**Brian:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the One Advantage Podcast, exploring the intersections of pure power, culture, and agility. Your host, Jason Richmond, Mike Richardson and Leo Tari, co-founders of the One Advantage Community of Practice and Advantage Peer Groups. For more information, please visit us at ideal outcomes inc com.

**Mike:** Hey everybody, welcome back to another episode of The One Advantage. Podcast. We have got a good one today. It's called Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable. That's one of our favorite topics, Leo. Can't wait to get into that. As you can see, if you're watching the video, everybody you are not gonna be hearing Jason's voice today.

This is two. Episodes in a row, Leo, that he's not been with us. I think we're gonna have to have a quiet word with him. What do you think?

**Leo:** I think he's gonna have to do the show by himself. Connect two episodes. That's what I think,

**Mike:** but I'm sure it's for [00:01:00] good reasons. I'm sure he's off all over the place working with clients and things and his team all around.

Igniting culture, everybody, which we know is Jason's thing. Before we do anything else, of course, let's always find out what you've been up to. Leo, where have you been?

**Leo:** I've been home. Nice. Yeah, that's getting a lot of work done here, which has been terrific. Yep. And then it's on the road next week.

I'll be in Washington, DC for the week. And then Beyond that, Connecticut, North Carolina, and then after that a lot of time in New England, so Yeah.

**Mike:** Yeah. And in the mix of all of that, you've got a virtual session coming up, don't you? With ref and working with our peer forum leaders around I think the session is healthy forums correct.

Or something close to that. Yeah.

**Leo:** June 28th. Yeah. Looking forward to that.

**Mike:** Yeah, good stuff. Yeah, really good. Really great stuff. And what have I been up to? Physically I've been here. Actually going on a bit of a road trip in a couple of weeks we have the C E o Louise Brookman [00:02:00] of the Advisory Board Center that everybody may know.

I'm a a certified chair with, and I'm also the co-chair of the America's community. And the c e o Louise Brookman, who's based in Brisbane, is coming into the USA for nearly a month. Doing a program in in New York and then in LA and I'm gonna drive her around a little bit, have some various meetings including coming down to San Diego.

Looking forward to that. Very much let's get into our topic today. It's it's something that I don't know over the last decade or more that I've known Leo. We've talked about this many times, Leo, this concept of. Getting comfortable, being uncomfortable. As a leader, it's important to be able to step out of your comfort zone and embrace change.

This can be difficult, but it is necessary for the success of the organization. By doing so, you can create an environment that encourages creativity and innovation changes coming at us faster and faster. And the more quickly you accept the change and adapt, the more successful you will be by being comfortable, getting comfortable, being [00:03:00] uncomfortable.

Where does your head go? Where does your mind go when you think about all of that? Leo?

**Leo:** In a lot of different places, as you might imagine. But one story did come to mind a number of years ago. I worked with a hundred year old architectural and engineering firm in Tampa, Florida. Yeah. And at the time, they were really having a crisis of confidence about the changes that were coming ahead, particularly in their industry.

And they were very concerned about their ability to keep up and keep pace and how were they going to thrive in the future. The interesting part about it, as you might imagine, a company that's been around a hundred years has been through World Wars Depression. You name it, right? Any kind disruption

**Mike:** They got, possibly they got some stories they could tell.

**Leo:** Absolutely. So as they're having this crisis of confidence, it's kinda interesting because I went back and I took their company history and actually rewrote it. So as opposed to having it being a conversation about dates in the past and all that, it was done in the spirit of giving everybody in that room and their senior leadership team and throughout the [00:04:00] company the confidence that this is who they are, that this is, it is absolutely embedded in their dna n a, to be able to, I think really.

Manage through change and lead through change, yeah. In a way that most companies could never do. So all of a sudden that crisis of confidence current down to be a boost of inspiration, a boost of confidence to them, and the ability to, you know what? Damn we are absolutely equipped to do what we've always done in terms of, not in terms of how they take that fresh look, that fresh approach.

And I think that, attitude has a lot to do with it.

**Mike:** Yeah, for sure. Yeah, love that. And the idea that by looking backwards at the last hundred years you can get inspired and confident, as you said, that we can not only survive the next hundred years, we can thrive during the next hundred years.

And as you just said, it's all a, it's all a frame of mind, it's all an attitude. It's all a sort of psychology almost. And. I love that because when I think about all of this, everybody, [00:05:00] I like to take people to the place of the word composure. How do you stay cool, calm, collected in the face of craziness.

