

Fueling World-Class Performance

With Steve Lover

Episode 115

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Steve (00:00):

Most people think confidence is something you talk yourself into before doing it, that you get confidence and then you get good. It's just the opposite. Success precedes confidence. When you go to do something, you don't do well and you become successful at it, that's when confidence starts to pile in.

Introduction (00:15):

Welcome to the Healthcare Leadership Experience Podcast, hosted by Lisa Miller and Jim Cagliostro.

Lisa is the founder of VIE Healthcare Consulting and now managing director at SpendMend. Lisa and her team has generated over \$1 billion in financial improvements for VIE's clients since 1999.

Since 2007, Jim has been a registered nurse working in critical care, perioperative services, and outpatient settings at nationally recognized medical facilities across three states. You'll hear conversations on relevant and trending topics in healthcare and much more. Now, here's your hosts, Lisa and Jim.

Jim (00:54):

Hi, this is Jim Cagliostro and you're listening to the Healthcare Leadership Experience. Today's guest is Steve Lover, Founder of Blue Mountain Business Coaching and author of IGNITE!: Fueling World-Class Performance Even If Your Employees Are Not Yet World-Class. I love that title, Steve. That catches my attention.

Steve (01:13):

Thank you.

Jim (01:13):

On this episode, we will hear from Steve on exactly what world-class performance is and how you and your team can get there. So Steve, welcome. Thanks for joining us today.

Steve (01:22):

Thank you very much, Jim. It's a pleasure to be here.

Jim (01:25):

I always like to just start the episode, every episode, with you taking a few minutes just to share a little about your story: Your life, your career before you started Blue Mountain Business Coaching, and really ultimately what inspired you to write IGNITE.

Steve (01:39):

Interesting. So let's see. I'll do the background as quick as I can. I started out actually as a rabbi, and I was in Jerusalem afterwards. I served communities in Amsterdam, Holland, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles. And my family got big enough I had to go from nonprofit to profit. Opened my first business, failed miserably. Ended up in the insurance business, did very well, and I was tapped on the shoulder if I would take over the training of Southeast, Michigan for a Fortune 50 company. And it went really well. And they had a really interesting perspective. They said if an agent knew what

to do, he had the skill he could prove he could do it, he had the desire, there's no reason he wasn't being successful.

Steve (02:23):

I had a room full of agents that knew what to do. They had the knowledge, they had the skill, they could role play it and show that they could do it, and they were dying to be successful, and they were failing. So there was something missing. And I got into coaching, and I found the missing thing. Sometimes you got to have a guy who is afraid to pick up the phone and he can have all the knowledge, skill, and desire he wants, but if the phone feels like it's 3,000 pounds, he's not lifting it up. And that's the same in any industry. It has nothing to do with having to make cold calls, but there's something somebody doesn't like to do or they're afraid of doing it or they have a thought process around it that doesn't work and they didn't get over that thought process, that's a big problem.

Steve (03:06):

And so we had a little bit of a discussion on that, and they said, "We kind of liked the way we're doing things." And I said, "Well, I kind of feel I like to do things differently," so I went on and started my coaching practice. At first, I was doing a lot in the financial services industry and that was back in 2005. And at this point I work with all kinds of businesses, and it's really worked from working with small business. How do we get more clients, how do we get more things to happen, kind the business stuff.

Steve (03:33):

And then over the last few years it's kind of morphed. Okay, I kind of get the widget business, but now I'm hiring people, and I don't know what to do with them. And so when some guy says, "I feel like I'm herding cats or I have good people and I can't get them to do what they need to do," that's where the problem is. And actually what happened is the book is a combination of two things happen at once. The real idea behind the book is that what makes a great employee is a confident employee. Confidence is the number one thing that you can have to be a great employee.

Nothing else even comes close. And the problem is owners don't realize and don't necessarily hire to that and they don't do anything about that.

Steve (04:14):

And so the book is, how do you bring out more confidence in your employees? That's what the book's really about. My original title is actually Confidence Creator, and it went through a few iterations till it became the IGNITE book. The first section of the book is, where does confidence come from and how do you build it? Second one is, what are confidence killers? And the third portion of the book is, okay, how do you help your employees develop their confidence, become great employees? And the original thoughts that I was originally playing with was really more around the self-esteem industry, which I got away from totally. And it was more about my kids growing up at the time. It wasn't a book that I woke up one day said, "Wow, this is the book I have to write."

Jim (04:52):

Sure.

Steve (04:52):

This is something that evolved over 25 years.

