



EP292_Jason Weems

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 and 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'm excited to have Jason Weems on the show today, Jason is the CIO at Soleo Health. So, Jason, I am so excited to have you on the show today. Thank you so much for making the time. I've really, really been looking forward to our conversation.

Jason Weems 01:53

Thank you. I'm so excited to be here. And thanks for thinking of me.

Lisa Nichols 01:56

Absolutely, absolutely. So, I always like to tell our listeners how I meet my guests, right? They want to know where how did you meet this person? How did, and so you and I actually met a few years ago because our data analytics and AI practice director, Jake Gower, knew you. And he's like Lisa, you got to meet Jason. You're gonna love Jason and boy, was he right? You are you're such a great guy and amazing leader. But then when we met, it was really funny, Jason because we knew a lot of the same people. Like and I'll give a shout out to our mutual friend Scott Richert.

Jason Weems 02:34

Yes. Scott is amazing. And, actually, I was talking to him. And we what's funny is I had lunch with him the same day that I met with you, and it was not coordinated at all. So, it's a small world for sure.

Lisa Nichols 02:46

It is a small world. It is a small world. He's so given a big shout out to our mutual friend, Scott. But you've had just an incredible, incredible technology career here. You know, I this is I'll just say this to you. I'll shout out another one of our friends, Tim Kessler, that you had worked with. And here is what Tim Kessler says about Jason Weems. He said Jason waves is a force multiplier. And so, I'm so excited to dig into your career and all of the leadership lessons you've learned along the way because I know it's going to help our listeners. But before we do that, I'd love to go back to growing up. Take me to back to the beginning. Jason, when you were in your mother's womb, no I'm totally teasing, but where did you grow up? Would you like to do a little boy?

Jason Weems 03:43

That's a great question. So, I grew up in Farmington, Missouri, which is about an hour or so south of St. Louis. Pretty small town. My parents built a house when I was one so lived was there. Went to Farmington elementary, middle and

high school because there's only one and it was, it was, it was a great experience. I mean, for me just being in a small, small town you know, in high school, I bailed hay and all the things so definitely, it was good. I went to community college there and then area college. And then once I finished there, I knew I needed to do I wanted to do something else like I would say even during school, there was quite a bit of time until even middle of high school where I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do. I was a little bit kind of searching and then I found you know actually we had a we had a computer teacher there that was like how those computer classes and really got into it and that's how I that's how I found computers, I guess and really just, just clicked for me and connected and so it was really, really great. Int terms of how I grew up, I was, i kind of liked to game. I liked to play games you know, would be like on, you know, whatever role-playing games, all that kind of stuff.

Lisa Nichols 04:54

Video games or like, video games? Really, okay.

Jason Weems 05:00

What's interesting actually, just quickly is that, you know, I was kind of a gamer as a kid, my all my kids how they do like games, but they're all in sports. And it was, I didn't really do the sports thing much. And so, so I'm having to relearn how to be a sports dad and like soccer games and practice, all that kind of stuff. So, it's been a, it's, it's interesting whenever you grow up, and then you're, you know, you've got a certain set of interest, and then your kids are in a different place. And then, you know, having to kind of reinvent yourself, so.

Lisa Nichols 05:31

Absolutely. So, I have a question for you. And you can be honest with me, do you still game?

Jason Weems 05:37

What was that? Do I still game? A little bit, a little bit. I mean, not, not as much as I did. You know, it's, like I said, I used to do more of the role-playing games, those kinds of things. My kids are into a lot of the first-person games and they are so much better at than I am. It's really, it's crazy, because I feel like I should have it should be transferable skills, and it's not as much as I want. They're really good.

Lisa Nichols 06:02

Well, I have to tell you this. This is so funny, because our grandson loves the gaming, he loves fortnight. I don't even know all of the ones that he plays, but he gets on with his old friends, you know, from school, and he just loves it. He's 11. And one Sunday, our pastor, which we absolutely love, he started saying he goes, he goes, I go into my main cave, and I love the game. And he goes, I probably played some of your kids. And so, so you're our grandson was like, that is the coolest thing ever. Pastor Eric plays video games, you know, we were just blown away. It was so funny. But well, that's awesome. Well, so you went on to SLU, so you did decide you want to do something else. I'm so grateful for that computer teacher. He teachers, Jason.

Jason Weems 07:00

Mr. Murray. He was I'm sure he's probably retired now. But we really wouldn't have had a program without Mr. Murray, Mr. Murray, developed this whole, you know, he basically had this class, and he would teach different types of programming, you know, Visual Basic, or Java or Pascal or whatever, at the time. And he just had one class, and he would just do individual courses for people based on what they were interested in. Multimedia, those type things. And again, I think outside of Mr. Murray, I'm not sure that we would have had it at all. So, it's pretty, pretty amazing that he, he really created that atmosphere.

Lisa Nichols 07:30

That is wonderful teachers. They deserve so much credit. They truly do. I can't tell you how many leaders I have interviewed, Jason, and they say a teacher in school is what inspired them to do what they're doing today. It's really now was he in the industry before? Do you know, was he only in academia, or had he worked in industry?

Jason Weems 07:53

He was academic for a while I did, he I think he did some work in the industry for a bit. But I don't fully remember. But I believe so.

Lisa Nichols 08:01

So, you went on, you decided to go into computers and get a degree from SLU. You got your undergrad from SLU MIS? And then you went on to pursue your MBA from SLU as well. Yeah. So, let's talk about this. So, so I know like when you started your career, you worked in two different financial services before joining Express Scripts in 2010. We can, we don't necessarily have to focus on those because I really want to really focus on when you went to

Express Scripts, because you had some amazing, amazing opportunity. For our listeners who may not be familiar with Express Scripts. I mean, Express Scripts is kind of an iconic St. Louis made company really.

