



EP290_Maggie Wilderotter

Lisa Nichols 00:03

Chromosomes, little strands of nucleic acids and proteins are the fundamental genetic instructions that tell us who we are at birth. Most people are born with 46 chromosomes. But each year in the United States, about 6000 people are born with an extra chromosome, making them a person with Down syndrome. If you've ever encountered someone with Down syndrome, you know that they are some of the kindest, most joyful people you will ever meet. They truly have something extra.

Lisa Nichols 00:35

My name is Lisa Nichols and I have spent the last 24 years as both the CEO of Technology Partners in as the mother to Ally. Ally has something extra in every sense of the word. I have been blessed to be by her side as she impacts everyone, she meets. Through these two important roles is CEO and mother to Ally, I have witnessed countless life lessons that have fundamentally changed the way I look at the world. While you may not have an extra chromosome, every leader has something extra that defines who you are.

Lisa Nichols 01:10

Join me as I explore this something extra in leaders from all walks of life and discover how that difference in each of them has made a difference in their companies, their families, their communities and in themselves. If you'd liked this episode today, please go to Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen and leave us a five-star rating.

Lisa Nichols 01:35

I am thrilled to have Maggie Wilderotter on the show today. Maggie is the chairman and chief executive officer of Wilderotter Vineyards. Well, Maggie Wilderotter, I am so delighted to have you on this Something Extra Podcast today. We finally made it happen. We've been trying to make this happen for several months.

Maggie Wilderotter 01:55

I know and I apologize. But I think what happened is we were doing so many things remotely, that when the COVID subsided, now people are back in person, but the remote stuff hasn't stopped. So, calendar wise, it's been crazy, I think for just about everybody.

Lisa Nichols 02:14

It has been in we're gonna dig into this but I told you in a sidebar conversation. I seriously I know a lot of people, but I don't think I know one woman that's busier than you, Maggie. So, maybe we'll talk about your secret sauce. I don't know if you even know what your secret sauce is. But I cannot wait for our listeners to get to know you. So, you and I met last year for the first time through the Garden City Equity Summit in Deer Valley. And you and I've talked about that listeners have if you've not been to deer valley, put it on your bucket list. It is the most gorgeous place. But Michael Arietta is the CEO for Garden City. And he's the one that connected us. And you and I spoke on a panel together and it was just such a delight, Maggie to get spend that time with you. So, I did what all got good podcast host do and I said May you come on the podcast, because I want to spend more time with you.

Maggie Wilderotter 02:15

It was a great event. And Michael put puts on events where it's from the heart and soul. It's not just about discussing business topics, etc. It's about people. And I have a lot of respect for that.

Lisa Nichols 03:26

Yes, and I do too. So, listeners, we're not going to talk about that too much. But if you want to learn more about Garden City Equity, reach out to myself or Maggie or Michael, we can get you connected. But you know, Michael, truly, Maggie, he says that you are one of the greatest mentors he's ever had. Which is a really incredible thing. So, I think you guys got to know each other when you weren't DocuSign you were the interim CEO. And I think Michael was like chief of staff or, you know, he had a good role. But he was, he was young. You said he was just a young, young guy. And we, for us. He's still very young. But I think that's where you guys got to know each other.

Maggie Wilderotter 04:13

Yes. You know, I have been on the DocuSign board for a number of years. And you know, we had a situation where I needed to go in as an interim CEO for a couple months. But I knew Mike even before that, you know, he was a, you know, a young person on the rise at the company. I tried to take an interest in high potential talent. And he represented that. And he also was entrepreneurial in terms of how he thought about business and I knew it was going to be a matter of time before he decided to do something on his own. So, and I love that I think knowing when to pivot and what to pivot to. And we have more formal programs these days, where people label people, mentors or mentees. I know when I was growing up in business, there was no such thing. I had an ton of mentors, but none of them knew that's what they were.

Lisa Nichols 05:12

Right, me too, me too.

Maggie Wilderotter 05:14

And I think keeping that attitude of doing for others, others do for you, and making sure we're giving and getting, not just getting.