Jim (04:57):

I love it. You mentioned your experience and I think a lot of times when we ask this question, I like to hear from our guest, Rabbi, failed business starter and working in insurance. You mentioned as a father these experiences, like you said, the last so many years have been preparing you to speak to this topic.

Steve (05:15):

Yes.

Jim (05:16):

And then you mentioned about the fact of fears and thought process. I know I shared briefly with you before, we were chatting, confidence is a big thing for me. I'm confident in some areas, at the bedside as a registered nurse, great, but then you get into some of the business side of healthcare, and I don't have that confidence. So we're probably going to get into that in our conversation here of you mentioned the confidence killers and how do you find or how do you build that confidence in your team. When you think about writing a book, have you written before? Is this the first book that you've written?

Steve (05:44):

I've written some short booklets on much more pointed subjects. This is the first full-fledged book. There'll be more.

Jim (05:51):

Sure, I'm sure. And you're pouring your experience into that, your perspective in it. And with a book, your audience becomes much larger. At least, the capability of reaching more people.

Steve (06:00):

Yes.

Jim (06:00):

I think that's great. So on the back of your book, I saw the words disruptive and disruption. The book is on its way. It hasn't arrived yet to me, so I am looking forward to reading it, but I saw disruptive and disruption. In your experience, what needs to be disrupted? What have you found to be the reasons why some teams or individuals are underperforming? And obviously confidence, but I don't know if you can break that down a little bit more?

Steve (06:26):

Yeah, so there's a bunch of things that go into that. That's a really juicy question. And one of the reasons I say that there's a great book, it's by a guy named Jocko Willink and it's called Extreme Ownership. And he's got this great story. This guy was a Navy SEAL and they had four boats that were in competitions and one boat was acing everything, the number one boat in all of them, and another one was number four boat. And they tried as an experience, they switched the leaders of the two boats. And at the end, after they switched them, boat number four became boat number one, and boat number one became boat number four. It was all about the leader.

Steve (07:07):

I like to say, and this is really, I've said that I say this in two different places in my book, but it's really interesting speaking to a medical group of people. When you walk into a doctor's office, sometimes you'll walk in, and the staff is pleasant and they're nice and they're welcoming and they're caring. And you walk into another office, and you feel like they're doing you the biggest favor by just showing up to work in the morning. Very often they're sour faced, sometimes they're even nasty. Well, I believe that that comes from the doctor. A doctor that really cares how his patients are treated, that's the first office you went to. A doctor that's really worried about what the money in the business is looking or other things or efficiencies. That's the second business. So people have to be, they're going to follow you and how you lead them.

Steve (07:49):

And what Willink came out in his book was in the good leader over there, everybody had extreme ownership of what they were doing. And the other one, they didn't. And so really, you had mentioned something earlier, what world-class is. And to me, the definition of world-class is when you decide you want to do something, and you can fulfill it. So we say we want to get this done as a company. The fact that we can get that done based on what we said we wanted is what world-class is about. And when it comes to having people work for you and getting them on the program and then

getting them involved and getting them excited, it's a whole different ballpark on how you're going to have those discussions.

Steve (08:34):

I take a model of self-confidence, which is just basically three things. I use a Venn diagram. The first one is taking on a challenge that you've never done before. And the problem is, if you've never done it before, you're not going to be good. You got to be lousy to be good, good to be great, great to be amazing. And everybody wants to start off amazing. And so you take on that challenge and you do the deliberate work that you have to do that's really hard and uncomfortable. And when you finally get results from that, you become confident. Most people think confidence is something you talk yourself into before doing it, that you get confidence and then you get good. It's just the opposite. Success precedes confidence. When you go to do something, you don't do well and you become successful at it, that's when confidence starts to pile in.

Jim (09:18):

I like that. Success precedes confidence.

Steve (09:22):

Yeah. First chapter of the book.

Jim (09:24):

I think that's huge in terms of this, well, you mentioned fear earlier, this fear of failure, this fear to make mistakes. And obviously when we talk about healthcare, there's certain mistakes, okay, yeah, we have to avoid. The stakes are high, we're dealing with human life, but in terms of your day-to-day and you building your skillset, you're not going to be an expert at it when you first start.

Steve (09:45):

A hundred thousand percent.

Jim (09:47):

I love that perspective.

Steve (09:49):

Nothing you've ever done that was worthwhile were you good at when you started. Not driving a bike, not driving a car, not eating, not walking. The difference is all kids are born confident. Have you ever seen a kid that gave up on walking?