Jason Weems 08:48

They are. I think what's interesting is so when I, when I joined in 2010, they were in the, between 20 and 25 years, you know, established, and they grew from just a couple of small pharmacies really, really small. And we're one of the fastest growing industries, honestly, in the country. And it was really, you know, based out of St. Louis, and was just the growth, the growth track, track record, there was amazing, you know, George Pas was the CEO for, for a long time and was, you know, iconic in the in St. Louis. And, you know, before that, to your point, I was in banking for 10 years at Citibank and a VC firm before, but really, I just continue to hear good things in terms of fast paced culture, you know, you've got to be able to keep up, but a lot of growth and lots of opportunity just to run with stuff at Express Scripts. And so, that's what that drew me. You mentioned, Tim Kessler, I think he's the one who even said, hey, you should think about because he worked in Sydney together. I think he's the one who would have been, you know, had had introduced me to the opportunity. I didn't work for him at that time, but, but to go to come in and then so you know, that's so glad I did. And it's been a was a very, very fast paced company. And Express Scripts has been there still. It's there. Now. They're now owned by Cigna. I think Cigna bought them maybe three years ago.

Lisa Nichols 10:03

Right, right. No, it's it is an incredible story. Jason funny, because Greg and I started our careers at McDonnell Douglas. And I remember, in fact, I believe that it was a couple of McDonnell Douglas people that, like started seeing us and it was like a joint venture is how it started. And I just remember when we were at Mac, a lot of people were leaving McDonnell Douglas to go work for this amazing startup. Just an incredible story.

Jason Weems 10:38

Especially past 2008. But the mortgage crisis, a lot of companies were reducing, and they were growing. And so, I think that that whole time period, they brought in a ton of talent across, across really the St. Louis, across the country, but especially in St. Louis. Just brought in some really, really smart people. And, and it was the talent, you know, pool at that time was, was really huge. And so, it was great for me, because you get to learn from people, some really smart people in different areas and technology and outside as well.

Lisa Nichols 11:06

Absolutely. remarkable success story. And to your point, Cigna did buy them a few years ago, three or four years ago. And now they're like, a Fortune 15, on the Fortune 20 list. It's crazy. It's crazy. But I do want to talk about your journey there. So, you were when you came in, in 2010, you were brought in as the technology, Director of Technology, Product Management, you continue to ascend up the corporate ladder. Finally, digital transformation, you were a segment CIO, what were some of the key lessons that you learned along the way, Jason, about leadership specifically? And, you know, what is your own leadership style? And have you seen your leadership style evolve over the years of being in these different roles?

Jason Weems 11:59

It's a great question. I mean, you know, is interesting, I came over to, to lead a lot of finance organization, which was a good transition, because I been in financial services for 10 years, as I went to Express Scripts. I came in to support a lot of the rebates, pricing those areas, and really standing up what was their product organization, we call them the business alignment team at the time, but it was really a product-based organization. Which was interesting for me in terms of, you know, what I enjoyed doing and still continue to enjoy doing is having strong partnerships, driving toward roadmaps, those type things. So, for me, it was an interesting way to come in, learn the business, get to understand healthcare, and then extend out. So, I think learning for me, even there is find the bridge, you know, as you're making a change, find the bridge, find places that you can come in and, and take what you've learned and carry that into something else. It allows you to come in and make some, some quick positive momentum, and then learn and grow from the business from there. So, that that was clearly a learning and something that I believe helped me as I came in.

Jason Weems 13:01

You know, I think it's, as you continue to take on more and more responsibility, you have to shift from being the guy who knows all the answers and knows how to get everything done. To making sure you've got the right team lined up, and you've got the right people in place to be able to make those decisions. And it's not that your app center don't understand what's going on, I think there's definitely a degree of being able to go in deep and understand and really probe as you need to when there's risk or when there's a you know, something that's important, but being able to get those teams, the team in place. And so that was something I had to learn as I continue to grow. You It's not sustainable, quite honestly, the larger and larger the organization. You know, I think at one time when I was in the care role, at the end, I have near 1900 people, between employees and contractors, and so you've got people that are

multiple levels in the organization. And so, being able to, you know, it becomes that much more important that you've got the right team in place, and that they understand kind of culturally of where you're trying to go and the key aspects of strategy and what we're, what are the business objectives we're trying to achieve? To me that I can't underscore that enough is that the larger and larger your sphere of influence and accountability, the more that becomes really important. So, for me that was that was, you know, a big learning. I mean, I think, again, you can only sustain over time to the degree you've got the right people in place, and you can you can pedal a lot underwater for a while but it's just not really sustainable long term.

Jason Weems 13:57

So true. Go ahead, you go. Keep going.

Jason Weems 14:41

I was gonna say, you know, and I think I probably learned this from you know, we mentioned Tim but then also just, you know, my even my pastor, but you know, this, this notion of words matter becomes really important. You know, there's a, the way you know what understanding your audience and understanding what, what they need and kind of reading your audience is a skill set. And it's not something that was necessarily something that I was proficient at early in my career, you know. You come into it with this is my message and I'm going to share my message, and then you're going to receive my message that way I want to share it. And that's really not always often that's not the most effective way to communicate. Honestly, a big part of being effective communicators, understanding what your audience is looking for, whether that's a business partner, or someone on your team, a peer, you know, a leader, a superior leader, any of those type things, understanding what their objectives are, and then how you are helping them achieve those objectives. And you get to an alignment in terms of that, you know, shared objectives, I think becomes really important in the words you use, to be able to resonate with them, and so that it makes sense to them becomes really important. So, being intentional around your words, based on again, what others are, you know, understanding their objectives becomes really important.

