascinating. I think that's a real key leadership learning piece is that ... Let's face it, a lot of leaders that we meet, particularly in a business context, they get pulled down into the weeds of everything day to day. Whereas this sounds like just such an opportunity to help you stay higher and strategic. Do you get caught up, do you get pulled down into the weeds of operational things for Toastmasters?

Mike: I think occasionally. I think whilst I'm all for being a strategic thinker, leaving operational to your managers, et cetera, you still have to be conscious of operational. Because if you don't know what's happening at the coalface in your business or in your organisation, it's very hard to make realistic strategic plans if you're ignoring the operational challenges. The thing is to realise when to let go and let the lower echelons deal with that. When to just be aware of their challenges, but let them solve that, but you keep looking at the goals overall and the broader picture.

Sally: That comes full circle back to your point about listening. Now you need to listen. I don't think it necessarily means that you're not doing, or you necessarily have to fix everything. I think there's a real balancing act and it comes back to listening and trust and delegation.

Mike: Yeah, and trust is a very important part. You need to trust your team, so you need to build a team in whom you have trust, you can develop the trust. Once again to develop trust, we were talking about delegation earlier, if you delegate to a team member and you're not quite sure if they're going to be up to it and they do a brilliant job, they have built trust with you built on doing something. That is so important, if you know your team and you can trust them, then it's one of the nicest feelings you can have in business.

Sally: There's a statement that was said to me many years ago doing a leadership programme was, "You cannot hate the person whose story you know." What that interpretation of that for me was, the more I get to know the people I work with or hangout with or need to lead or manage, not all the warts in all stories, but you get to know them, the trust will be there. Because I'll have a better relationship to ask and to

clarify, and to take hands off and let them do. I think that, it's quite interesting in Toastmasters, the first speech that we ask people to do when they join, is their icebreaker. I think it's a beautiful blend. It's a beautiful way to build the trust and get to know the team and then it can build from there.

Mike: I think one of the most important things in business and in society today is communication. Too many times you hear people say "The only time I ever hear from my boss is when I've done something wrong." I am a great believer that when I was an area director and had to ring the presidents of the clubs in my area for which I was responsible, I'd ring them every week, once a week. Not to find out what was happening in the club, but just to find out "How you going John, how's the family?" Just to build up that rapport, so when there was a problem, they felt easy in talking to you. I think in business today we don't do that enough. We don't talk to people and congratulate them, give them praise and ask how they are going enough. You build up that rapport so when there is a challenge, a problem, you can have a meaningful one on one with trust.

Sally: Here's quite an operational question for you then. As that area director, number one, how many presidents were there? Realistically, how long did all those calls take you?

Mike: Six to seven in the area that I was in charge of, spread over an area of some 500 kilometres. Many of the clubs were different to others, some were rural and some were based in an urban area. The average time for the call would be no more than five to 10 minutes. But if there was something they wanted to talk about, then it could take 20 minutes, 30 minutes, but average five to 10. It was really just an hour a week at a time that suited them. That's important, don't you stipulate the time, ask what is convenient, because each of them has family commitments that won't be the same as yours.

Sally: That's right. The reason why I ask that is because, the problem, or the scenario is much bigger in our heads than what it really is. I think quite often leaders and managers need to right-size a situation or right-size a problem or right-size this kind of task.

Mike: Exactly.

Sally: Yeah, thank you for that. I think that's really, really important to actually get a handle on that. That it's not actually such a big deal, but that the outcome is gold. Yeah, the outcome is absolutely gold. I've asked you about an unexpected challenge. That was about really being really quite global and looking at situations from more than your own perspective. What's been an unexpected delight of being the international president?

Mike: I don't know if it was unexpected to be honest with you. As you know, I

am passionate about the members of our organisation. The opportunity to actually visit them on their home territory and in the conditions in which they're attending clubs and things, it's an honour and privilege that just blows me away. I'm still a great believer that the greatest thing in our organisation, it's the member. To actually be able to go to club meetings in various parts of the States or Sri Lanka or India, or whatever is such a privilege.

Sally: I get goosebumps when you just said that. I've been to a few countries where I've seen a few different clubs, but I've not been to the sheer diverse amount of clubs you've probably visited, so yeah, an amazing experience. What would you say to someone who is looking to take on a bigger role? I mean you've got the top role at the moment in Toastmasters International, I know you don't look at it like that, but organisational structure wise you are. When people look to a role like yours or they look to a really senior role, and they kind of have their sparkle in the eye, what's your advice for them?