Jim (10:03):

No.

Steve (10:04):

I'm just not good at this. I fell a thousand times already. I think I'm going to set it out. I believe that if today we would learn to walk at age 20, most people would be crawling into meetings because they would give up. I'm no good at this. And that's a shame. That's not our normal state, but many things have done that. The school system beats it out of us. I think it's chapter eight in the book where I speak about the schooling system. School system was set up to create factory workers.

Jim (10:32):

Yes.

Steve (10:33):

They're not learning environments. So what happens is there's bells to tell you when to come in and when to come out. There is somebody, an autocrat at the front of the room running the show. They're boss, and they don't have to be reasonable. They're just your boss. You just got to listen to them, whatever they do, it doesn't make a difference. And don't look at the

next guy's paper or get help from another kid in class because you might learn something. You have to worry about getting your school into the thing and that's all you worry about. And so it's created for a factory environment. And guess what? We don't have factory environment anymore. We have a value-based environment. It's a whole different everything, and if you're not there putting it out...

Jim (11:07):

And the value-based environment, yes, especially in healthcare. We're looking at results, but how are we getting to those results? How long is it taking? How much is it costing? I was just listening to something this morning about that, talking about the school system that we all grew up in, in this country. The system, like you said, factory workers. And for the kid that's the creative or the risk-taker, it just puts out that fire in them, but their personality just keeps going to it. So it was an interesting conversation, but it's funny that you mentioned that here.

Jim (11:40):

When we talk about performance of individuals or performance of a team, really, we're ultimately talking about individuals who are working together towards a common goal. You said about that, getting the job done for that world-class performance. How does a leader, whether it's healthcare or any other industry, hire or bring on the best people? So I am kind of starting at the beginning of that process. You might already have a team, but what if you say, "Hey, we need to build this team up." How do you find those right people? Or how do you say, "Yeah, this is the one with the confidence that we need," or, "this is someone who has the potential, let's bring them in"?

Steve (12:12):

Awesome question. And the answer to that question is really, I believe there's five things that you need in a good employee, and they're not the five things most people look for. The first one is, do they have an aptitude for the business? Now, you might have a business that needs a certain amount of skill that they've learned, but experience is never what it's at

because very often you have to unteach them. And so do they have the aptitude? Do they have the ability to do this work? Is this work a good job for them? Number two, the most important of the five is, do they have the right attitude? Are they people that are going to be upbeat, optimistic, go, and with a gusto to the business? The third one, the hardest one to find is, do they have a good work ethic?

Jim (12:51):

Yes.

Steve (12:52):

Most people today do not have a good work ethic. And so finding people that have a good work ethic or would like to develop it, as a third one, that's the hardest one to find. The next one would be, are they coachable? Is this somebody that you're going to be able to have a real discussion, help them get better? And they're going to be willing to take that discussion. If they're not coachable, it's a mistake. And then finally, are they a good fit for your culture? If they're not a good fit for the culture, that's going to create waves.

Steve (13:22):

So those five in place, and sometimes you'll make mistakes. You think you have all five and you find out you don't really have the work ethic or attitude's not quite as good as you thought it was, and then that's time to make a new decision about that person. But when it comes to coming on, those five things scream. And if those five things are in place, I believe you can overcome almost anything.

Jim (13:44):

So aptitude, attitude, work ethic, coachable, and a good fit for the culture. I love that list, and I'll just echo what you said. I've heard that more and more from people who are responsible for hiring, that work ethic is harder and harder to find, whether it's, well, definitely a cultural generational thing. And the coachability. The coachability is one I've heard often from others. So that's a great list.

If you're just tuning in, you're listening to the Healthcare Leadership Experience and I'm your host, Jim Cagliostro. This show is sponsored by VIE Healthcare Consulting, a SpendMend company which provides leading edge financial and operational consulting for hospitals, healthcare institutions, and other providers of patient care.

Since 1999, VIE has been a recognized leader in healthcare costs, hospital purchased services, healthcare benchmarking, supply chain management, and performance improvement. You can learn more about VIE Healthcare Consulting at viehealthcare.com and spendmend.com.

Jim (14:39):

So Steve, once you have your team... Thank you for breaking that list. I love that list of five. I wrote it down here. That's great. But once you have that team, how do you motivate? How do you inspire? Let's use the title of the book. How do you ignite world-class performance across the board on a consistent basis?