Jason Weems 16:02

I'm also a fan of, you know, there's a lot of research in the scientific world around like neuroplasticity, which is like, brain pathways in the way that you think, over time that you create, you know, you create plasticity, or basically you create patterns in your brain. And so, I think it's the words we say, influences the way we think. So, if I'm so and the way we think influences what we do. And so, I think it becomes really important because it's, it's a bit of the start the foundation for that. And so being really intentional around that you know, about the words we say, and that it's actually going toward something and it's not complaining or something like that. No, we can be real. But you know, am I speaking into where I'm going or am I not? Speaking into where I'm going, it's actually going to line my brain up in that direction. And it's actually and I'm kind of move in that direction, versus talking about all the things that aren't happening, or the things that aren't working the way that I thought they would. And I think that's, that's really important. And, and I think tied into that is this notion of being authentic. I think there's an authentic component to that too, which is like, if I'm always going towards something, and I'm using words toward something, I can have the same conversation, whether I'm in a board meeting, or I'm having a one on one with someone on my team. And so, again, I think if that's what's driving you, and you're driven toward a path forward, it all just lines up, so.

Lisa Nichols 17:25

I, there's so much packed into what you just said, I don't know that I can unpack it all, Jason, but you know, the thing that just resonates with me, communication is so important. And sometimes we think oh, communicating meaning the words that I'm saying, but what you just said to me was it's so important to understand your team and what they need from you, and how they receive that. And so, what that really requires is listening. Wonderful listening skills.

Jason Weems 17:46

Empathy and listening for sure.

Lisa Nichols 18:00

Yes. And the empathy that comes, yeah, putting yourself in their shoes. There's so much goodness in what, what you just said, that's, that's really good. Well, let's say, do you have let me ask you this question. Do you have any stories maybe about some challenges you face? Because, again, we've been talking about this crazy journey trajectory that Express. I think Express Scripts made something like nine or 10 Different acquisitions, big acquisition with Medco. I remember, when Tim Wentworth came in, from Medco, which another amazing CEO, you know. So, I mean, it was kind of a crazy journey that you guys were on lots of changes. Can you remember, like, you have any stories or think about any stories as you're going through this, how your team overcame some of those challenges and maybe even resistance to change? Leader changes important to as a leader, knowing how to do that, right?

Jason Weems 19:10

I think that's, that's a good to your point. Lots of acquisition and from Express Scripts and Cigna, quite honestly, you know, as large organizations. But especially there a ton of integration, you know, well, there was well, there's some activity with Well Point and Express Scripts and Medco came together and kept you know, Express Scripts banner, or branding. And then you got Cigna. A couple of things come to mind. So, when Express Scripts and Cigna Express Scripts, Medco story came together that was in the 2012 time period. It was massive, you have two large pharmacy benefit managers or two large pharmacy companies coming together. In many cases, kind of the one and two are the top five for sure top three in the in the country. And so, as you're bringing that together, just a massive amount of change and also just cultural differences, you know, and both, both of them, both companies very competent, both very successful otherwise they wouldn't be to, you know where they were at. But very, you know, sometimes you've got this vertical integration, and sometimes you got horizontal vertical, being more of where you've got, you know, in the supply chain one is higher than the other. This was much, this is definitely a more of a horizontal, you know, had a lot of overlapping services and those type things. So, a lot of kind of uncertainty there, too.

Jason Weems 20:27

I think a couple of things that stood out to me in that time period was, it wasn't perfect by any means. But I thought what was interesting was this, the approach that really got in to come in and say, hey, we need to make some decisions quickly, because we're going to if we don't, we're going to spin on these things for a long time. And it's going to be three years later, there's so many examples in the market or in the industry, where companies come together, and then they have multiple adjudication systems, multiple pharmacy systems, and it just creates this notion of tech dead and sprawl. And then it gets hard to get things done, because you've got to make changes in so many different places. What one thing that was really interesting, and then I felt like went well, there was this ability to make decisions, kind of like, it's the 80/20 rule, right? It's the ability to come in understanding enough, and you're not going to make perfect decisions, but make kind of quick decisions, and be able to get moving and then adjust. I mean, it's almost this whole notion, there's a lot of focus, or a lot of the market shift, especially in technology shifted toward this continuous improvement, make a decision, make it informed, use data to make the decision, but get started and then adjust from there. And I feel like doing that at scale is not always easy. And it's, it's you know, there's, there's a, there's a resistance to change, too, when it comes to leadership, because what if we made the wrong one, right?

Jason Weems 21:45

But I thought it was interesting how, as Express Scripts came together. We made some decisions in like the first couple of weeks post close. And we started, we came down with very aggressive timeframes, to get those things done, and again, wasn't perfect. But I thought it was, for me, it was a learning that I, you know, that the importance of making a call using data, but making a call and getting going, you know, when you fast forward, it's, you'll be in a better place. And not getting stuck or stagnant in terms of over analyzing or having to have the next level of, you know, going, I need that I need 85. And now I need 90 and 95. And this polarizing effect. For me, that was a, it was an interesting use case or case study, if you will, in terms of how to make decisions, and go with it and then adjust from there. So, that was one.