Lisa Nichols 05:25

Absolutely, I could not agree more. It's a give and take, isn't it, Maggie? It truly is. And I, I feel and I know, you would say the same thing I've had so many people pour into me in my career over the years. And I just want to make sure that I am pulling other people along, you know, so. Well, let's get into a few things. So, you know, you have been a multi time CEO of both Fortune 500 companies as well as many startups. In your career, I think you've served over 35, public company boards, Maggie, and 14 private boards, ones that our listeners would all be familiar with DocuSign, Costco, Hewlett Packard, Lyft, Xerox, Yahoo, I could Procter and Gamble, I could go on and on and on. You've also been named as one of the most, 50 most powerful women in business for at least three years by Forbes. And I know you don't you that probably you probably don't like people like talking about that. But I just want our listeners to understand who we're talking to. I mean, this is a woman that knows a lot about a lot, so cannot wait to dig in. I know we're only going to scratch the surface. But before we get into that, Maggie, I would love for you to take us back to growing up. Because you've got some really interesting things about growing up too, that I really want our listeners to hear about.

Maggie Wilderotter 07:00

Yes, and I think it's an example of how our parents can have huge influence on who we are. And what we do. I grew up in a household, my older sister, Denise Morrison, who actually was the CEO of Campbell's Soup. She and I are the only two siblings, male or female ever in the Fortune 500. And we overlapped as CEOs for a number of years, and really helped each other but we grew up together. My dad was an executive at AT&T. And he only had girls to work with, he didn't have sons. And he really taught us a lot about business. And he took the mystery out of business. He also incorporated business practices into how we were raised. A good example is pay for performance. You know, we had job jars that every Saturday, my dad would put our jobs, usually five or six of them into our jars. And we had to complete those jobs by the following weekend in order to get our allowance.

Maggie Wilderotter 08:05

But Denise and I could actually negotiate and trade jobs. So, we learned how to negotiate. We learned how to trade. You know, there might be a week that I was really busy. And so, she'd do all my chores. And then the next week I wouldn't do hers. But then there was a bonus to that I'd have to do one the following. So, we would put these things together where we learned how to perform and based on that performance, you get paid. My, My father also worked for AT&T in the Bell System. And he was in New York Tel, he was in New Jersey Bell, he went to Ohio Bell back to AT&T, Cincinnati Bell. And during that, that career formation for him. Every year, he would take Denise and I to work with him so we could shadow him sit in on his meetings, and learn about business from an activity perspective. And when we would go with him, we would take the train to work with him. And he would tell us about what the day's going to be. And then on the way home, we would debrief on the day. And we talk about what we learned and we would ask questions about what we heard. And, and so our dad really took a lot of the mystery out of business I think for, for both my older sister and I which paved the way for us to take risks in our career. Because we weren't afraid to do that. We were encouraged to do that.

Lisa Nichols 09:32

So, Maggie, I have to love it. That is brilliant that your dad did that. And I don't know you may know her. But Cheryl Bachelder is a really dear friend of mine. Do you know Cheryl by chance?

Maggie Wilderotter 09:45

I don't know of Cheryl but I don't know her personally.

Lisa Nichols 09:49

She was the CEO for Popeyes and the interim CEO for Pier One. But that's what she said. She said her dad she said every night at the dinner table was a Many MBA.

Maggie Wilderotter 10:01

Same thing, same thing. And I believe that, you know, I've done that with my boys. You know, I think we, we can carry on those traditions. And it does make a big difference. But I can't discount the fact that my mom had huge influence on my sisters and I as well, she was a working mom, she was a real estate agent in the state of New Jersey, she was in the top 10 Real estate agents for many years. So, she had this great balance of raising a family, but also having a job. So, our parents were great models for Denise and I that, you know, you can juggle, but what's important, is no matter what you're doing, be in the moment, when you're doing it. Don't be thinking about those other 10 things that you have to do or will be doing. Be in the moment with people. It's the biggest gift we give.

Lisa Nichols 10:55

That's beautiful. I love that. Well, you've already answered a bunch of my questions, because I want to know really, who inspired you and, and truly that is your parents. And, and I did not know that I was going to ask you that question. Is there another sibling group that were in the Fortune 500? And you said, No. I mean, you guys are the only sibling group that's really amazing. Well, you went on to get an education and economics. How do you believe Maggie, that, that education has really informed your decision making or problem solving in your career? Has that played a part?

Maggie Wilderotter 11:31

Yes, you know, I went to the College of the Holy Cross. And this won't surprise you, I was the second class of women. So again, trailblazing into an all-male institution. The first class of women had 12 Women in it out of 450, my class had about 125. So, again, still lower ratios. But it was a great education. I think the Jesuit education system is terrific. It teaches you not just about learning, but it teaches you how to be a lifelong learner. And, you know, I got a degree in Economics and Business Administration from Holy Cross. And it really gave me a great foundation, to, you know, have my career be business oriented. That's what I really wanted. But I was given an education that gave me that foundation. And there's nothing like the Jesuits to push you.