You are remaining. Composed and present and not panicking. And with all your faculties, all your assets, all of your capabilities and skills and talents at your disposal or your creativity to be okay to be in the flow to go with the flow, to steer the flow, to shape the flow. And with a little bit of luck here and there along the way, which the more composed you are.

The more you can invite, good luck and deflect bad luck things will turn out okay. And I love your story, Leo, because it pulls up the idea that we live life forwards, but we understand it backwards, don't we? And if you look backwards, you re, You realize how composed we have been through everything we've been through.

Why is it about to change now? [00:06:00] Why are we catastrophizing all of a sudden now? If we can draw upon the continuity from the past into the future, then we can thrive and survive onwards and upwards. What? What would you add to the mix of all of that, Leo?

**Leo:** I think sometimes it takes an outside perspective to make you realize that.

Which is why the work you do with ref, the work that peer advisory groups and forms around the world do so well is they help each other when their heads are down to lift their head up. Right number one, and to see what's going on in the world and see what that change is, but also to gain the perspective of others about what they're doing and how they're doing it.

And they can give them that, that boost, that spirit of of confidence that is so often required there, you've just gotta be able to. Have a lens on where things are headed. And I remember talking to so many people, so many member companies of different organizations who spoke about the 2008 financial crisis, for example.

Yeah. And how [00:07:00] they survived it, not because they were better led companies that they were competitors, but they were better prepared. They had their head up, they had people around helping them. For them, the event was more like a hurricane. Where they had time to board up the doors in the windows and everything and secure themselves versus an earthquake.

So in the suddenness of that, so I think we can do a lot by. Just keeping our head up and working with other people around us to ke keep us with that perspective.

**Mike:** I love that as well. I think that's a really useful analogy that you've drawn there. I'm gonna, I'm gonna use that actually everybody, most change that we experience in business is much more like a hurricane than it is an earthquake.

If we had been fully awake at the wheel, we could have been seeing it coming and we could have been getting prepared. That idea that luck is where preparation meets opportunity. [00:08:00] And so if you're experiencing a procession of bad luck, it usually means it's cuz you were unprepared to, to seize the opportunity of good luck.

And with 2020 hindsight, everybody. I like to ask people every time you experience, what you think is 2020 hindsight, something came at you out of the blue and you've learned that something wasn't working or some threat was taking shape in front of you. Every time you've learned something from 2020 hindsight, I invite you to look at yourself in the mirror and ask yourself, could we really have learned that from foresight?

If only be, we'd been more awake at the wheel. We'd been looking more carefully and we'd been doing more what if scenario analysis. The Great Recession didn't come out of nowhere as an earthquake. The pandemic didn't come out of nowhere as an earthquake. Both of them. Nine 11 didn't come out of nowhere as an earthquake.

They all came out of somewhere as a hurricane. That you [00:09:00] could have at least seen coming and worried about gosh, what if? I think that's a fantastic analogy. I'm not sure I've ever heard you use that before, Leo.

**Leo:** Who knows? Maybe not. No.

**Mike:** I'm not a very good listener

**Leo:** no.

I'll switch this too, because So speaking about peer groups, which I did, but if I'm gonna channel Jason just for a moment please. I would think that what he would add to this conversation would talk a lot about culture and a culture that's curious, that's open to learning, that is open to trying new things and all that.

There's a really interesting story that kind of surfaced recently because Matt Damon you know this whole movie Air He and Ben Aflac? Yeah. Which I saw Air and Ben Affleck, the director, but he talked about how when they worked on Goodwill hunting together, it was this whole idea Ben Affleck saying, don't judge me by my.

Bad ideas judge me by my good ideas and with the point really being, do you want to create an environment where all of those ideas surface? Cause how many times has every one of us been in a meeting where someone comes up with [00:10:00] an idea that on the face of it, it's not doable and it's not great, but someone says hold on now, we can't do that.

But now it gives it now, but we can do X, right? And we build on those things. But unless you have an environment, unless you have a culture that allows for bad ideas to come forward. You're gonna be less likely to have the good ones surface. And this kind of, I think, cultural imperative toward

**Mike:** Yeah.

**Leo:** Being agile and being

**Mike:** yeah.

**Leo:** Able to adapt and be uncomfortable. Because that's uncomfortable. Yeah. When you're putting an idea out there that, could be marginal or whatever, you're just throwing a flyer out there, that takes some courage. Yeah. But it's an incredibly powerful thing to do.

**Mike:** Yeah, exactly. And courage of course is a word that we should delve into in a moment because I think that is obviously right, right here at the center of this whole conversation. It takes courage to be, to get comfortable being uncomfortable. And two thoughts came up for me there when you were talking about [00:11:00] innovation and creativity.