Jason Weems 22:36

I think as you bring together organizations or even have lots of change, what becomes really important is that you go back to the fundamentals, which is as an example, within, you know, within the pharmacy space, which I was leading the pharmacy space at the time was, our mission hasn't changed. We're continuing to serve as patients, we need skill, we need to have a really strong engineering department or whatever departments, those are engineering, user experience, digital, etc. Like this is still part of our mission. So, tying it back to the mission and tying it back to the work that we do that you tie back to the, the anchor, if you will, of what's still stable, and understanding other things will change. But we are we're going to do the right things. We value our people, those kind of things, I think helps. Because there's so much uncertainty when there is changed that people are always like, what does this mean to me? What is this, and I think if you can take it back to keep doing what you're doing. And we want your input to this process. It's not perfect, but I think it goes a long way in terms of, you know, helping people find some stable ground.

Lisa Nichols 23:38

Sticking with the core values, the core values have not changed, the mission has not changed. But maybe the way that we deliver is going to be a little differently.

Jason Weems 23:48

Values hasn't changed, some of it will change but a lot of it hasn't. And so, the more you can find those commonalities and ensure that it gives people a place to feel a little bit more stable, which is really important to change.

Lisa Nichols 24:01

Agreed. Oh, that is so good. That is so good. So, tell me this, I mean, you, you We already talked about it. But at the end, I think you were managing over a \$250 million budget you had 1900 plus people in the organization, building high performing teams is critical, right? And we talked about that the very beginning. It's all about the people. So, what you know, for you, Jason, specifically when you're building a high performing team, what are some of those traits that you look for in the members as you're adding members to the team?

Jason Weems 24:38

So, I think there's a, good question. I mean, I think clearly as you know, my, my team changed vacillated in size and scale over time but, but as you got team and getting the right people in place, I think there's an aptitude and an attitude component to that. So, from an aptitude, do they understand, like what good looks like do they do they understand their craft, right? So, I'm so if it's engineering, do I have somebody that's engineering minded, that knows what good looks like when it comes to engineering that knows where to go to figure out, they may not have all the answers, but they know where to go. And they have a way to really make sure that we're moving the organization along within that space. And they're going to surround themselves with people that are going to keep them sharp. So, there's this aptitude part of do they get it? You know?

Jason Weems 25:23

The attitude side is this is more of like, are they? Are they looking forward to the challenge? Because there's always going to be a challenge, right? There's always going to be some challenge, and maybe it's a people challenge. Maybe it's a delivery challenge. Maybe it's a culture, whatever. Do they lean into those challenges? And do they view those as do they get revved by that? Saw this thing, like, we're gonna get this done, and it's going to be hard, but we're going to figure it out. You know, those are the type of people that I'm looking for. Because, because we want to do hard things. And, and the reward is hard, but the reward is big. So, finding people that have that type of mentality or mindset becomes important. I'm big on accountability. And I talk a lot about it with my team in terms of, you know, when we say something, we should do it, right? As long as we're doing the right things, right? If we still believe in it, like if we're like, hey, we made a mistake, don't, don't go after stupid things. But if, if we, if we said we were going to do something, it should be hard to turn away from that. And so, you know, I call it our say/do ratio, like we should have a high say/do ratio, when it comes to, we said, we're going to do it, we're going to deliver it, it was it keeps us accountable to not taking the easy road.

Jason Weems 26:30

But also there's a level of confidence that instills in the organization that if hey, if, if technology says they're gonna get done, they're gonna get it done, or they're gonna come back to me, and they're gonna say, Hey, I've got risk, and this is what we're doing about it, and I need your help, or you make it about it's a we problem, it's not a, you know, it's not as it's not a defensive thing. It's a hey, we need help. We've got to get we've got a challenge. And this is what I'm doing and what I need. And I'm going to come back next week, and I'm going to let you know, but this, again, owning it, if you will, is something that I look for in my team. You know, a lot, you know, I've been known to kind of say, you know, don't be a victim sometimes where it's like, oh, I don't have this, I don't have that. Well, what what's what do you need to get there? And what do you need for me? And, you know, flip the conversation a little bit? I think to me, it's, it's a mindset.

Lisa Nichols 27:18

That's so good. Aptitude and attitude. I'll never forget, I'm a big southwest fan, you and I kind of talked about Southwest, prior to hopping on here. And I remember a long time ago, reading the Southwest Way. And Jason, like Herb Keller, the founder of Southwest said, you know, he hired for attitude and trying for skills. But attitude was so important. And sometimes that's something you can't necessarily teach, right? I mean, people you have agility people, listen, I'm kind of, of the mindset, I know that our IQ is kind of set for us. But I'm kind of one of these people that I'm like, hey, if there's something you need to grow in, you can grow in it. There is. So, we do need to be agile, but, but I do think

Jason Weems 28:11

There's modeling, right? You see people, hey there, hey, I saw how they handled this situation. I want to do more of that. And there's this notion of like, I'm gonna get uncomfortable, and I'm gonna do it even though it feels awkward for a bit until it becomes less awkward. And then that's how I respond.

Lisa Nichols 28:25

Absolutely, absolutely. Well, this is I've got so much more I want to talk to you about and you're so amazing. I mean, you and I could sit here for 10 hours, but we're not going to do that to our listeners. But we do need to take a quick break. And we'll be right back with Jason Williams on to Something Extra Podcast.

AD 28:42

Hey they're in a challenging business climate like this savvy leaders looking at 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 a 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 29:12

Welcome back everyone to the Something Extra Podcast with my friend Jason Weems. So, Jason, I know that you were a sponsor for this leadership program. When you were at Express Scripts/Cigna that was focused on developing and equipping leaders within the workplace. Can you tell us a little bit more about that program and especially this concept of TPOV?