Steve (14:57):

That's a great question. That's really what the whole third section of the book is about. The shortcut is I told you there's three things that are in place to create confidence, which were taking on a big challenge, doing deliberate work on it, and getting results. So the corollary for the manager or leader is to inspire the challenge, encourage the efforts, and to celebrate the results. And there's a lot to unpack there because first off, I do not like motivation. Believe motivation is totally the wrong thing. Motivate means I get you to do things that I want you to do for my reasons. Whereas if I inspire you, I get you to do things that you want to do for your own reasons.

Steve (15:39):

And if you think about what people really want, like the salesman example, I can come to them and say, "Listen, we really need you to do this because this is what our company needs right now." Or you can say, "You'd like to have that extra money? Wouldn't you like to go on vacation this summer and you'd like to get that new car?" Which one do you think is going to help them take on the challenge and do it better?

Jim (16:00):

Sure. Inspiration.

Steve (16:02):

Right, inspiration. So I don't believe in motivation. I always see inspire. Second off, when it comes to the work, anytime somebody's doing something difficult that's off the charts for them that they haven't done before, it's scary. And what they need, this is a really interesting distinction also. A lot of people think that fear and courage are opposites. Couldn't be further from the truth. They're brothers. If you're not fearful, you don't need courage. Courage is only around if you're fearful. If you're not fearful, I don't have to be courageous about anything. But if I am fearful, that's when I got to put on my courage pants or my courage jacket, whatever is, and go do things.

Steve (16:40):

And so what they need is to be encouraged. The word encourage means to give somebody else your courage. Now, I'm not doing the hard work. It's easy for me to encourage them. And I like to use example of the guy who's working out and he's doing bench pressing and he takes on a new weight that's higher than he's ever done before and some guy's spotting him and he gets number eight, and it goes tough in nine. He's struggling and the guy spotting him says, "It's all you. Come on, you got it. I'm here for you. Just go a little. Push a little more, push a little more." And he gets his 10 reps because the encouragement.

Steve (17:12):

And that's the same thing that a leader has to do. They have to encourage their people when things are going tough. Not necessarily push them, not necessarily hang it over them, not necessarily berate them, but just the opposite. You have to encourage them. Get them to keep the picture of

what they want to do, what inspired them to go do it better. And then probably the most important is to celebrate the results. And most business owners absolutely are horrible at celebrations. They just don't know how to help a person see it. And I'll just give you an example for a kid. A kid comes home with a 99 on a math test and dad could say, "Wow, great job, kid." That's almost not even a compliment, let alone on a celebration.

Jim (17:53):

Sure. Guilty. I'm guilty there.

Steve (17:55):

But if dad says, "Hey Jimmy, I know you've been struggling with math for a long time, and I noticed the last two weeks you worked really hard and I'm getting to see a 99 on a test right now and I'm really proud of you. I'm proud to be your father. You did great work. Let's go get some ice cream to celebrate." How much more does that kid want to take on the next new challenge? You've set it up that winning that challenge feels so good, is so wonderful, I'm going to take on the next challenge so I can get to that place where I have that celebration again. And that's really important and really exciting.

Jim (18:27):

That's a great reminder. There's been plenty of studies on the value of recognition and it's not expensive. I mean, it's not recognizing, again, thinking of my time at the bedside or on the floor, you have a bunch of your coworkers. And when one of your coworkers is recognized for excellent work or going above and beyond for the sake of a patient, it causes other... Well, first of all, it reinforces that behavior.

Steve (18:50):

Yes.

Jim (18:50):

They love that feeling, just like you said, they want to repeat that. But then others see it and say, "Okay, I want to enjoy it as well."

Steve (18:57):

I want some of that.

Jim (18:57):

Yeah, absolutely. Inspire, encourage, and celebrate. The encourage part too, that's a big one for me. I've been in meetings and Lisa will tell you this, or Rich, my bosses, they've seen the look in my eyes. I have no clue how to do or just not sure where to go. That lack of confidence. After the meeting, you get that phone call from them to say, "Hey, we got this. We're going to go through; we're going to figure it out." And that one-minute phone call is all I needed to, okay, let's go. Let's get running. That's huge. I love that you have that.

Steve (19:27):

There's another thing that works a lot here at this also, and that is most bosses have expectations, but they're never fully verbalized. And I don't believe in expectations because I think when you have expectations, you are setting yourself up to be disappointed. I would say in most cases where you see things don't work out between partners, husband and wife, unvoiced expectations they had of the other partner, they never came to an agreement. So instead, we do agreements. What agreement is, is okay, this is the problem we're trying to solve. How are we going to do this together? What do you want to take on? What do you want to do? Get their total buy-in in it and say, "Okay, how are we going to follow up and check on this and make sure it's happening?" So now I, as a leader, am a support person. I'm supporting you on getting the thing done that you want to do, that you're committed to. And now it's not about my expectations, well, they let me down again. It's about people owning the thing that they're going to do, and they react differently when they do that.