That's another form of composure. Everybody. We tend, if we're not careful to only use the word composure in the face of threat. But composure is equally important in the face of opportunity. It's equally important in the process of innovation and creativity. How do we remain composed to be open-minded to what's taking shape as a conversation in front of us, and not to trample on something, not to poo something, not to brush it off, right?

That's another form of losing our composure. Everybody. We're trying to be future oriented. We're trying to invite a new future. How do we stay composed in the flow of that? But also where it takes me to is exactly what you were saying, Leo around culture. And as we delve into the emotional soup element of culture.

We get into, resilience, we get into emotional intelligence, we get into social intelligence both collectively as [00:12:00] a culture of our team and our organization, and individually inside of each of us. What's our culture? Our mindset. Our attitude as an individual person. And so it does take us very deep into that, doesn't it?

Of just how deep, how deeply well plumbed are we, as it were to have the reserves of emotional intelligence and resilience down there in the depths of that emotional soup. What would you say, Leo?

**Leo:** Yeah. And when you're capable of that, I think it sets the foundation for having an environment that is far more comfortable being uncomfortable from the perspective of having an iterative process versus the grand plan strategic planning process.

**Mike:** Yeah.

**Leo:** One of the things, in preparing for our program today, I was looking at Peter Skillman and he, we led the work at Ideal around the marshmallow challenge, right? Which is almost 20 years old now. 2005. And for those who aren't familiar with it, it's [00:13:00] when you get basically 20, pieces of uncooked spaghetti with marshmallow and string and tape, and you get, 18 minutes to be able to construct a freestanding.

Peace. And it's whoever, first of all, can make it stand number one and stand the tallest. And what's interesting is when they have tested MBA students, CEOs, kindergartners, architects, and engineers. By the way, the only people that outperform kindergartners in this exercise, thank goodness, are the architects and engineers.

Yes. Do this for a living. Thank God. Okay. However, when you think about why. The others and MBA students, I think basically Kevin last out of that group I mentioned, and part of the reason for that is first of all, there's a struggle for who's in charge, number one. Second, they engage in a plan for what they're gonna do.

So then what happens,

**Mike:** right

**Leo:** you got 18 minutes, now you build this thing, you put the marshmallow on top of falls, and now you're screwed because now you can't recover, in time to ever build anything [00:14:00] where. Everybody's, the kindergartners are there, they're just trying stuff. Boom boom.

And they, they try and fail. Try and fail. Boom. And then

**Mike:** exactly

**Leo:** after that 18 is done, they're the ones with the

**Mike:** Exactly,

**Leo:** With the tall power, marshmallow, balanced right on top. No problem. It's just, yeah. But it really shows you the power of being able to do that and that, but that's uncomfortable.

That's, Having such a comfort level with ambiguity.

**Mike:** Exactly

**Leo:** that you just you can live in that world. You can live in that space but have the confidence maybe in some respects from kinds of things like I described, either through preparation or your history or whatever happens to be, to know we will find a way.

We don't know what that is yet. And we're okay that we don't have the answer right this minute, but we know if we work together and we have the kind of culture that allows for that iterative process that we're gonna make it happen. Cause we,

**Mike:** I'm so glad, I'm so glad you brought that up because I think you already know this, that the marshmallow challenge everybody is one [00:15:00] of my favorite.

All time things to do with teams When I'm facilitating I've just, I've done probably how many far? I think we're on our fourth or fifth cohort with a construction company in San Diego, and we're helping them get their arms around Agile project management as it applies to construction.

We do the marshmallow challenge with them, and you've all heard everybody that, of course, Leo has, I think spoken now to more than 300 or maybe more. PI forums,

**Leo:** 500 hundred,

**Mike:** 500 peer forums around the world. So he's a, he's just overtaken me because I spoke to 400 peer forums around the world and in the, I think in the, over the course of 15 years, and I think about halfway through those 15 years.

So maybe with the second 200, I would carry a bag of marshmallows and spaghetti and string and scissors and masking tape. And I probably did that 200 times with the peer forums and Invariably [00:16:00] what Leo is just, and then there's a TED video, everybody, there's a TED video that you are referring to that does a really nice I think it's, I think it's just a seven minute TED video that does a really nice summary of this.

It's, and it's hilarious. It's hilarious. We'll put that in the show notes, everybody. But it what it does as Leo is articulating everybody, is it invites you to change your relationship with failure. And the idea in agile, of course, of fail early, fail often, fail cheaply, fail fast because actually success is made up of failure.

