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**Brian:** Welcome to the One Advantage Podcast, exploring the intersections of pure power, culture, and agility. Your host, Jason Richmond, Mike Richardson and Leo Bottary, 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 Richardson:** Hey everybody. Welcome back to another episode of The One Advantage podcast. We have ourselves a full house here. We haven't had that in a while. We were gonna give you a hard time, Jason, for not being here, the last few, but we're good. It's good to have you here today. Welcome back, my friend. We can't wait to hear all the places that you've been to, and of course Leo as well.

We'll start with that in a moment. We have a good one today, everybody. One of my very favorite topics, agile decision making. Acceleration versus consideration. Agile decision making can be challenging because it requires leaders to adjust quickly to changing circumstances and make decisions in a short amount of time.

Leaders need to assess the current situation, weigh the pros and cons, and make a strategic decision quickly, often trusting their intuition. And that's what we're gonna talk about everybody. How do you do more of that? But before we start, let's go to Jason. First of all. These last few weeks, months, we haven't seen you.

Where have you been? What you've been up

**Jason Richmond:** to? I have been coast to coast and even a little stint in Europe, my friends oh, you did? Oh yeah. I took a little bit of downtime, but I tell you what, I've been making a road show. Even just this, even this week, I have been in Chicago, Philadelphia, New York City, and now back to Orange County getting in last, late last night.

I tell you what, it's midyear. And a lot of organizations are taking a pulse check on, on where they're at and where they're going. Yeah. We're in a lot of learning and development strategy things we're into strategic planning for 2024 already in regards to organizational development conversations.

So it has really been a good Good. Solid couple, a couple weeks. Yeah, a lot of travel, a lot of engagement, but been a lot of fun. Yeah. And

**Mike Richardson:** You got some exciting news in Orange County, right? You're gonna be spending more time here and tell us more.

**Jason Richmond:** We've got some pretty exciting news.

Yes. Ideal outcomes. And myself, we we acquired the local Dale Carnegie franchise here in Orange County, California. So it's it's an opportunity to, to partner even farther with, with the Dale Carnegie organization and their intellectual property and the, in the marketplace and the talent and ev everything going on here in Orange County.

So we're really excited about it. Yeah. Matter of fact the ink is just barely just probably dried here a day or two ago.

**Mike Richardson:** Yeah, it is very exciting. It's a great market. Of course, everybody, and yeah, obviously Leo and I would, will love to turbocharge what Jason's doing over there with a little bit of p innovation, a little bit of agility in the mix.

Leo, where have you been and what have you been up to?

**Leo Bottary:** So my wife and I had a nice 10 day vacation in New England that spanned everything from Southern Maine to Provincetown to Tanglewood for a James Taylor concert. Oh. So it was just a really good break. Came back home only to get right back out on the road again.

I was in Atlanta for a few days earlier this week and this coming week I'll be in Salt Lake City Irvine, and then in Milwaukee. So nothing like ending the week in Milwaukee. Lemme just say that. It'll be good. That's a really cool place. So especially in the summer. So it's all good.

**Mike Richardson:** Great stuff.

I was in LA for a week and spent the week with Louise Brookman, the c o of the advisory Board Center from Brisbane, Australia. And we did a two day program and we had various meetings and so that was all very exciting stuff. So let's turn our attention to this topic of agile decision making.

And how do you navigate through that? Jason, do you have some thoughts to get us rolling there? How do you think about this topic? How I think

**Jason Richmond:** about this topic is, I think about it in the relationship with chains. It, the way we make decisions in correlation to the change that's going on in our world with inside our walls, outside of our walls and more importantly how responsive we are.

To that change. And not, but even proactive, yeah. Even if visionary and proactive, the change that is coming

**Mike Richardson:** pre preemptively agile.

**Jason Richmond:** Yeah. But it's that comfort level. Of getting comfortable with the relationship of change and, being responsive to, in your decision making process instead of sticking rigidly, sticking to a predetermined plan.

You gotta have, you gotta be flexible and a and open to the realization that you're gonna be able to change on a dime. And I think that's my big. My big correlation of this topic is the driver of change in the way we make decisions in an agile

**Mike Richardson:** way. Yeah, and of course everybody that change is coming at you thicker and faster than ever before.