Jason Weems 29:37

Happy to. So, there was a program that was developed was a huge fan. It was really focused on leading self, leading others, and then leading through change. And there was a couple of things wrapped into that. So, first of all, you have to know who you are as a leader to be able to lead others effectively if you're not clear on who I am and how I want to lead. It's really hard to lead others or even to lead change over time. You vacillate a lot. So, so I think one of the things that become really important, and there was a lot of tenants of the program, we did things like situational leadership and, and emotional intelligence. And we I think even in the last segment, we talked a bit about this empathy piece, which is, you know, being emotionally intelligent, understanding what other people and how other people are coming into a situation and how I'm coming into it being, being aware, which is an area that you can grow, we talked about, grow, that's an area where you actually can develop, you know, over time.

Jason Weems 30:32

But one of the things that I loved about the program was this notion of TPOV, which is a teachable point of view. There was a book by Noel Tichy called The Leadership Engine, and one of the things that came out of that was this notion of having a teachable heart. And which is really, can I, am I, am I open to learn? Am I Am I able to learn? Do I know who I am? In terms of a leader? And, and getting crisper on that. So, so one of the core tenants and no. I think Vicki Wheeler actually put together some of the programs that got created, but one of the core tenants was, you know, going through and saying, okay, who am I as a leader, and being able to articulate that, and a lot of times people can't do it upfront, like, it's, you know, if you what's your elevator pitch? Who are you? What kind of leader are you? It's really hard to use, it's like, well, I'm this or, you know, and so getting crisp on that, and take some work takes some work and kind of do some soul searching and saying, you know, what do I actually believe in? And what do I what drives me? And what are those core beliefs that I have, you know, as a leader.

Jason Weems 31:33

And in going through that exercise, it's interesting, because, you know, what I found was, you go through and you start to, you start to think about it, I journal and I'm big on journaling. I think journaling helps me process, you know, and people process things in different ways. For me, journaling, as we're writing is helpful, I get things out in written word that I can't always get out and, you know, verbal. So, it's interesting for me to be able to. So, I went through this process of trying to say, okay, what do I believe? What are what are my core beliefs? And you write out a bunch of different things. And then you distill that down over time, what are the things that resonate the most, and then you start to get feedback from people. And so, this whole exercise of going through that was really helpful for me. The outs, the output of that is a more distilled view of these are my core beliefs, or these are things that matter to me, as a leader, and the things that drive me.

Jason Weems 32:23

And it's helpful, because it does a couple things. One, it helps me have a grounding point. This is what I believe, and it's a reference point to go back to where am I still? Am I adhering to these beliefs? Am I you know, I'm making a decision because I'm in a stressful situation. Am I actually, is the way I'm responding in alignment with who I said, I want to be in the way I want to lead or am I not? And if it's not, it's a good check, you know, say, actually, this isn't lined up with how I want to respond. And I know I'm in a stressful situation, but I, you know, it's a good, it's a good reference check, if you are grounding point. The other thing I think it helps do is, as you got those that work with you, it allows you to communicate, where am I coming from? You know, there's more than one way to do this. There's user manuals that kind of say what, you know, there's, there's all kinds of things that can, but I think, for me, it was an interesting way to communicate that. And even for my team, as I went through this exercise, and I they say, oh, yeah, I can do that. Oh, yeah, oh, you're doing that, because this is, you know, it even connects the dots sometimes for your people that have been around for a while, or that you've worked with for a while, and they and they start to threads it

together a little bit, you know, you're doing this because this is really important to you. And I maybe didn't realize that originally.

Jason Weems 33:34

So, it's a very individual thing. But it's an interesting way to, you know, both have a reference ground guide for yourself, as well as a way to really share with others the way that you're, they're wired almost some things that came out for me, and I hit on some of this in the first was the notion of accountability, again, being really focused on accountability. One thing I didn't hit on before was, I believe you have to be accountable for yourself, but you also have to hold others accountable in a mutually respectful way, right? It doesn't mean that you're calling people out or in ways that feel not respected, but, but also saying, hey, look, I'm, I'm committed, I need you committed too when it comes to delivery type things, or whatever, like. I think becomes really important because we're in this together. And we both have we both have, we both, you know, need to step up. And that's what's going to actually allow us to be successful. And so, so this notion of high accountability for self and others is really important.

Jason Weems 34:33

You know, another one is just the role of technology. So, we, as technologists, we're technologists by trade, maybe you're a developer, maybe I'm a product person, maybe I'm a security person, maybe I'm a desktop, you know, administrator, whatever. We're still business leaders. And so really, and so having that hat are really kind of saying, hey, how, how is what I'm doing? So, first of all, do you know what they'll go? Do you understand the goals and mission of your organization? not just by ask, right? Get clear on that, like, where are we trying to go? What are we trying to do? Having understanding that first and foremost allows you to have an anchor or something or point to go to work. And then at that point, it's like, what am I? What am I doing? What outcomes can I drive to help achieve that. And so being outcome oriented, this notion of I'm a business leader, I'm a leader within the organization, and you have different degrees of depending on your role, you'll have different degrees of influence in different spaces. But you still have a degree of influence, whether it's in your team, whether it's in your space, whether it's in your division, maybe on a company level, whatever, like understand your sphere, how do I influence that toward, you know, an outcome that's going to allow us to achieve where we want to go? To me is really important. And we it's a mindset required. It's not like, hey, I have these things that I was asked to do. And I did them, right? That's good. You should do them, because that's part of your job, right? And that's part of my job. But there's a bit of like, okay, how am I actually making this place better? And, and that's just a different, it's a cultural way of thinking. And so, for me, I'm a big again, you, you asked earlier about what things draw you people that have that mindset, or can embrace that mindset? I believe over time, you'll find out they're often some of the people that are most successful, because they're, they're thinking about their contribution, and they're, and they're having, you know, a mindset of what else can I do?