If it's smart failure, if it's dumb failure, repeated failure, stupid failure, what were you thinking? Failure then categorically not but launching early and iterating often, and experimenting and trying and learning because if it's smart failure, it's not failure. It's learning is what kids do.

And they, and that's why kids are much, much more successful at the marshmallow challenge than highly educated MBAs. And so it's about changing a relationship with [00:17:00] failure, which I think is a, is at the heart of remaining composed, I think and getting comfortable being uncomfortable, right?

Because most people, especially in the modern corporate world, are incredibly uncomfortable with the prospect of. Failure at any level. Even the smallest little mistake, rough edge glitch in a presentation. You know that 99% was great and 1% wasn't. It's the 1% that beats people up. Is that not right? Leah?

**Leo:** Oh, no doubt. And I was actually gonna ask you too is there an organization that you've worked for in your career that you think to yourself, we were really good at being comfortable with being uncomfortable.

**Mike:** That's really, that's, oh boy. That's, or even if you were just good. That's a good, that's a curve ball right there.

So let me, let's say, wow. Gosh, this is realtime podcasting, everybody. I love it. There you go. [00:18:00] Yeah, no, I love it. Yeah, boy. Let me think of one here. Let me think of one. I've been in, I've been in aerospace technology most of my career until I went independent 20 years ago.

And when I first became a managing director, a k a president, c e o, it was of a Manufacturer of crash protected flight data and voice recorders in the uk black boxes and other associated software and other kinds of recorders for other kinds of use cases and applications. But the core of it Was crash protected data recorders.

It was, the company was called Penny and Giles, which is a famous brand name in that space, professor Penny actually invented the crash protected recorder. And it was his company, penny and Giles data recorders that I became the managing director of. And when I walked into it, I knew that it was a turnaround.

It was my first gig as it [00:19:00] were as a managing director. They took a risk on me. Clearly. I knew I was walking into a turnaround, but by the end of day one I had discovered it was three times worse than they had led me to believe. And so I'm having a, I'm having a beer in the bar in the hotel cuz I'm obviously in a hotel that night.

And I'm in a bit of a cold sweat to be honest with you. Cuz I'm in the middle of relocating my family and selling houses and buying houses and I'm thinking, oh my gosh, did I just roll the wrong dice on the wrong thing? Cuz I'm betting the farm here of my career and. I was very uncomfortable.

I I can remember it vividly, very uncomfortable that I might be on a losing proposition and I thought back Leo to my previous era of my career when I used to work on offshore oil [00:20:00] and gas drilling rigs. For Shell International. I was a petroleum engineer. I worked 18 months onshore all around Holland, and then six months offshore.

It was a phenomenal experience. When you're on your helicopter out, helicopter back, week on, week off. When you're on 24 7. You don't, you sleep different when you can and you deal. You have to be comfortable dealing whatever with whatever uncomfortable things are coming at you.

Machinery, breaking a storm, rolling in a supply boat that's late. There's a lot of stuff clearly that makes you feel very uncomfortable, very concerned, very worried, and you just have to get comfortable that this is situation normal. And of course, one of the ways that we would deal with that, Is we would have daily scrum meetings.

We didn't call them Scrum meetings, but I now realize, in the frame of Agile, that's what they were. Standup meetings

**Leo:** Yep.

**Mike:** Sometimes twice a day. Sometimes every two hours. When. [00:21:00] We were in the thick of something, unfolding. And so I'm in the bar that night drinking my beer in a cold sweat.

And I remember that and I remember how calming it was and how comfortable I was in the face of being uncomfortable. And so I thought to myself, why don't I just do that? So I went back in the following morning. This is it wasn't day two literally, but it was probably the Monday, perhaps at the beginning of the second week.

It was, and these people had just met me, right? I'm the new guy and I announce, in fact I don't announce, I just start a daily scrum meeting. And I, mentioned to everybody who I need there, and I just get on with it. I think it was 9:00 AM every single day, and I did that forever and it helped turn the whole thing around.

Six months later, I had turned the company around. I. And of course [00:22:00] everybody was saying are we now gonna stop with the daily Scrum? And I said, you must be kidding. That worked so well in terms of fueling our growth and innovation and thriving, not just surviving. We're gonna keep doing this. And so I did it.

Every business I've ever run Leo. And it's part of how I get comfortable being uncomfortable in the face of craziness. What a great question. Real time podcasting, everybody.

**Leo:** No, and that, I'll tell you what I love about the example is that almost like supercharged hyper level of communication and what that did to fuel and surface, ideas and things.