Jim (20:29):

Okay, if I understand you correctly, the expectations, the big issue is, it's not communicated. When we say instead of expectations we're saying agreements, there's a better communication about what those expectations are.

Steve (20:41):

Yeah, it's a little bit more than that, but that's the main point. The main point is when you get an agreement, both sides are buying in and both sides are taking responsibility for getting it done. When you have an expectation, this is what you're going to do, even if you articulate it decently, it's not the same thing. Get the buy-in. And so you can get the buy-in however high what you wanted to do. I mean, think about the sports team that wants to go to the Super Bowl. If the guys are not buying into going into the Super Bowl, the coach can want them to go to the Super Bowl as much as he wants and scream and throw things and do whatever he wants. It's not happening. When the team members say, "No, we're doing it," and they start holding each other accountable and doing things, everything changes.

Jim (21:23):

It's collaborative. There's buy-in, you said that word, accountable. Accountability, that's huge. So I really do, I think we have time to get into this as well. I wanted to ask you, healthcare is an industry that deals with people, whether patients, providers. How important is relationship when we talk about fueling world-class performance? I'm sure you've seen it in your coaching, in your experience where you've seen, hey, the strength of the relationship. Does that really ultimately determine how successful this is in terms of building that confidence or how central is relationship in this process?

Steve (21:56):

So, yes and no. You have to be really good at what you do, but doctors with good bedside manner don't get sued, even if they mess up.

Jim (22:05):

Yes.

Steve (22:05):

I saw that statistic and I was wowed. If a guy's got a grumpy, arrogant attitude, the doctor, and he comes in, yeah, well, mess up, okay, I'm going to get you.

Jim (22:14):

Yes.

Steve (22:14):

But the doctor that they love and you know what I mean, they feel very close to him and they feel that he's always there for them, they don't sue him, even if he screwed up royally. So I'm not saying, listen, it's okay. Just be nice and you can screw up. That's not what I'm saying at all, but let's realize when you're in the middle of healthcare... And I think healthcare right now is going through a very difficult time. I think COVID has not helped the healthcare industry. I think it in certain ways even destroyed it. And I think there's issues with pharma and so on. Every time you go to the doctor, he says, "Oh yeah, here's new medicine that's going to take care of your problem." That, to me, is missing.

Jim (22:51):

Yep.

Steve (22:53):

Healthcare is not my thing. I'm just looking at it as an outsider, a consumer of healthcare. And when you have somebody that takes the time to explain things to you and speaks to you and shows that they care, you have to realize when you're in the healthcare system, that means somebody's going through some sort of trauma, however little it might be, but they're not in their perfect state, otherwise they wouldn't be sitting here in the hospital or the facility of some sort. And when you're at that place of

trauma and you're not... People understanding, it makes that trauma so much easier. It makes it so much easier to walk through it. And cutting corners in so many different ways, such a big mistake.

Steve (23:35):

Now the truth is the way the system works with third-party payers and everything else, it's not good for the consumer because the hospitals aren't getting paid what they need. They charge higher prices because they know they have to deal with the insurance company that's going to cut it. The insurance company has got a clause, we have to have the cheapest amount than anybody else has. So you go to try to buy the tubing for your CPAP machine from a place that's servicing the regular insurance companies, you're going to pay five times what you have to, whereas you can go online and find it from somebody that puts the tubing out, and instead of paying \$60, you pay 6. So there's a lot of things that healthcare is really going through some majorly crisis right now, in my humble opinion, with the management. And you know what the truth is that the hospitals, it's hard to make money. It's not an easy thing to make money.

Steve (24:24):

You go to a nursing home industry; they make their money on the last 5% of beds. If they're 90% full, they're losing money. Get them to 95, they're just at the point of breaking even, and everything above that now is making money. So you have to find ways to cut different ways, and some that ends up on onerous work schedules for some of the employees. It's very difficult for them to be happy and warm and friendly when they're doing 12-hour shifts. You're a nurse. I don't have to tell you.