We've talked about that many times. Vuca, volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity, disruptive change. There are some authors that say, You haven't seen anything yet. We're about to enter an exponential age of incomprehensible, acceleration of change with artificial intelligence and nanotechnology and this, that and the other.

Leo, when you think about this, how do you frame this up in your mind?

**Leo Bottary:** So the way you described this offer is a kind of Wimbledon inspired tennis. Oh, of course.

So I played division one tennis for a brief time. Oh. Oh, wow. Every once in a while I will return to the sport only to be what, half, half a step behind, all the time, basically, which is why I play golf now.

But the bottom line though is that at first I just thought that while I'm not maybe as quick as I was when I was 21 years old, right? Leave that possibility. But the reality is that the big factor is the game is faster. And I don't see things as early as I used to. So now when I'm not quite as quick and I'm not seeing things as early, meaning that, back in the day I'm watching someone and I'm moving before they even strike the ball.

So now if I'm slower and the ball's already come off their racket, I'm done. I'm just, it's not gonna happen. So I think that the focus that we have today, maybe we haven't lost a step, but the world's moving faster and because of that, it's more imperative that we see things earlier than ever before, which means watching trends, getting perspectives from outside people, and having a level of preparation that allows for that agile decision making.

And I think it's incumbent upon us more today than ever to do that.

**Mike Richardson:** I love that tennis analogy. That's fantastic. And it reminds me of the sort of martial arts analogy, and of course it's very similar, right? You've got two opponents squaring off in front of each other, and I forget the phraseology, but in, in martial arts, there is a concept where we see the pattern taking shape.

Preemptively such that I know what move you are gonna make before you do. And so it's what you just said, that you are almost shaping up. You can almost tell right, you can tell from the footwork, you can tell from the arm work. Okay. I can tell, not like cognitively, but instinctively I got a sense that he's gonna make this kind of shot or that kind of shot and you're already moving.

Maybe even before they've decided and their body posture is giving away. I. The kind of shot that they're gonna make. So that is what we mean by preemptively everybody is how can you not just be keeping up? But how can you be getting out ahead a little bit, not so far ahead that you're just, betting the farm on things that haven't shaped up yet.

What else comes up for you, Jason, as you react to that?

**Jason Richmond:** Leo mentioned something, in our, if we're really focusing on decision making, I think. I, there's a misconception in the world of business that agile means just fast

**Mike Richardson:** in the moment.

**Jason Richmond:** Shoot from the hip. Real time hip, yeah.

Yeah. Shoot from the hip. But that's absolutely incorrect. And the true agile decision making process is based on collaboration data facts. Figures. It's a very educated decision. It's not just reactionary and shooting from the hip or what does my gut tell you to do? Yeah, and I think's probably one of the biggest misconceptions of this topic in the marketplace.

**Mike Richardson:** And in fact, that's so well said. And you're beginning to segue to where my head goes and on the way there, the Navy Seals, for instance, say, slow is smooth and smooth is fast. Yep. You know the Navy Seals, when they're in the thick of it they're on a mission, they've landed on the beach.

Things are not as they expected. When a plan meets the enemy gets a vote, right? And the plan changes immediately. They don't just start, shooting from the hip and making stuff up and all of this. They fall back on their training, their preparation their ethos and they will often say, hang on a minute.

Slow is smooth and smooth is fast. Let's just think this through. Now, after the grenades are coming in, of course they don't stand around and have a committee meeting. They're on the fly, as it were. But that's one of the things, and what I love about this topic is, as I was pondering all of this, 20 years ago when I took the leap from the corporate world, I was, I had a real sense of void that there was something missing.

I. In the sort of frameworks of leadership and management and all that kind of stuff. And what I came to the conclusion of was that you really had to understand how a journey of a career, a journey of a business, a journey of a project, a pro, a program, a product, really understand how a journey unfolds.

At a microscopic level, and I suggest everybody that really a journey is a series of decisions. That's what it is. Turn left, turn right, speed up, slow down et cetera, et cetera. It's a journey of decisions. Now those decisions have to be surrounded by good questions and good thinking.

To improve the quality of decisions, and they, of course, have to be followed by good actions to execute on those decisions. So it's a bit more complex than that, but we could say that it's really a journey of decisions and, when and therefore that's why Agile decision making is so central.