Lisa Nichols 12:32

Right? Well, I love what you just said too, about loving to learn love learning to love to learn. Because do you ever stop learning, Maggie?

Maggie Wilderotter 12:43

No, every day is a learning experience.

Lisa Nichols 12:46

Every day is a learning experience. I could not agree more. Well, I mean, you had so many great organizations that you've been a part of, you know, you've been the CEO for Frontier, you were there for 11 years, the interim CEO for DocuSign, which we've already talked about. Now, when you were at Frontier, the organization grew significantly. Yes, I read about this, Maggie, under your leadership, I think the organization went from 3 billion to over 10 billion during your tenure as CEO, you know, what were some a few of the strategies that you employ to really guide the company to this kind of growth.

Maggie Wilderotter 13:25

I took it to about 12 billion in revenue before I left. Look at it, it was frontier was a sleepy rural telephone company. And coming from a telephone company family. That was about the only thing I had in common with Frontier at the time. But what I loved about it is it served rural and suburban America. And I believe in America, we never leave anybody behind. And while the big cities were all getting data, analytic capability through, you know, being able to get online, and having networks that enabled them to have both voice, video and data, I believed that rural America needed exactly the same thing. So, I took this rural sleepy telephone company, and I did you know, billions of dollars in acquisitions to buy other adjacent rural properties, and put together a leadership team that had great experience in telecommunication services. And so, we built out networks in all of these states, to provide those capabilities to, to families that lived in those areas. And it made a huge difference to be able to not just employ people in all of those locations, but to also provide the actual the you know, that the active capability for them to have access to information that they wouldn't have had otherwise. But I also participated, you know, as a CEO, doing fireside chats in those

cities, helping with the education of the next generation in those cities. So, it was a very active role that I tried to play and having our teams not just do well, but do good.

Lisa Nichols 15:19

That's so good. Well, it worked. It definitely worked, because the company was better off when you left it. So now, you are also part of President Obama's national security Telecommunications Advisory Committee. That's a mouthful, isn't it? How did this, you know, how did this experience really contribute to your understanding of the cybersecurity issues that we face? And then my second part to that question, is how would you advise companies to, to navigate this really complex issue that we deal with, with cybersecurity?

Maggie Wilderotter 15:59

You know, it's, it's funny, too, because I'm basically a Libertarian. And I remember when Barack Obama took office, I was on the boards of the Business Roundtable and the Business Council. So, he's very active in what was happening in Washington that can affect business, and how can business and government work together. And so, I met Barack Obama at a business roundtable meeting in Washington, DC. And he's, you know, he was young, you know, he was running for president. And, you know, I got to know him. And I, you know, I believe you get to know people for who they are not what they do. By getting to know him from that perspective, when he did get elected, he really wanted me to help him with the National Telecommunications, you know, and Security Advisory Committee, and to give him advice and counsel on things that he should be thinking about with regard to the business community. And I put together programs where we would bring together the top, you know, 250, leaders of Fortune 500 companies, where he would have a day to interact with them, and we would do breakout sessions and bring advice and counsel to him that was collected from the business community. And so that's how I participated in NSTAC with him. And I have a, you know, a certificate from Barack Obama that's hangs proudly over my desk. For you know, a, you know, a proclamation from the President. So those are a big deal. But I believe being a servant leader and continuing to learn and pivot and help when I can. And, you know, cyber was just in its, you know, it was incubation.

Lisa Nichols 17:53

Infancy, right? Yes.

Maggie Wilderotter 17:56

And, you know, today, you know, the bad guys just keep getting better. And companies have to outsmart the bad guys. And need the capabilities in order to do that.

Lisa Nichols 18:06

We hear all the time from CISOs. It's not if you are attacked, it's when.

Maggie Wilderotter 18:14

And how fast you can find it.

Lisa Nichols 18:17

How fast, Yes, and how fast you can respond, right? I just I love what you just said, though, about pulling these 250 fortune 500 CEOs together? Oh, my goodness, Maggie, I hope that I don't know, I hope the president after Barack actually have continued that because I think that's brilliant, right? I mean, you're, you're hearing from the shop floor, basically, what are the issues? And what are the things that we need to be thinking about because business is so crucial to, you know, our economic stability, right? Of our country.