Lisa Nichols 36:22

So good. Seriously, just what you just said is so good, the accountability, holding yourself accountable, holding other people accountable. And even, you know, sometimes Jason, like you said, that requires hard conversations, and candid conversations with people, which sometimes does not feel comfortable. But here's what I do believe, and we don't use the word love a lot in business. But I think we should love our people enough to hold them accountable. And to say, hey, you know, I'm don't think I'm telling you this, because I'm getting on to you, or whatever, or being a jerk, I mean, I'm really wanting you to be the best you can be. And to be the best organization we can be. We all need to do our part, right?

Jason Weems 37:14

There's, there's a piece like, there's a value component, like I value you and your contribution. And so, I'm, and there's no getting to me, again, I'm talking about accountability. But there's accountability of like, Hey, we're in this together, we're in the same boat. I need, like, I need you to row too, right? Because if you're not rowing with me, like, I'm not gonna, we're not going to be as effective as a whole. And that's part of the part of being effective as an organization, part of being effective as a technology team is we're rowing in the same direction. And we all have, we all are going the same way, right? And, and so I need your help, right? I need your help, because our boat will go faster if you're rowing too.

Lisa Nichols 37:49

That's no good. So good. Well, let me ask you one other quick question about and I want to talk about AI a little bit. You and I've had sidebar conversations about AI, everybody's talking about AI. But you know, I really do believe that people are our greatest gifts, and it's our job as leaders to steward those gifts, right? So, let me ask you this, how many people did you guys put through? What was the what was the protocol? I guess, if you will, for I mean, could anybody just sign up say, hey, I want to go through that program? Did you do it in cohorts? Can you tell us a little bit tactically? And did you guys develop this? You mentioned Vicki Wheeler? Did Vicki pretty much orchestrate this? Or was it an outside program?

Jason Weems 38:34

So, I think there's two, yeah, so there's kind of two things. So, one is this notion of this leadership program, I think Vicki was instrumental in terms of upfront defining it. And then yes, that's true. So, and Vicki is an amazing leader, and very, very thoughtful and very, one of the most, we talked about empathy before, but you know, caring people that I know, so yes, so yes, for sure. When it comes to AI, artificial intelligence, it was somewhat different. I think, for me, the AI, you know, we, in, in a role that I was at, we had a kind of an AI Center of Excellence, which is this group that was brought together to look at leveraging artificial intelligence, machine learning and kind of higher level learning, to be able to drive out to embed into the way we build our software and to drive efficiency.

Jason Weems 39:22

And so, that was really the goal was to be able to do that. What's challenging then, and still challenging now is getting good talent. What comes really hard as finding the people and finding the people at a cost that's, you know, that you can manage depending on your budget and organization. They can, it can be expensive. And so, one of the things that we did was we wanted to get in a couple of strong leads that there had experienced that have been in the space that understood modeling and just in some of the notions, and then make sure that you get them in a place where they can start to play that tech lead role, if you will. And then we started to bring in more junior individuals, started to train them. And so, almost like any kind of training wheels, whatever, you they come in and they start to run, then you start to, you know, becomes this mentor type of relationship. And over time they become more and more proficient. That's a technique that I've you know, we've used in a few places where it's hard to find skill sets, is you've got to, you've got to have people that know what good looks like, that are in a level of influence, and within those, those, those areas that can help bring up the team, if you will, and make sure that you're building in the right way. And that you're, you know, you're applying the right level of, you know, the right competencies within, you know, in the right structure, and all those things.

Jason Weems 40:40

So, I think, you know, having those people that really help drive the direction become really important and that they understand kind of the mission of the organization, those type things, but then, you know, bolstering those with the people that are hungry, or this this whole aptitude site is really important. If you're learning something new, you know, if I need to make sure the people that you're bringing in, that are going to learn have to be hungry. They have to be willing to learn new things. They have to be okay with being uncomfortable, and, you know, stubbing their toe a little bit through the process. And, and we, as a leadership team have to be able to support them in that in that journey.

Lisa Nichols 41:14

That's right, make it a safe place to do that, right? Jason? They're not going to be penalized for stubbing their toe, right? So, wow! There's just so much more we can talk about here. But I, I really want to move into what you're doing today. So, summer of 2023, we made the conscious decision to step away. Firstly, and just take some time, what did that What did you do? I mean, you said you needed time to get healthy physically, spiritually, mentally, what would you do with that with that time, Jason?

Jason Weems 41:46

A few things. So, yes. I took some time off last year, which was honestly really healthy for me, it was helpful for me just kind of reset and kind of unwind a bit, kind of get to a place where I'm like, hey, I'm ready for this next day, and kind of recharge is probably the right word. And it was nice, because I got to spend some time with my family, we did some trips. And honestly, I got to do some things that I just went didn't have quite the time to do before. You know, I took my kids to school every day, or most every day or, you know. Made them breakfast in the morning and pick them up from school and just, you know, had the flexibility of doing some things that I wasn't able to do on a consistent basis before that, which was nice. And it was, it was nice, even for my wife and I just to have some time to, you know, run the mall and Tuesday afternoon or whatever, you know. Quick just kind of just run, you know, do errands together and stuff. So, it was it was a good time just to reconnect with my family and recharge a bit.

Jason Weems 42:44

I also use the time to do some just some, you know, internal, like, learning around that homework, you know, artificial intelligence did some work on Gen AI and just trying to get just brush up on those things. And honestly, just go a little deeper there, which was, which was fun. For me, it was interesting. And it helped me in terms of just get understanding where the, the newest trends were, and started to reach out to the network too, just to start to understand where people were people focus on right now. And so, it was a it was an interesting, think of it almost like a market check, if you will, just with my network, just to say, you know, where were people going? What are we doing? What are you doing? And so, it was a, it was a it was a learning period for me.