There was a thing that we did for I think about 10 years. Myself and some colleagues, we did something called the VUCA report and we collected about 2000 data points. And one of my colleagues is a pH is Ben Barron, the PhD, and he wrote up a white paper on this data, I think it was about 2000 data points, 2000 executives that we surveyed.

And amongst other things in that VUCA report, we would ask them to rate and rank 15. Aspects of agility and the lowest score, not 100% of the time, but 80% of the time was Agile decision making. Yeah. People felt the weakest at agile decision making. They didn't really understand how to do that. Along the lines you were saying, Jason, that it's a sort of paradox, isn't it?

Do I make decisions slowly? Do I make them quickly? How do I decide? Do we make them centrally? Do we make them in a decentralized way? How do I do that? And that is the essence of what we're talking about, right? What would you add, Jason?

**Jason Richmond:** Yeah. We just finished we just finished A three month engagement.

It was two days a month for three months with a good client of mine here in Southern California. And a big portion of the program is, was around, agile behaviors in our decision making and our planning. And one of the big ahas for that group that came out is if you're truly operating collaboratively, cross-functionally, In an agile way, your decision making is circumstance.

Is part of your decision making? Yes. Where if you're working in silos and things like that, it's hard to predict circumstance and that relationship between understanding what the circumstances are going to be on this small decision to move the ball forward versus a big bang decision, right? Allows us to be more accurate, more productive, and more efficient, and it mitigates risk.

Yeah, so we, we've spent a lot of time on, on really understanding in a collaborative way what cross-functional circumstance means, and how it impacts our ability to be efficient. And then ultimately, coming up with our decision making, our business decision making, really making sure that it focuses on value and outcomes.

Yeah. The value that these decisions are bringing to the organization or your customer, or a project or, the value the decisions bring and then the outcomes those decisions create. Yeah. So these decisions, yeah. All of this together eliminates mistakes.

**Mike Richardson:** Yeah. And this flow of decisions is in service of valuable outcomes for clients and customers.

Leo, what would you throw on the fire here?

**Leo Bottary:** I think that, again, I'm gonna go back to preparation and its ability to help us be more agile and actually appear more spontaneous. How many times have you gone, for example, and seen a speaker take a q and a and have all these questions come at them and say, man, is that person really faster in their feet or, They went through a process.

If they can give every conceivable question they could possibly get, and were absolutely ready for anything that came at them. I think what's interesting though is you talked about vuca and I know we may have talked, we could dedicate a whole show to this is this whole evolution of vuca, the people who are calling him Bonnie.

This idea of brittle, anxious, non-linear and incomprehensible. And I think I wanna focus on the last one because it's the incomprehensible that we have to address. So our level of preparation now isn't just to prepare for the obvious, it's to prepare for the unimaginable. If you think about, and I, I hate to use this example, but the reality is that when you look at nine 11, no one was prepared for someone to use a commercial airliner as a weapon.

Yep. They dealt with it like a typical hijacking. And so we're gonna be challenged, I think, over time, not just to develop our list of what if questions against a lot of the obvious scenarios, but we're gonna have to challenge ourselves, I think, to the next level in terms of thinking about what are the things that are maybe.

Incomprehensible that could happen, and what would we do in the face of that? So I love that.

**Mike Richardson:** Yeah. Yeah. I love that. I do a little thing, I did it when I was up in Seattle. I say to people, Hey, let's imagine we, we start a business tomorrow Leo and I start a business. There's two of us, right? So there's one, one-to-one conversation to manage, and Jason joins us the next day, there's three of us.

So now there's three, one-to-one conversations to manage, and then we get a fourth person, a fifth person, a sixth person. Before you know it, It starts to compound and there are 21, there are 26, there are 32, there are 36 one-to-one conversations to manage. We're not

**Leo Bottary:** paying any of these people yet though, right?

**Mike Richardson:** That begins the process of them beginning to realize how things start to go exponential, and then I'll say hang on let's change the metaphor a little bit. Imagine instead of six people, we had six Lego building blocks, just the two by four Lego building blocks. And I say, maybe you've got a product block, a process block.

Place, people, technology, et cetera. And I ask them the question, how many different ways are there permutations are there to construct six Lego building blocks, two by four in three dimensional space? And they'll say I don't know six factorial, which is about 5,000. No. I don't know, six to the power of, something else.