Steve (24:55):

I think one of the things that happens is medicine, besides being a medical thing, it's also business and there's a customer journey. And if you leave the hospital saying, "I'm never going to that place again," that's a problem. You go into a place and you're coming out and say, "Wow, they took so good care of me, I wouldn't go anywhere else," the hospital's doing

their job. Same thing, nursing home. You go to a nursing home and the kids feel that they're taking care of mom and dad real well, then that means a lot. If they feel like, you know what I mean, oh, I can't stand going into that place. And most people, you ask them when they close your eyes for a minute and think about a nursing home, you'll see everybody's face kind of go... You know what I mean? And you ask them what hit them the most and they all say the smell.

Jim (25:42):

Yes. I can relate.

Steve (25:46):

These are very difficult problems that the medical establishment has, but there's so much ingenuity and innovation that's available. Disruption, if you will, to say, "No, this is not the way we're doing things. We're doing things a little different." And you start doing things different and people like it, guess what? They start standing out the door in a line to come and give you the business, and money's never a problem. So medicine in general, it's like I said, I think they're going through a big metamorphosis now and it'll be very interesting to see what it looks like 10 or 12 or 15 years from now. It's going to take that long there. Big organizations move very slowly.

Steve (26:22):

But the bottom line is the customer journey is everything. It's a very funny thing, the words "customer service" is part of our lexicon for so long because it was so important, but actually customer service is dead because customer service is about remedial. When something goes wrong, what do I do to fix it? And although you still have to have that, there's something much, much more important, and that's called customer experience. And the way I like to explain it like this, you go to a restaurant and the ambiance is beautiful and it looks nice, and the waiters are well-trained. They stay close enough that you can get them if you need anything, but far enough away that they're not intruding on your meal. You look at the menu, everything sounds so good, and the prices are really reasonable. The meals

come out, it looks better than it sounded, and it tastes better than it looks, which is usually not the case.

Jim (27:16):

No.

Steve (27:17):

You are floating, cloud nine, this was such a great client experience, customer experience, can't wait to tell all your friends. Before you leave, you go to use the bathroom and the bathroom's dirty. Filthy. What just happened to your entire experience of that night out? Instead of telling your friends-

(27:32):

... about the restaurant is, they're going to say, "Don't use the bathroom if you go there. Make sure you go before your home."

Jim (27:37):

It's the Google reviews are typically the negative. I'm going to take the time to talk about the one bad thing.

Steve (27:44):

Yeah, so it killed. Here's the real funny thing in my example, the bathroom experience has nothing to do with the dining experience. It's a necessary evil. You have to have it there for them, but this is not... They're coming for all the things you did right, but the non-central part that wasn't right is going to screw up the whole experience. And by the way, it works the other way also. Imagine going to your mechanic and having to use the bathroom and who knows what you're expecting that to look like. And you go in there, it's pristine, clean, done really nicely. You'll give him credit for being a better mechanic, which is crazy because again, nothing to do with the mechanic. His bathroom is actually for the guys working there, it's not even for the customers, but if it's done right, yeah. You know what I mean?

Steve (28:31):

And so it's important to realize that customer experience is so important and how you create that out. And by the way, employee experience is just as important as customer experiences. If your employees are grouchy, they don't feel they're being treated properly, an employee will only treat its customer as good as the owners treat the employees. So that whole experience and what you do with that is so important.

Jim (28:56):

My wife will give me a hard time because I'll notice things like that, and I'll point it out. To me, and maybe this is a little off of what you're saying, but you see that clean bathroom at the mechanic and I'm like, "You know what? There's an attention to detail, or at least it's, they care about something." And when we talk about healthcare, we talk about any industry really, but specifically healthcare, there's a care and a concern for the customer or for the patient, for the client. And even the little details that often get looked over, if someone is paying attention to that, that speaks to me as a patient to say, "Hey, they care. They're doing the little things right because they care." So I think that communicates more than we often recognize. You're talking about customer experience. You also use the word journey, which I really appreciate too. It is a journey. And the employee experience.

Jim (29:45):

You actually shared something on LinkedIn, and I'll just mention it briefly. I think the story, the example was a proposal, beautiful night and the engagement ring, but then the engagement ring is presented in a paper bag versus the nice pretty box-

Steve (30:01):

\$1.50 box.

Jim (30:03):

Right. So the messaging, I wanted to talk about that briefly and then we'll probably close up here. How important is that messaging? When you're talking with this is from leadership to your team, have you worked with people that, hey, you got a great message, but you really need to work on your messaging? Or "Hey, this team is ready to really give that world-class performance, but the messaging has to be improved?". Would you care to elaborate on that? Have you seen, is that a difficult thing to help people improve on? Is it something that comes natural? How do you develop that?