Maggie Wilderotter 18:57

And those organizations are still in place, they are still thriving, and they're still have the same activity in terms of, you know, new leaders as they come up. So, it's really a long-lasting set of programs, which I think is great for the country.

Lisa Nichols 19:12

That's wonderful. Well, you, let's talk about this a little bit, because I know that you've been a huge champion. You're a huge champion, Maggie, for DEI and especially women, at each of the organizations that you are a part of how did you foster diversity and What strategies did you put into place?

Maggie Wilderotter 19:34

I, you know, again, I, I believe God gave me two arms when to push myself forward, one to yank another woman right behind me. So. So diversity, equity and inclusion helps companies make better decisions because you have different perspectives. And I think that when you're mono focused on just one way of doing things, you miss the bigger picture of what can be done and should be done. So, I've always been big on making sure that we prepare women and

minorities, for especially board service. I started doing about three years ago board bootcamps. And they are very quick, so they don't take a lot of time. You know, we start usually at four o'clock in the afternoon, and we go through about two o'clock the next day. And during that period of time, I teach the work of the Board, both public and private. I teach how to intentionally get on a board. And then I teach how to be successful in that first year on any corporate board that you join.

Maggie Wilderotter 20:40

I also had one of the members that attend do homework. And they will also intentionally send me a list of usually five to six companies that they would really, they believe they have a right to win to serve on those boards. And I'll look at who the directors are and do some intros for them. Because I'm still very connected in corporate America. I know all the CEOs of the Fortune 500. And actually, a number of them from 500 to 1000. I've placed over 850 women and minority men onto their first boards in the last two and a half to three years. And I make them give back. So, when I do another bootcamp, they have to come and tell their story. I also have them you know, now that they're on boards also, you know, be folks that I'll reach out to if I have women or minority men that are interested in joining that specific board to see if there's an opportunity there.

Lisa Nichols 21:44

Maggie, what a, what a legacy. That's incredible 850 placements. That's really.

Maggie Wilderotter 21:54

I've trained 850, I've placed about 70% of them on a board.

Lisa Nichols 21:58

Right, that's, that's wonderful. Well, well, let's just say we have a high level person that that is looking to join a public or private board. What I mean, how would they how would they go about getting into your boot camp?

Maggie Wilderotter 22:16

Well, the nice thing is, just a couple months ago, there's a woman named Janice Ellig. In New York, she's got The Ellig Group business, Janice and I have been fast friends for a number of years. And because I keep getting overwhelmed with the demand of people that want to do this, you know, I sit on, you know, seven corporate boards. I'm a senior advisor to 12 companies. I have six grandchildren, I'm married. And I do not have infrastructure, right? So, Janice has agreed to take over the bootcamp. So, she now runs the boot camps. And this year, there are three of them. We've done one, we did one in April. And we have a couple coming up in the fall. And I will come and teach the boot camps. But Janice and Camille her assistant who's amazing, they do all the logistics so they do the outreach, the signups you know the all of the details associated with the boot camps. And then I come and I'll, I'll do the teaching, and they were in New York.

Lisa Nichols 23:23

Perfect. That is perfect, right? Because really the logistics part of it is a big lift, right? Maggie? So, if you don't have to do that piece, and you just can come in and share your expertise. That's beautiful. Well, I'm going to ask you one more question. And we're gonna take a quick break. So, I read something you and Denise, your sister, a former CEO for Campbell Soup, were at KPMG. And you shared the stage together, I think it was called New Jersey's Women's Network to network event. This was several years ago, but the whole event was geared around women in leadership risk taking career strategies for women. You both really commented on Sheryl Sandberg and lean in and sided where she said that the pipeline is small because women opt out of the pipeline because of other priorities. And so, Maggie, I'm going to ask you, do you believe that we have moved the needle on getting the flexibilities in the workplace that are needed for women to want to stay in the game and balance the family and the children and the grandchildren and the spouse sometimes?

Maggie Wilderotter 24:36

Well, I think the best thing, you know, I can't I can't necessarily comment on what drives people to do what they do. But what I can do is be a role model to show it can be done. And that's really where I focus and spend my time. I know Sheryl Sandberg wrote a book called Lean in. I'll tell you something. I've been laying on the table for 50 years. Okay, so to me, it's not about leaning in, it's about being all in. And, and I really think that difference matters. And so, I would just suggest to women who are hesitant. If you put yourself out there you will grow and learn. And you will get experiences in very different ways that just make you do better, be better, and feel better about who you are.