No. And the answer is 900 million. And they go, what? And then I say look, let's just go a little bit further. Let's think of a Rubik's cube. It's not that much more complex. There's 27 building blocks. Three by three. In fact, it's 26 cuz you've got the little gimbal thing in the middle, right?

But it's not that much more complicated. Let's say you've got three locations, three products, three divisions, right? It's not that much more complicated. Do you know how many permutations there are of a Rubik's cube? 43 quintillion, that's 18 zeros. So it's, I use that as an example for people to realize how incomprehensibly and exponentially complexity is.

Just grows outta proportion just because of raw math, let alone personality types and time zones and geographies. So I love the fact, Leo, I hadn't heard of BNY before. I saw you write about it the other day. I think it's fantastic. How did you arrive at it? Where did you find it?

**Leo Bottary:** It was an article that was on Medium that was actually published a few years ago.

Someone the author I believe was referring back to it. And so I started just diving into it a little bit and, and what was interesting about it was it, I think it was more than just somebody trying to play a game of semantics. So I think the more you read what was behind it, the more that you recognized.

This is really interesting way to think about the world just a little bit differently. Building off, standing on the shoulders of vuca. Yeah. But I think doing so in a way that is reflective of what's going on today and the human. Involvement in that, Jason, the emotional

**Mike Richardson:** involvement in that Jason?

Yeah. And Jason, back to your sort of your challenge of leadership change leadership and change management and all of that, that's the challenge. Is it not that we're having to lead and manage change in an increasingly incomprehensible future Yep. That could easily cause us to be to have analysis paralysis, right?

Correct.

**Jason Richmond:** Yep. Yep. And you, but you have to have a strong skillset and to be able to analyze and then predict, right? But, Leaders have the ability to control those predictions and control the outcomes of those predictions. And I, again, I talk to so many people, Mike and Leo. They say I'm my decision making.

I'm agile every day. I'm all day long. I'm thinking agile and everything, making decisions with that methodology. And I says, really? I says, how many people live in your office? How many people are you talking to about the decisions you're making? And he said most of the decisions I'm making on my own, I'm like, then you're not doing it in an agile way.

Exactly. Exactly. You cannot make agile decisions unless there's a level of collaboration coming together. To help influence or provide insight in, into that decision. Yeah. And in collaboration and agile decision making play hand in hand. You can't do

**Mike Richardson:** it in a silo. Yeah. I wrote a pdf, everybody called the Five Myths of A, of Agility.

And one of those myths is that startups are naturally agile. They are categorically not. Startups are naturally frenetic. Hair on fire, seat of the pants, living in disorganized chaos. That is not agile. And so if you are a person, I don't know if the person you were describing you would put in this frame, but if you in the flow of that's not agile, that's disorganized chaos.

Now, if you're trying to be too planful, too bureaucratic too by committee too structured, too corporate. You've got your annual budget and your annual business plan. And it is not changing. No matter what happened by the half year point, we are sticking to it. That's disorganized chaos too, because there's too big a separation.

You're, as Leo said, you're playing tennis, but you're. You're a step behind, you're a yard behind you're in a different court. The whole court has moved and you're on the wrong court. That doesn't work either. So that's disorganized chaos. So the paradox, everybody is that agility lives in what's called the agile middle.

There's lots of metaphors and things you can do to describe that, but it's the Goldilocks zone. It's the golden mean. It's the, it's, in the middle of things, we talk about flow. It's how you drive a car. You don't drive a car. Shooting from the hip and making decisions, one hand on the wheel cup of coffee and the other hand cell phone at your ear, that's not gonna end well.

But on the other hand, if you're driving down the road and there's roadwork, you don't pull off the road for 10 minutes to rework your plan. Do you don't have time for that. So you're naturally in the flow of making. A series of agile, not only decisions, but actions of course and we know how to do this.

The question is, when we pull in the parking lot outside our office and walk inside, why do we leave those skills in the parking lot? How do we take them in with us? That's what we're talking about here. To be in the flow of agile decision making, what would you add in the mix, Leo?

**Leo Bottary:** I don't know that I could add anything to that, Mike.

That's that was that was buttoned up beautifully there.