Steve (30:34):

So I think that really starting with the message is putting the cart before horse. And the reason I say that is there are three things, and every time I mention them, of course everybody rolls their eyes. That's a mission statement, the vision statement and the value statements. And the reason they roll their eyes, everybody's heard it a million times before. But the problem is all those statements have usually been taken over by the marketing department. They've been hijacked. And the marketing department writes those things for brochures, for websites, and for walls — not for what's really how the company works. So if you want to look up something really interesting, go look up Enron's value statement. That's in the book. Because it has nothing whatsoever to do with what Enron really was as a company. It's like it's laughable, integrity, you know what I mean? Honesty. It's baloney.

Steve (31:25):

And so any messaging that's not coming from something real is going to be a problem. So when people say, "Listen, our most valuable resource is our people," and then they blow up at them or they embarrass them at a meeting or they treat them like garbage in some other way, it's not the messaging. It's who they're as people. It's getting back to the two doctors, one that has a beautiful situation of the people that work there that treat their people so nicely and are so kind and friendly and warm versus the ones that aren't because they're following what the doctor has either messaged them in messaging or has shown them that that's what's

important to him. And so it goes according. So the messaging is really kind of a secondary thing. Let's get the house in order. I believe mission statements is something you should never have to tell anybody what mission statement is. I can tell what your mission statement is by the way you do business.

Jim (32:21):

Authenticity.

Steve (32:21):

Yes.

Jim (32:21):

You're making me think of the word authenticity.

Steve (32:22):

Yeah, so authenticity is a really interesting concept because it really doesn't exist. And the reason I say that is we're all in the middle of changing and growing. And so when I'm authentic, I'm authentic about yesterday, not about today, because today I'm at a little bit of chaos. It's not my idea. This is from Seth Godin. But the concept of what the world calls authenticity, being real, when I shake a guy's hand and I got to count my fingers afterwards to make sure they're still there, that's not a guy I want to do business with. So it's not so much the messaging as much as who you are. And just like people have personalities and situations and tell you who they are, organizations have it also. And if the organization doesn't have the internal essence of the goodness that they're trying to portray, I don't care how much you message it, it's not happening. And if you do have it, your messaging doesn't... There's an old saying, your actions are speaking so loud, I can't hear a word you're saying.

Jim (33:25):

Like that.

Steve (33:26):

So that's really where I think that's at. I think that the messaging... Now, getting smart messaging is a great thing to do, but if you didn't get the first step done right, the messaging's not going to fix the problem. Whether it's marketing messaging, whether it's anything else, you come into people who have not been treated properly or some of the situations are kind of off and you start giving them great messaging, you're wasting your time, you're wasting their time. They're just going to yawn, at best, or get indignant, at worst.

Jim (33:54):

And people see through it, right? Maybe not-

Steve (33:55):

A hundred percent.

Jim (33:56):

... first visit, but if it's an ongoing relationship, it comes out pretty quickly.

Steve (34:00):

Yes. And so I think that that's really... Messaging is really important, to get messaging right. It really is. But you got to start with the basics. And if you don't have those basics right? And I mean real. They have to be real, not something that sounds good. Get it out of the marketing department and get it, okay, how do we want our company to work and what do we want from our company? If you don't value integrity, don't say integrity is something you value. And if you don't value creativity or individualism, don't say you do. Find the things that are real for you, that make you, you, and make you able to do the things that you do better than anybody else in that, whatever that little world is. And when you do that, messaging's not the problem.

Jim (34:43):

I love it. I mean, that's so well said and you're really calling... It's something I think we've gotten so used to a certain way that we do things, and you're really calling people to, no, there's a better way. We really need to step up into this. It's a better way to do business from a very real sense. The actions are speaking louder than the words. Get it out of the marketing department. I love that.

This has been a great conversation, Steve, and we are coming to the end, but I do, I love to give our guests an opportunity at the end just to share any leadership lesson, that something you've learned through your career or something that you feel has carried you through that you'd just like to share with our audience as we finish up here.

Steve (35:23):

I think the bottom line is, there are things you are afraid to do. And when you step into the fear and you do what you need to do with courage, worlds move. I once had a bankruptcy attorney once tell me something that was very funny, and I don't necessarily know if I care about it from bankruptcy. He said, "People think they're jumping out of the window, and after they jump, they realize it's a basement window." And I think a lot of us find ourselves looking at something that's overwhelming and scary because we've never done it before, and instead of stepping in and doing it and putting ourselves on the line...