Lisa Nichols 25:29

Well, that's a great note to end on. We got a lot more to talk about. But we're going to take a quick break. And we'll be right back on the Something Extra Podcast with Maggie Wilderotter.

AD 25:37

Hey there, in a challenging business climate like this, savvy leaders look for technology to find an edge. This can mean the difference between staying ahead of the curve or playing catch-up. It's time to collaborate with the highly skilled experts at Technology Partners. Our team of technologists draws upon decades of experience for your project, with each bringing a passion for solving problems and the track record of success. How can we help you overcome your biggest technology challenges? Visit technologypartners.net to book a free consultation with one of our leaders.

Lisa Nichols 26:07

Well, welcome back everyone to the Something Extra Podcast with Maggie Wilderotter. So, Maggie, you talk a lot. And we've already kind of talked about this a little bit people are so important to you building people building high performing teams, but really seeing the people for who they are and, and pulling them along. You talk a lot about this. But I think I personally think that, this is one of the things that women do pretty well. Because I think that when we see people, a lot of times we see the whole person, you know, and realize that people are not just one dimensional. But you know, you and you and Denise both have, you know, got children, you've got six grandchildren big corporate jobs, you know. How have you really, how do you how, what are some of the tactics that you've used, really to, to see the whole person when you've got teams, and obviously, mag you can't do that with 10,000 people. But you know, you can do what you can and then you, you build that into other people that hopefully go and do that for others, right?

Maggie Wilderotter 27:19

Yep, absolutely. You know, I would I'll say a couple things about this. I, I do look at seeing potential in people, not just seeing them for where they are today. And I like to get to know people to understand what their potential is. And then encourage them to maximize that potential. I'm also Irish, right? So, I'm a storyteller, that people do remember stories versus statements. And I know when I was a CEO, and I traveled all over the place. Every Friday, when I was, I was the only CEO of a Fortune 500 Without a corporate jet. Because I took over a company that was in trouble. I had a corporate jet, I had six pilots, I had a chef, I had a corporate doctor. And the first thing I did is I let them all go. And I said to our employees, this is a company that has not made money in many years. We're all in it together. I'm flying commercial, just like everybody else. And, you know, I flew around the country commercial. I probably have the most miles of anybody on the planet. American, United, Delta, doesn't matter, Southwest. But what I would do is every Friday, and I would you know, upgrade and fly first class because I have a lot of points. And I would get a glass of wine and I was flying home. And I would write an email to all employees about my week. And I remember the first time I did this, I was watching the movie I decided to it was my birthday. So, I got a glass of wine, and I decided to watch the movie on the plane and it was Secretariat. That's about the horse that comes from behind, right?

Lisa Nichols 29:20

Love that movie.

Maggie Wilderotter 29:21

With an amazing jockey who just had this bond with his horse that was very unbelievable. But it reminded me of our company of frontier that we were sort of the underdogs, and I did the parallel of frontier to Secretariat. And our frontier colors were red. And the horse was called go it was called Big Red. So, at the end of the email at right at my signature line, I changed it to caps to say Go Big Red, and I sent this email out to my entire employee base. And literally, within 10 to 15 minutes, everybody in my company changed their signature to Go Big Red. And it was one of those, you know, sort of rallying cries.

Lisa Nichols 30:14

It's a rally cry.

Maggie Wilderotter 30:15

And everybody to work together collectively to do the impossible that thing people don't believe we can. And I knew, and then every Friday, I would send an email about my week to all of my employees. And I would get 1000s of responses. I mean, I had 12,000 employees, but I answered every single one of them. And I think when you're a responsive CEO, and it's not just one way communication, it's dialogue. And it's discussion, and it's deliberation, and it's questions. What happens is, you're approachable. So, my employees would tell me really the truth of what's going on. So, they didn't feel like oh, we can't tell her. I wanted them to tell me. And I was appreciative to that. And I would share their stories with the rest of the organization, too.

Lisa Nichols 31:10

Oh, wow, Maggie. Okay, I really get it, now. I really get it. I mean, you know what, you're an inspirational leader, you inspire them to have hope to see the possibilities, right? And to dream bigger, maybe than they would have before. So, wow, that's just that I love that story so much. Thank you so much for sharing that. You know, I, here's, here's

something that Kelly Watson at that KPMG. She was managing partner of KPMG at the time. She said, she said women may think they should work hard, and then hope that someone will tap them on the shoulder and promote them. But that's not the way it works. You have to pick up your head, pay attention to what is going on, get to know people make your skill set known to others. This is what makes you valuable in the market. So, Maggie, what I'd love to talk to you about sometimes you do get tapped on the shoulder, sometimes you do get tapped on the shoulder, right? And you've tapped a lot of people on the shoulder. But I talked to a lot of leaders, Maggie, and oftentimes what they say is no, I raised my hand, I raised my hand for the project that no one else wanted. So, I have a question for you. How do you because sometimes putting your story out there letting people know what your skill sets are, can feel a little bit like self-promotion, and it can feel a little icky. So, what would you say to people about that? I mean, how can you go about kind of promoting your brand, you know, within the organization without it feeling icky?