Jason Weems 43:29

What was interesting, I would say, you know, I wasn't actively looking, you know, for a good part of last year, I started looking last year, in terms of what is my next role? What am I going to do next? And it had a couple of interviews. And really what I learned pretty quickly was that I wasn't very clear, I wasn't very clear on like, what is my brand? Who am I? What am I focused on, you know. It was a little bit I went in a little unstructured into some of those conversations. And so, I had to step back a little bit and do some work to think about almost like we talked about before, like who am I? what's my brand? what is my journey been? what do I want to do? And get crisp on that. And it was a it was a process honestly to go through and it was it took some reflection and it took some time just you know. I mentioned journaling but I took some time to really get, get crisp on that. And so, I think it was a healthy process for me honestly, just even to re-anchor inside as well as to and do the job search process. But then also, it was helpful for me even as I'm coming into a new role just to be really, you know, hey, this actually aligns well with what I was looking for. And this is and so it's almost you know, I don't know it just clarity was, was helpful for from a clarity perspective.

Lisa Nichols 44:23

I think it's gonna be really, I think it's gonna be really helpful because there's a lot of people that that you know, I always say we kind of get in this autopilot kind of mode sometimes, Jason, is not a bad but it's just the reality, right? When you've got a big job, and you're just, you're going through the motions every day, but really taking that time to really step back and say, what is it that I really want to do? What, what drives me? And kind of you had said before, it's kind of going back to the basics, you know, and kind of re-anchoring yourself, basically.

Jason Weems 45:23

What's interesting on this topic is my wife was very supportive through this process, in terms of she was like, she's like, this is a great opportunity. What do you like to do? What gets you excited? Like, do you want to do consulting? Do you want to do like, whatever, you know, like, I was interesting, where she was kind of like, take this time and just figure out, like, try stuff, like, does this get me excited, does it not? And it was actually kind of freeing to be like. I should do that. Like, you know, it was you and I hadn't had necessarily approached it in that way up front, you kind of have this mindset of like, I'm on this. I've been on this path. And you think that your path looks the same? And it actually it's a good time sometimes to say, here's my path is my job, you know, is my path. Is that the way I want to go?

Jason Weems 45:23

Am I on the right path?

Jason Weems 45:56

I can try things. I don't have to have it all figured out right now. And that's okay.

Lisa Nichols 46:10

I love it. Well, you took the role of the CIO for Soleo. It's a company that's based in Frisco, I think it's a PE backed firm. Is that correct?

Jason Weems 46:20

That's right.

Lisa Nichols 46:21

So, tell our listeners a little bit about the company, what they do, what their mission is, why? Why were you drawn to this company in this role in particular?

Jason Weems 46:32

Soleo Health, it is a private equity, owner backed company. You know, it has some, it's in the pharmacy space. In many cases, it's supporting complex patients with complex therapies. So, think of that as maybe, maybe they need infusion support, nursing support, those type of things. So, they're going to be the sicker of the sick patients. And it's a very much a care organism-based organization focused on providing that care, getting patients the right care that they need. One of the things that I liked about the mission was that they talked a lot about simplifying complex care was one of the three if you go out to there you know, their website. To me, that resonates, you know, my middle daughter, Olivia, she was born with some health issues, you know, congenital heart defect, so she had a hole in her heart, as well as you know, autism.

Lisa Nichols 47:21

And so, what you learn is that, even though you're in healthcare, and you think it should be really easy, it's not always easy. And so, even things that you're like, hey, I should be the best at this getting access to care or getting through a

prior auth, whatever that is, I should be the best at this. And it's still hard. It's so. So, having a company that's really focused on making that complex care simple, and getting people the care that they need, because whether you're a caregiver or a patient, or just you know, have a loved one. That's, that's what you're focused on is how do I make sure there? And so having a company that's focused on that was, is really great. And yes, they're based out of headquarters in in Frisco, just resonated with the team to the management team, the CEO, CFO and some, some others, the COO, and it just was a.

Lisa Nichols 48:14

Good fit.

Jason Weems 48:14

Just felt like a good fit.

Lisa Nichols 48:16

Good fit and you're excited. Let me let me ask you this. And then we're going to talk about well I got, I guess, I've got two more questions for you. You've got a lot of hats that you're wearing, Jason? You're the dad of three kids. You know, you're the husband to Jillian, you are a CIO, you also serve a lot of boards. You're the president and one of the boards. What do you do to prioritize self-care? I mean, are there things that you do specifically, or routines that you have that you think might help our listeners?

Jason Weems 49:02

It's a good question. You know, I think I'm an early riser. I get up pretty early, you know.

Lisa Nichols 49:08

How early, how early?

Jason Weems 49:10

Five-ish, for some people that's out early, but you know, five-ish. And I've been in this kind of constant routine of using that time to do a couple things. One, if I'm going to why I exercise probably four times a week just because I'm kind of in that routine, but I think it helps like even throughout your day getting up in the morning. What do whatever I'm doing been doing this class F45. But it's you know, whatever, do a class go to the gym, workout at home, go for a run whatever, but doing something active. To me, I actually feel like I have more energy. I know I do. I have more energy during the day. If I do something in the morning, even if it was 30 minutes, 45 minutes or whatever. You know, a lot of times when I don't do that, or if I'm not in the routine, what I'll find is mid-afternoon. I'm in this law and I'm tired. And I, I noticed when I'm more consistent about doing you know, taking care of myself physically and eating well, and all those things, I just feel better. And I have more energy throughout the day. So, for me, that's it's important. It's a habit. But it's important. And it's something that I prioritize whether I'm busy or not. I was traveling this week, Monday through Thursday, and I got up every morning and went to the gym and at the hotel, you know, and it's not that you have to do that. But for me, it was important, so I prioritize it. So that's one.