**Mike Richardson:** And there's a very famous model, everybody that you've no doubt heard about. It's as famous as the phrase Vuca. In the agile world and it's Oda, o d A, and it's this thing called the ODA loop. And how you observe, orient, decide, and act and and the smaller your loop, the more you are able to operate inside the chaos of what's coming at you.

The larger your loop the more the chaos is operating inside of your loop and so you are operating in disorganized chaos. If you can get on the inside, then you're operating in, in organized chaos, it's still chaotic, it's still fast moving but you're operating on the inside. And this is how fighter pilots are trained.

They're trained to understand the ood loop. And to practice practice in, up in the air, in the real arena, which is the only place you learn, right? You don't learn this from a book. You learn it by doing it. And gradually strengthening shrinking and speeding up their oodle loop. And of course, everybody, you have an ood loop operating in the driving seat of your car.

That's how you are able to drive your car. 99.999% of the time, getting where you're supposed to go safely, on time and ready for what's next. So you have an ood loop operating in the driving seat of your car. The question is, what kind of ood loop do you have operating in the driving seat of your business?

And as Jason has been hitting on, not just as an individual, but as a collaborative team, what's your organizational OODA loop for you to be able to. Sort of Pac-Man, like that's an old, that's an old game that half the audience have no idea what I'm talking about. Eat your way through the flow of agile decisions that you have no choice to be making.

What would you say, Jason, around the idea of your organizational. Ood loop and being in a flow collaboratively, not just individually.

**Jason Richmond:** Again, I think your I think your point is dead on. I'm with Leo on this. I think that's pretty, that doesn't need too much more color commentary.

Yeah.

**Mike Richardson:** Yeah.

**Leo Bottary:** You know what's interesting just of on a final thought, because each of you put together for me, would've been the three Ps that we've talked about in this conversation. It's all the perspectives that you need. It's the preparation and it's practice.

And if we can do those things, that'll help us as you said, be able to be in the flow, deal with that oodle loop the way that we need to. And I think that's what everything keeps coming back to, are those, I think three ideas.

**Mike Richardson:** Yeah. I love that. And we almost touched upon this earlier when you were talking about preparation earlier, Leo, of course, it brings up the idea of luck.

And luck is where preparation meets opportunity. And when you're in a good flow of collaborative agile decision making, everybody luck becomes a predictable, reliable factor. Luck by design and you change your relationship with luck. And and how do you practice for that? And again, the Navy Seals will say under pressure, you do not rise to the occasion, you sink to the level.

Of your training, your practice and your system. And so how do you do the work on the practice ground, everybody to take your training your practice and your system to a high enough level that when you're under pressure and that's what you have to fall back on, it's up to the task of pushing through the problem and coming out the other end in good shape. Jason, as we begin to land the plane here, what sort of final thoughts would you leave our listeners about this whole concept of Agile decision making?

**Jason Richmond:** For one I think if you truly buy into the fact that the way we make decisions has an actual bottom line impact to our business, our organizations, our customers, and you really get committed about this type of discipline and behavior.

It's it really starts with transparency and the comfort level of sharing information and that, that's under the collaboration umbrella. And I really think it is, but you have to make an honest commitment to yourself. That this is gonna be part of your leadership style. And you've gotta be open to practice and

**Mike Richardson:** involved.

Yeah, exactly. And then, you know this already, I love what you just said. Decisions have a direct path to the bottom line. And when I talked earlier about it's not just decisions, it's thoughts, questions, and actions as well. You guys know that I call that conversation flow, right?

Yep. And then go conversation flow to cash flow. So C to C. So it really, this really is about the top line of the conversation flow in the business, everybody to the bottom line of the cash flow in the business and all of the

**Leo Bottary:** decisions. I think Jason, a lot of what you've been speaking, you spoke to, and of course Mike as well, is this idea of creating clarity from one another.

That's what the transparency is all about. If we don't, if we can see things clearly and not through a fog, we're gonna be able to make decisions a lot more. Effectively. Yeah, I think there we go. Let's bring in that plane.

**Mike Richardson:** There we are everybody having to be agile with a few little technical challenges today, but we pushed on through nevertheless another episode of the One Advantage podcast.

Thanks for being here, Leo. Thanks for being here. Jason, a full house today. We love it when it's like that. We love it when it isn't too, but that's all cool. And thanks for being here, all the listeners and we will. Look forward to our next episode of the One Advantage podcast.

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

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