Maggie Wilderotter 33:00

So, you know, look at, I always believed that the best leaders are inside out and outside in. All right, so you're looking at things holistically. And I also believe that leaders need to build power bases, which is something that a lot of women don't want to do, or they're afraid to do it or they think it's like icky to do or something. But, but positive power makes the world go round in the right way. Negative power makes it go the wrong way. And I believe in building power through networks. And so, to me, networking was always working, it wasn't an extracurricular activity, it was integrated into everything that I did. And, you know, I would raise my hand for projects for opportunities when I was young. And I always made a list every year of 15 people in business that I wanted to meet and spend some time with. And I would build into my schedule, you know, find out where they were, what things that they, they love to do. And I would work my way into an opportunity to meet them, either through people that they knew and I knew, right? Or being at a place at the same time they were was whether it's an event or whatever, because networking is working. And I also believe that the best way to get to know people is to share a meal with them. Because when you sit down and you eat with someone, you're equals at a table, there's not somebody sitting behind a desk and you're sitting in front of it. There's not somebody who's you know, got their badge on and they're in a position of power over you, or, or greater than you. When you eat a meal. You're two people or four people depending on who you're having a meal with. And you're all equals you're all doing the same thing. And people lean back when they eat. And, and you get to know them again for who they are not what they do. And so, I ate my way around corporate America. And it was one, it was a big gift, right? Because I got to eat it many fabulous restaurants all over the world with very interesting people. And my company actually paid for its.

Lisa Nichols 35:29

Oh, that is so awesome. Well, I laughingly say but it's the truth, that book that came out and I can't remember the author. I want to say it was Keith, you probably will. But that book that came out years ago, Maggie Never Eat Alone. Do you remember that book? I'm like, the after reading that book. That's when I really started gaining weight so but it's, it's the truth. I, so, I agree with you just sharing a meal with someone you know, and just getting to know them as a person. And I know for me, magic has happened when I get to know somebody and, and you know, it's not it's not like I'm asking anything from that person. It just wants to get to know them. And then you're able to make connection sometimes for that person based on you know, what their interests are. You know more about them. I just I, I love I love what you just said.

Lisa Nichols 36:24

So, I'm here. Here's a quote that I read about you. I told you I found all these amazing quotes and some Maggieism to that we'll talk about but I'm not really sure who wrote this because I didn't write down who wrote it. I just found this quote, "Maggie makes herself available to employees and customers alike, modeling a kind of leadership with an emphasis on communication, and ensuring that each individual feels respected as a vital part of the mission." Wow. It's just amazing. Here's here is another Maggieism. I love this. And I think you were talking about one of your mentors, Bob Matthews. Maggie, when you wrote this, he was an amazing mentor for you. Someone's belief in you and your abilities can truly change your life. And I love what you said here, you said Bob practiced opening doors. He practiced opening doors, and we can all practice all of these things that we're talking about, right? I see you doing the same thing, Maggie, for other people. And so, you've carried on Bob's legacy that he put inside of you. Here's another one. "Never take your customers for granted. They may love your product, but if you don't show them love, they will buy from anyone but you."

Maggie Wilderotter 37:48

Absolutely.

Lisa Nichols 37:50

Right? I mean, they may love the product. But if they if you're not care and feeding them and showing them. And I know we don't use love a lot in business, but I think love is an important word, word. But here's another one, one

more, "Learning isn't always easy, nor success a given. I think of an oyster irritated by a grain of sand, and how that rub of sand and water makes a pearl. That same process can produce great results and business. Adversity and struggle can make great wins happen." And that is Maggie Wilderotter. So, do you have a story? Just let me ask you this before. I want to talk to you about your winery and Jay, because we've got some commonality there that you might not realize on that. But do you have a story Maggie about where adversity really was the thing that helped you grow or in maybe even a struggle?