Jason Weems 50:28

I think the other is, I mentioned journaling, taking time to journal. And one of the things that I heard that resonated with me, and I believe is this notion of, you're the same person, or being the same person, whether it's professional or personal. I spent a lot of the first part of my career first half, at least, having a very separate lines like, this is who I am at work, I would answer this question, well, how are you? Well, if I was at work on this, if I'm home than this, and I think the more you start to blend those things together, I think it's healthy, you know, again, have there's guidelines and all those kinds of things like you can't, you know, like, be smart. But the more you can, the more you can blend those things together, the better because I am just, I am who I am. And I want to be, I want to be consistent across those things. So, as I think about things like journaling, I'm, it's not one or the other. It's just journaling. Who do I want to be? What kind of like, so we're, you know, what am I focused on right now? And what am I working on right now? To me, that's really, yeah, it's important.

Jason Weems 51:35

The one thing I'm doing right now, which is kind of interesting, I joined, there's a program called Boys Adventure. A friend of mine, he's kind of to this for a group of guys. But they they're getting together, like, and so for a year long, we're committing some time for the next year, to get together and just really focus on you know, who are we in terms of, how are we supporting our families? Who are we? What are we working on? How do we live adventurous lives? How do we start to be you know, more present in terms of who we are, like this intentionality around being a man and you know, just, just being, you know, father, all the roles that we are all the hats you mentioned. For me, that's

something that I'm that I've committed to, there's a time commitment. And, you know, an investment in in terms of doing that. But for me, it was really important.

Lisa Nichols 52:21

There's a small group of guys, kind of like an accountability group.

Jason Weems 52:26

That's right. So, it's kind of an interesting, you know, you find your thing, but for me, it was, what also was really important to me through that, for me through that process was that I started to get crisp on like, what do I want out of this engagement? You know, if I'm going to commit this time, there should be, you know, what do I want to what do I want to provide sound like, I don't want to be haphazard about it. I want to be intentional, you know, and it's, and so being crisp on what are the two or three things that are looking to, you know, create sustainability. You know, I think one of the interesting parts of committing a longer period of time, like a year, is it allows you to start to retrench. You know, you do something for a short period of time. And it's easy to do things but it's not sustainable. The more you can retrench your the way, you're thinking again, we talked about neuroplasticity, whatever the more you can retrench the way you're thinking, the more it'll become permanent. So, the goal isn't to be perfect. In fact, that's one of the things Vicki used to say it's not perfect. It's permanent.

Lisa Nichols 53:19

Progress.

Jason Weems 53:20

Permanent, permanence. How do we make things continue? And so that's, that's a.

Lisa Nichols 53:27

That's good, that's good. Well, goodness gracious, I like I said, I could just keep talking to you forever and ever. But I want to ask you, because this is something I asked every guest, what is it something extra that you believe every leader needs?

Jason Weems 53:46

You know, I think, take stock of the people around you. I think that's one of the things I'm learning right now. And even in the program I'm in. It's easy to take, whether it's your family, your people, you work with, whatever for granted. And so kind of step back and be grateful, be grateful for the people that you, you know, that I wake up next to, or like that, or that my daughter who I get to, like, walk through the bus, you know, like the time that you have and like and just being it's really easy to be to get used to it, you get into the routine, I think is what we talked about earlier. And then, you know, shake up your routine, like, sometimes we need to abrupt it, like we need to properly adjusted and just say you know what, I'm really like, I'm really thankful I'm really grateful and then communicate it because it's not always about like, hey, what happens if they get hit by a bus? Sure, that's true, but like, this is the time that we get. So, how are we investing in those people around us? And I'm not perfect at this man. He means just something I'm working on. But for me, that's, that's really important. And I think, you know, I don't do it enough. And I don't know that you know, I see it modeled as much as I feel like we should be. We get stuck into our phones and all kinds of things. I have a phone and I use it all the time. It's not that when you get.

Jason Weems 55:07

It was crazy for me. I was at the airport yesterday. And I was waiting for my flight, it was a little bit delayed. And I looked around, and I'm like looking at her way. And there everyone is like, this, like literally 80% of people I was counting. 2 out of 10 were not and again, this is not a fun shaming. I'm sure, like 10 minutes later, you could have looked over and I would have been in the same list but I but it's just it's interesting how, how much we get sucked into, into like, the immediate and so that resonates with me at least. That's kind of top of mind for me right now

Lisa Nichols 55:43

I've got a good friend that says, be present where your feet are. So, if you're with your family, be present there. Don't be thinking about work. If your work be present with that and yeah, so I boy, everything you've said, Jason, I'm just like, whoa, everything resonates with me. I just appreciate your time so much. Thank you so much. You've been traveling you just got back late last night and you're on the podcast with me today and I just want to tell you how grateful I am.

Jason Weems 56:15

Thank you again.

Announcer 56:18

Thank you for listening to today's show. Something Extra with Lisa Nichols as the Technology Partners Production
Copyright Technology Partners Inc. 2019. For show notes or to reach Lisa visit tpi.co/podcast. Don't forget to leave a review on Apple Podcasts, Google Play or wherever you listen.

*Please note, the preceding transcription has been automatically generated and should be used for informational purposes only.