Steve (35:56):

By the way, when you fail, no one's going to remember anyways five minutes later because they're thinking about their toenail, not about what you did point. And so it's about stepping up and going to do that thing you fear, because the other side of fear is where everything happens. And we've gotten so fearful of making a mistake, of being thought of as an imposter. There's another sentence, I love this a lot: You'll stop worrying about what people think about you when you realize how little they do. And so stepping out, taking the plunge, and doing the thing that you really want to do and you're afraid to do, that's where magic happens. And that's

where magic happens for leaders and followers and everybody. But when you get that going, then the second thing is, I'm a big believer in a 90-day cycle. Every 90 days you pick on something new that you're working on, and you take that challenge that you've never done before that's frightening, and you're going to have to do it. And figure out what the actions you're going to take and what the celebration's going to look like.

Steve (36:30):

And so you're going through those 90 days. Well, if you have a company and you have employees and every 90 days everybody's upgrading who they are as either people or employees, and they're not separated, you end up with a different company a year later. They've gone through four iterations at the end of the year, and there's no way your company looks the same.

Jim (37:20):

Hm. I love that, Steve. What an incredible perspective. My sheet today, you filled up with notes. I really appreciate everything you shared. I look forward to being able to finish the book, to read through it, but thank you so much for being on the show. Thank you for sharing your expertise. If our listeners have any questions about VIE Healthcare Consulting, a SpendMend company, you can reach out to me or Lisa Miller on LinkedIn. Steve is also very active on LinkedIn, so please follow him.

We at SpendMend love helping hospital leaders uncover financial leakage and improve the patient experience. And we're hoping that today's episode... I know today's episode gave you some new insights to consider and use for your team, for your leadership in your own organization.

Steve, once again, thank you so much for being on the show, for sharing everything you did today.

Steve (38:05):

It's been a pleasure, Jim. Thanks for having me.

Speaker (38:08):

Thanks for listening to the Healthcare Leadership Experience podcast. We hope you've enjoyed this episode. If you're interested in learning new strategies, best practices, and ideas to utilize in your career and healthcare organization, check out our website at thehealthcareleadershipexperience.com. And oh yeah, don't forget to rate and review us. And be sure to join Lisa and Jim next time on the Healthcare Leadership Experience podcast. Thanks again for listening.



MEET LISA MILLER

"It's important for hospitals to have a clearly defined cost savings strategy with purchased services as a component to that strategy. We provide our clients with a focused roadmap to achieve those savings through our expertise since 1999."

Lisa Miller launched VIE Healthcare Consulting in 1999 to provide leading-edge financial and operational consulting for hospitals, healthcare institutions, and all providers of patient care.

She has become a recognized leader in healthcare operational performance improvement, and with her team has generated

more than \$720 million in financial improvements for VIE Healthcare's clients.

Lisa is a trusted advisor to hospital leaders on operational strategies within margin improvement, process improvements, technology/ telehealth, the patient experience, and growth opportunities.

Her innovative projects include VIE Healthcare's EXCITE! Program, a performance improvement workshop that captures employee ideas and translates them into profit improvement initiatives, and Patient Journey Mapping®, an effective qualitative approach for visualizing patient experience to achieve clinical, operating, and financial improvements.

Lisa has developed patented technology for healthcare financial improvement within purchased services; in addition to a technology that increases patient satisfaction through frontline insights.

Lisa received a BS degree in Business Administration from Eastern University in Pennsylvania and a Masters in Healthcare Administration from Seton Hall University in New Jersey.

She is a member of the National Honor Society for Healthcare Administration – Upsilon Phi Delta. Her book *The Entrepreneurial Hospital* is being published by Taylor Francis.



MEET JIM CAGLIOSTRO

Jim joined VIE Healthcare Consulting in 2018 and brings to the role over a decade of critical care nursing experience at highly regarded medical facilities across three states.

During that time, he observed both the 'good and bad' of hospital operations in a number of regions, giving him a unique insight and understanding which he brings to VIE Healthcare Consulting's clients.

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jimcagliostro/>



MEET STEVE LOVER

Steve Lover, a former corporate trainer at a Fortune 100 financial company, shifted to coaching to help business owners and agents achieve extraordinary success. Disillusioned with traditional training methods, he started his own practice, emphasizing the discovery of abilities, talents, and overcoming self-imposed limitations.

Steve excels in guiding business owners through leadership and staff management challenges, fostering confident, engaged employees and stellar leaders. His coaching is rigorous and results-driven, tailored for those

ready to accomplish more.

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/your-business-coach/>