Maggie Wilderotter 38:51

So, I'll give you two stories one about Bob Matthews who was the founder and CEO of Cable Data, which was a data processing and management information systems company in a very nascent new business called the cable television industry. So, this was way back in the 70s. And I was the accounts receivable supervisor my first job out of college at cable data. And about six months after that I was promoted to the manager of accounting. So, I ran the accounting department. And I did that for a while and the company was growing exponentially because the cable industry was starting to take off. And we didn't have a sales and marketing department. And I started to work on Bob say, you know, Bob, I think I could start a sales and marketing team and we could, you know, interact with customers and make sure we're selling the right products and services to the right people and we could do marketing programs to engage our customers better. And I worked on it for about six months, and he finally said okay, go hire your replacement and accounting. And so, I hired my replacement.

Maggie Wilderotter 40:06

I was in a two-week training before I was going to start my new job. I was a week into it. And Bob called me in his office and he said, I have some good news and bad news. And I said, okay, I'm from accounting, let's start with the bad news. And he said, you're not going to run sales and marketing. And I looked at him like he had two heads. I said, Bob, I've already hired my replacement. He's a weekend to training, what do you mean, I'm not going to do that. He said, I've decided since we're growing so fast, and we did data processing, I want to get closer to my customers with the data processing services. So, I want to open regions in five locations around the country and one in Canada. I want you to go scout find those locations. I want you to hire general managers to run those locations. Oversee us distributing our data processing capability out to all those locations, and get the teams in place in order to support customers more locally. And I looked at him like he had two heads. I'm like 27-28 years old. I said, Bob, I don't know anything about regional operations. He said, Yeah, you don't know anything about sales and marketing either.

Maggie Wilderotter 41:13

But was the best job I ever had to be a CEO. Because I basically got to be a Chief Operating Officer running distributed groups. And I had, I open six regions of which, in data processing in those days, the only people in data processing were guys that were at least 10 to 15 years older than I was, that worked for me. And they built teams. They were great mentors for me. But I was also a great mentor for them. I taught them different things about how to think about business. I also taught them that having capable women working for them was a really good idea. They stepped up to that occasion, and they had balanced management teams because of that. And it really opened things up. So, that was an example of someone taking a risk on me early in my career. And Bob, you know, Bob Matthews, as a CEO, he was an engineer by background 50% of his direct reports were women. He actually married one of them, so.

Lisa Nichols 42:19

Oh, wow.

Maggie Wilderotter 42:22

He loved all of us. But all I'm saying is he had that secret sauce, knowing women could be really, really strong leaders. And I still in touch with several of the women that I worked with way back then. The other story that I'll tell you is about tenacity and grit. And I, I as I said, I always made this list of different people that I wanted to get to know. And if I, if I felt that I was not making headway or getting traction, I remember, I, I would send flowers to get their attention. And I would send flowers and I would put a little card. You know, roses are red, violets are blue all I want is 15 minutes with you. And I would do on my, on my flowers. And it worked. I mean, I would you know when, when you send flowers to people in technology that are guys, they call you back. It's it was. So, you know, I think being creative. Not, not ever thinking about things as failure as I've always just not figured out what to do yet. And I think kind of building that tenacity and grit into our leaders today is really important to do, because, you know, stuff happens around us that we don't get to control. But what we can control is what we do about it.

Lisa Nichols 43:47

Yes, that's so good, Maggie. Well, I, you just reminded me This is so funny, because you do um, you know, one of our listeners, if you're trying to get the attention of someone, you know, send flowers or do something, you know, a little

different right than the normal person would do. I remember years ago, a young woman was trying to get on my calendar. Maggie, and she sent me a in scripted, beautiful Cutco knife. Now, if you've got Cutco knives, these are not inexpensive. I knew she probably spent about \$120 on this Cutco knife because it was a carving knife, you know, for turkey or, you know, a big piece of meat. But she put on there. I would love just a little slice of your time. And I'm like, whoa, I'm like of course. If she's gonna take the time it you know, put my name on the knife. I've never used the knife, because I'm like, oh, I'm not just going to use this day to day and it just stood out to me and I'm like, of course absolutely. I would love to meet with you and we still meet, you know, from time to time to, to this day I said, you know, I will meet with you whenever you want, but I'm putting the onus on you to remind me to for a meeting.

