

You decided to jump on the entrepreneur wagon as well, but you had the opportunity while your dad had a middle school education. You went to Cornell, you went to [inaudible 00:08:58] Ivy League schools. Of course, that's where you met Christina. Let's talk about that experience. What was that like getting into an Ivy League school?

Abe: Both Christina and I were pretty high academic achievers. We were both with public schools all throughout, went to a great public school here called Miami Palmetto. Really through high school debate, which we both did, speech and debate, I was able to travel to the northeast and really caught a vision for going to school at a very traditional college campus. Cornell was my first choice. I had some classmates of mine that were ahead of me that I visited and fell in love with...Christina, very similar story. She's from Southern California, I'm from Miami. When we got to Cornell, most people that are there, the majority are from the northeast, but those of us who weren't from the northeast are international students or people from the South, Southwest, or out west. There's a certain profile of people who go to Cornell, but you find your tribe. For us, both of us, it was in the Christian fellowship, called Chinese Bible Study.

That's really where we got to meet people who were like ourselves because when you're Asian American growing up here, you're really not fully American, you're certainly not Asian because you don't speak the languages. We found their people when we got there. We didn't date during Cornell. We both dated other people, but it wasn't until after I graduated a year ahead of her, that she came down to Miami for spring break with some of our mutual friends. That's when we sparked our love interest a year after I graduated and we dated long distance, I don't know if you know this, for three years when she was in law school. We did the Miami-LA-

Lisa: That is not easy.

Abe: We did that for three years. We got married in 2000. We celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary this past year. God's blessed us with three amazing kids, 16, 14, and 12 years old now.

Every step of it is hard, when you're dating it's hard, when you're young married it's hard, when you have young kids, it's hard. It's a busy season right now, but it's an adventure for sure.

We got some advice early on that you had to make sure you keep date night going, you got to make sure you take a trip just the two of you every year. My mom has been incredible at always took care of the kids whenever we need to have our alone time. No marriage is perfect. It's hard, but we're super blessed that we were good friends. There's times that we don't like each other, but we always love each other, [laughs] especially now that we work together.

Lisa: You work together, and I want to get into that. Greg and I work together too, as you know, and I said, I love him like none other, but there's just times where I really haven't liked him. [laughs]

Abe: I get it.

Lisa: I'm just going to be vulnerable here and say it's hard. Thank you for saying that seriously, Abe, because I think sometimes people look and they go, "Oh, they got it so easy." No, anything worth having is going to be difficult. I want to talk now about the entrepreneurial journey and that's really easy, right?

Abe: Yes.

Lisa: [laughs] [inaudible 00:12:08]. No, it is not easy, but you decided to jump on that wagon as well. I want to talk about how you pivoted to do something a little bit different than what your dad and your mom had done with the Chinese takeoff.

Abe: Initially, I started a burrito fast food concept called Wrapido, wraps fast in Spanish, raised money.

I'm also in an industry forum, on a restaurant forum, been in that for over, I think, 13 years now. These are lifelong relationships. People that you grow with, you see them having grandkids. You go through life together.

Lisa: To your point before, Abe, you said you didn't realize that some of the challenges that you were having in the family business were normal [laughs] until you met other people that were in that same boat. You were like, "No, this is good. This is how we got through it." I've made great friends through YPO.

That brings me to my next subject that I really want to talk about. I know that there is a book that a lot of YPOers are basing their business on right now, called *Traction* by Gino Wickman. It is the entrepreneurial operating system. For our listeners that don't know, this is about building your business into a self-sustaining entity, powered by an effective system rather than just by your sheer determination. There are many components to that. I know that you are going through that process right now.

Abe: I'm by no means an expert in this. We're just at the beginning stages of implementation. In a nutshell, EOS tries to pair visionaries with integrators. That's what I needed. In many ways, I had hit the ceiling, was trying to do everything myself. The marrying of hiring professional manager talent with a founder is tough. You need to be able to be mature and articulate at what you're good at.

This gives us handles and languages for doing so. The great thing is that it brings forum in YPO, where there's best practices that work. If you follow the rules, you see acceleration in the goodness of it. We see that. We're following the program. We have a great facilitator. Scott, who you mentioned, has been terrific at coaching me and my teammates along with this. I'm excited because that's really going to free me up to do what I do best, and that is to search for future opportunities. It allows for people who are much better at running the business to be focused on that without me getting in their hair because I'm the problem. This puts me in a good box.

Lisa: Yes, I know. For our listeners out there, again, it's called *Traction*. There's six key business components that you look at. As Abe just said, you can have an implementer that helps you and facilitates that. I think most people would say that's a really good idea to have an outside person do that. The six business components that it looks at is vision, people, data, issues, processes, and then traction. For anybody that doesn't know that book, you might want to grab that. It's good stuff. Abe, this is called *Something Extra*. I would love for you to tell me what do you believe is the something extra that every leader needs?

Abe: I think every leader needs to have people that will speak the truth, tell them when they have spinach in their teeth. I think it's critical. So many times in business, you surround yourself with people who tell you what you want to hear, whether it's people that you trust in your tight-knit group, a family member, if you're a part of business groups like YPO, in your forum group, that will tell you where the blind spots are and do so in a way that's loving and caring. I think every leader really needs that.

Lisa: I so agree because we can't see. That's why it's called a blind spot [chuckles] because we don't see it in ourselves sometimes. I was telling somebody not too long ago. I said, "I used to take things to heart and be a little bit more defensive." [laughs] Now, when somebody, and especially if I know that person really truly cares about me, it's a gift, really is a gift because how can you move forward if you don't really understand where you are?

Abe: Amen.

Lisa: I love that. Abe, I want to give you the opportunity to talk about something you're passionate about. I know what you're passionate about, but I want you to tell our listeners.

Abe: In this time of craziness, traveling to Miami would be my invitation. I'm a huge fan of this destination. Returning back to normalcy, we have a wonderful destination, the beaches, come dine in our restaurants, come visit our attractions and come to our churches and visit. I think all these things as we move back into some normalcy, that's my invitation.

This destination has definitely been hit hard in terms of whether it's cruise ships or conventions that are in a holding pattern. We are open and waiting to serve you and show you a great time here in Miami.

Lisa: Now, you know a great sushi restaurant.

Abe: That's right, and come visit Sushi Maki.

Lisa: Come visit Sushi Maki. Well, Abe, thank you. This has just been so much fun. I've just had a blast talking to you here this afternoon. Thank you so much for making the time to be on the show.

Abe: This was lovely. Anytime you want a Miami point of view, I'm happy to come on.

Lisa: Sounds good. Thank you.

Abe: Thanks.

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