Mike: Never let an opportunity pass you by, because it may never come again. Even if you have some misgivings or doubts that your capabilities are sufficient to do the job, trust in your own ability. Study by it all means, but take it on, because I would hate think that in years to come you'd be sitting there in the privacy of your own home one night and thinking, "What if I had done that? Or what if ... ?". You should never die wondering. You need to go out there and take every opportunity, because as I said before, they might not come your way again. You know, there are some amazing things that can happen when you make a decision and you're not a 100% sure it's the right one. If you don't make a decision you can't change anything, but if you make the wrong decision you can change it. Don't vacillate, grab it with both hands and run with it.

Sally: Oh I love that, I love that. One of the things that I would like to add to that is, and I'd love your comment on this. When we look at a role, a higher level role, or an opportunity that comes our way, I think some of the tape that plays in our head is, "Well, I don't know how to do that." To me and to my way of thinking is, well or course you don't, because you've not done it before, stop expecting to know how to do it. This is real life on the job training and you're not alone.

Mike: That's where I think Toastmasters shine. They don't expect you to know how to do the job. They look at you and say, "We believe you have the potential to do the job, take the challenge and we will teach you on the job." Nothing teaches anyone better than doing the job. You can swot books, you can go to university, you can do a whole lot of things. There is no substitute for experiencing and doing the actual job.

Sally: Yes, I totally agree. We're a work in progress and that's why we always step up and have a go, so I think that's fantastic.

Mike: Exactly.

Sally: Yeah. I think I have one last question for you if I may. That's around being productive and keeping productivity on track for you. Given it's a global role, what do you do to keep or insure that you are productive in achieving your vision as you set yourself forward into this presidency and beyond?

Mike: I usually try to take about 20 minutes a day where I sit down at the end of the day and I say to myself, "So, what did I achieve? What have I got to do tomorrow?" I hate being caught by surprise, so I do like to know what I am doing, where I'm going. Then, I'm very fortunate, my wife is also a Toastmaster, Leslie, as you know. She's a great sounding board. She reminds me sometimes, "Don't forget, you've got to do this and do that." She's also a great evaluator.

She'll come and she'll see me give a speech or whatever, and I really value the feedback she gives me because it's honest evaluation. She's prepared to tell me, "You didn't do your jacket up. You didn't stand straight." The little things that you need to know that maybe other people aren't prepared to tell you. I think you need to have a mentor. Everybody needs a mentor they can trust. If you're in business, you need someone whose advice you trust. I think the big thing is to have a mentor or a team of mentors who can help you, who you trust, and who can keep you on track.

Sally: I think the permission to be brutally honest and understanding it comes from a nurture, not a destroyer perspective, I think is really valuable. 10 points for Leslie then.

Mike: As you know in Toastmasters evaluation is the keystone of our organisation.

Sally: No matter what role you play in the course of a club meeting it will be evaluated. I think that's such a fantastic lesson for business and for organisations, is that everything we do needs to have some form of evaluation. Even if it's personal reflection at the very, very minimum, how else do we improve, how else do we get better?

Mike: Exactly, which is why I would urge everybody to come to Toastmasters. If you don't learn anything else you will learn how to receive and give constructive evaluation.

Sally: Exactly. I think knowing or expecting there will be feedback is a key piece to that. I don't think that happens in business very often.

Mike: No.

Sally: We need to expect it. We need to not be so naïve, and be open to it. I know that quite often managers and leaders in certain businesses don't

deliver it very well, even though they're well intended. I think that's were some organisations, particularly Toastmasters, they provide us structure. They provide a way on which to craft some feedback.

Mike: Exactly. It has to be supportive, not destructive.

Sally: Yeah. Even if something's gone wrong, it's about a proactive approach to fixing and learning.

Mike: Exactly.

Sally: Yeah, yeah. Mike, I have loved chatting with you, and I really appreciate. I want to finish on to something that you have said. "The skills I developed in Toastmasters from helping others, work as a team and developing a vision in order to reach a common goal have made me better equipped to tackle leadership opportunities both in my private life and professional life." - Mike Storkey.

Thank you so much Mike. I have loved speaking with you. I think we're on so much of a same page we could probably talk for another three days straight. We are Toastmasters after all. Any final words from you Mike?

Mike: Yeah, I think the saying I have now and I tell Toastmasters is, "We're not here to make better Toastmasters. We're here to make better people who learn the skills in a Toastmasters club to take them outside and use them in their family, their business, or their community life." I think that encapsulates what it's all about. We have to be better people who share and support others.

Sally: Definitely. Thank you so much.

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