I think the other thing that kind of made me think is that, When you're in those situations, you also have to not believe that your answers are not necessarily gonna come in formal group meetings or things like that. They're often, they're gonna come from the craziest places, and this is where you have to remain open like 24 7 number of years ago [00:23:00] was like the mid two thousands we had.

Won this opportunity to rewrite the global crisis communication program for this company that was so concerned, obviously about they, they realized that they're not as quick responding as the world's changed. People have, video on their phone. All of this was really starting to have a huge impact on things.

And I remember we win the business. I read one of the crisis communications plans. And of course it was brilliantly done. It was like, so I get to the end and I'm like, oh boy, what did we sign up for? Like, how are we gonna make this better? So that night I'm like sitting racking my brain thinking, oh my goodness.

And then I'm home and I'm watching, remember the show csi, Las Vegas, csi. Right?

**Mike:** yep, yep.

**Leo:** Okay. They've taken all the, so here I'm watching the show. I'm halfway the show and I'm like, of course the plan is great. It's the forensic evidence I need to study. So what we now did was we pulled all the stuff, all the things regarding [00:24:00] various crises and where things fell down, and then we could actually put a plan together that was able to deal with those things.

Beautiful. I was looking at the wrong thing. I'm reading the plan. Of course, the plan's brilliant. The plan was incredibly buttoned up and perfectly, All of it was wonderful. And yet, once you studied the forensic evidence, now you start realizing this is gonna be the source of where your answers are gonna come from.

And it's from a TV show, so it wasn't like we all sat down in some big meeting somewhere. So I, I think when we are open, to these kinds of things. And we really lean into that, being comfortable with being uncomfortable. That can help us a whole lot.

**Mike:** I love that. Wow. You're on fire today, man.

I love this, now this idea of forensic evidence, everybody, in other words, Often

**Leo:** it's the black box.

**Mike:** It's the black box. And oftentimes everybody, it's the smallest of things that, that has the biggest impact. It's the, air thinking of talking of [00:25:00] black boxes and aircraft accidents. I know a lot about aircraft accidents cuz that was the business I was in.

Invariably, it's the smallest of things that the biggest. Derailment of all. And I have just, Leo knows I have story after story about all of that kind of stuff. And so I love that idea of forensic. And one other thing I wanted to throw out for everybody is I wonder, and this I think ties a bow around everything.

I wonder, three years from now, five years from now, 10 years from now, when we're looking backwards on that period of time, and we've all now been in the flow of this, Thing that might be making everybody uncomfortable right now, which is artificial intelligence. And how is that going to be a revolution of exponential disruptive change?

Like we can hardly even comprehend it's taken what, 30, 35 years for the disruption caused by the internet full of great stuff as well. Of course. This is probably gonna be of a similar magnitude or bigger, but it ain't gonna take 35 years. Everybody, we'll [00:26:00] be lucky if it takes 35, 35 quarters, maybe 35 months.

I wonder when we look back with hindsight on all of that, Leo, and we look forensically, I suspect everybody and Leo knows where I'm going that. We will have clarity that even with massive new levels of artificial intelligence, human intelligence has remained as critical and the collective intelligence of both of those artificial intelligence and human intelligence will have become even more crucial.

But the human intelligence piece, that emotional intelligence, that composure intelligence. That resiliency that we've been talking about here, the human intelligence to greater and greater depths, plumbing ourselves to greater and greater depths, individual and collectively to remain composed in the face of craziness will have become even more important than it is today.

What [00:27:00] would you add to that, Leo?

**Leo:** Only that it has never been more an important time to lean into our. Human creativity and ingenuity. Yeah. And I think combine those things in a way that can be very powerful for us to deal with what's ever ahead.

**Mike:** Yeah, and by the way, everybody, it's not by accident that we arrived at this concept of the one advantage, which is a peer powered culture of agility.

If there's one way in which you can really lean into being more composed, getting comfortable, being uncomfortable, it is to leverage a peer powered. Culture of agility more than ever before. Thanks for being with me today, Leo. That was a great conversation. We missed Jason, but man, if he's not here for free in a row, ho, oh boy.

He's gonna be in big trouble's.

**Leo:** Gonna be the penalty box.

**Mike:** Hopefully. Hopefully he'll be here for the next one. We, his voice, they have it everybody. Another episode of the One Advantage podcast. Will see and hear each other and you, us next [00:28:00] time will hear you and see you then.

**Brian:** Thanks for listening to the One Advantage Podcast.

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