Lisa Nichols 43:49

So, I love that. Well, okay, so Jay is your husband. And I want to talk to you about this for just a minute. Something you may not know, Maggie, I don't think we've talked about this when we met last year. But you've known Jay, since you were 12. I think you guys met at some beach club or Country Club, something like that. Greg and I have known each other since we were four and six. We went to the same church together. And so, we kind of grew up together didn't start dating until we were in high school. But I've known him practically my whole life. And so that's really special. I love, I love that you guys have known each other that long. But I know that Jay had always dreamed of being a winemaker. And so, I would love to for you to tell us a little bit about Wilderotter vineyards. And I'm not sure if you guys still have the Grand Reserve Inn or not, but tell us about winemaking.

Maggie Wilderotter 46:06

Yes, so, my husband. Again, Air Force Academy grad flew jets in the military, very smart guy, especially any. He's very intellectually smart. But he's also very sensitive, right? He's one of these guys that has a good balance to him. And I remember that he's always been a grower since he was a kid. He had big gardens. I remember when we were dating, you know, he was 13. And he, whenever he would come over to my house, He'd ride his bike, but he bring a bag of vegetables for my mom. So, my mother, my mother always loved my husband more than me. But, you know, that was just sort of the person. He was he you know, he loved the soil. He loved things that grew. And he has like a sixth sense about that. So, at one point, he said, you know, I really want to get some land, and maybe grow grapes and make wine. And I said, honey, the only thing you know about this is you like to drink the stuff. So, we were in the Sacramento area at the time when I worked at cable data. And so, what I said you need to go figure out what it takes to do this. And you know, in Sacramento, we're very close to where Napa is. So, my husband enrolled in courses at UC Davis, right outside of Sacramento and etiology and vinta culture. And I thought, Oh, great. So now he'll actually see what it takes to do this, and it'll go away. But it now he just got more excited about it. But because he, he was able to get that education, He knew what he needed to do in order to do it. So, we bought 40 acres of property in Amador County, California, which is between Sacramento and Lake Tahoe. At the 2000-foot level. It's actually the oldest red grape growing region in the United States of America. Because when gold was discovered in the Sierra foothills, that front by the miners, the Italians came over from Italy and planted grapes to provide wine to the miners. So, on the property, we had those 40 acres, we had 100-year-old vines on that property.

Maggie Wilderotter 48:21

So, but Jay, you know, he cultivated, he planted out the entire 40 acres. And you know, he he walks he walks those acreage and he knows exactly what's happening with those grapes. So, he was a great grower, and he always sold 60% of his grapes. But over time we built a five star luxury Inn on the property we put in a tasting room, we put it in a winery, so we started making wine in addition to growing and we did that for a number of years. We own that property for about 40 years. And after we owned that property for about 10 years, we bought another 40 acres a mile away that had 25 acres planted and we built our home on that property. We tore down the house that was there built our home and put in a guest house. And a couple of years ago with you know just as getting older etc. We actually sold the business that has had the winery the tasting room and the Inn because it was seven days a week. I mean, I was I was the Rainmaker for the in, you know, filling, filling the end, we had 17 employees, it was a 24/7 operation seven days a week, in addition to all the other stuff we were doing. So, we finally just said, we'll keep the, the acreage that Jay grows and sells because he was selling 60% of his grapes anyway, he's got 10-year contracts on all of those grapes. And we have our home and we have a guest house so we can have small groups come together, but we don't have to be in this business 24/7. So, He, was a great chapter for us. And he's still a great whisperer. And he still gets to do, do what he loves to do. And I get to have more time to spend it with my grandchildren.

Lisa Nichols 50:13

Right? And an endless supply of wine, Maggie.

Maggie Wilderotter 50:19

We have a lot of wine to list as 100 years.

Lisa Nichols 50:23

That is wonderful. Well, there's part of your legacy, too, for future generations. Well, Maggie, oh, my goodness, I think I could talk to you for hours and hours and hours. But we won't do that to our listeners. Maybe in the future, we'll do a part two. But I have to ask you, this is called something extra. What do you believe? Is that something extra that every leader needs?

Maggie Wilderotter 50:44

I think we need to be in the moment with the people that we care about. Both at the office as well as personally. And make sure you have that balance of being intentional about how you spend your time. Those are the biggest the time is our biggest gift, and it's also a gift to ourselves.

Lisa Nichols 51:02

Absolutely. Well, this has been so much fun. Wow, I feel like I've learned a lot just from listening to you. And I know that our listeners are going to appreciate all your insights and your experience about your leadership journey and family and the whole nine yards, Maggie, so thank you so much for making the time.

Maggie Wilderotter 51:21

And thanks for making it easy. I appreciate it.

Announcer 51:25

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