EP297_Jake Gower_Chris Lundeberg

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.

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. 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.

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Lisa Nichols 01:35
I'm excited to have Chris Lundeberg and Jake Gower on to Something Extra Podcast today. Chris is a Chief Solutions Architect and Jake is the Cloud Data and AI Director at Technology Partners. Well, welcome to this something extra podcast guys. I am so excited for this time with the both of you. I just adore both of you. And you know, we've been blessed to really work with each other. I don't know, for, I was trying to count up at least four years, right? And it's been a kind of a wild ride and an exciting ride. And I'm just so excited to have you both on the podcast today.

You are in a booming sector of technology, both of you with data analytics and AI. We've got a lot to dig into. But you guys' kind of know the ropes by now this is almost our 300th episode. So, we've been doing this for a while. And I always love to go back and really kind of talk about your childhood a little bit. And I'd love to know kind of what you'd like to do as little boys and you're both in technology. Did you have an interest in technology back then? Love to, to hear from you guys. Did you go up, both grew up in St. Louis to tell us where you grew up? So, Jake, why don't you go first?

Jake Gower 02:51
I grew up in the Metro East on the Illinois side. Small town, rural town outside of Columbia, Illinois. And so, certainly have been here, right within this region. Now my wife and I have, have moved to St. Louis. Lisa, you know, we have our oldest test special needs. And St. Louis has a wonderful special school district. So, as much as we love the Illinois side, we came over here now a little more than 8 years ago, almost 9 years ago, for educational services for him.

Lisa Nichols 02:52
Oh, see. I just learned something about you Jake, I didn't know it only been like 8 or 9 years.

Jake Gower 03:28
We've lived in Missouri for 9 years now.

Lisa Nichols 03:31
Well, we're lucky to have you. You're, you're an amazing person. How about you, Chris?

Chris Lundeberg 03:36
So, I grew up in Carbondale, Illinois, and stayed there the majority of you know, through college, I went to SIUC, I was a CS major. But I didn't start off that way. I was I originally wanted to go into medicine. So, my lots of my family are in

medicine. So that's what I thought I was going to do in the beginning. So, I was pre-med for a couple of years. And then long story, but I, I started a dial up internet company when I was in college, and that was kind of like, okay, this is really cool. I mean, it was always doing technology, but it was kind of like on the side. So, I dropped out of med school and switched over to CS.

Lisa Nichols 04:17
Well, I think you chose well, because technology is booming. It's not going away. Medicine would have been great too. You know, I started out Chris, you might not know this, but I started out thinking I was gonna do something in medicine.

Chris Lundeberg 04:29
Oh, really?

Lisa Nichols 04:31
Yes, I did. I did all the you know, advanced biology and physiology and all that stuff in high school. And then when we got to college, Greg talked me into going into business. So, so it all worked out. It all worked out. So, did you guys both play sports because I know you're a big sports guy, Jake, did you guys what did you do as little boys?

Chris Lundeberg 04:56
I was big into soccer. So, I played soccer when I was growing If I didn't play baseball, I wasn't great at baseball. I tried football was terrible at football, so I stuck with soccer.

Lisa Nichols 05:08
How about you, Jake?

Jake Gower 05:09
Oh my gosh. I played everything as a kid. Like that was what I did, right? That was like my mom and dad's kind of like rule was you were going to do a thing at all points in the year, like, stay busy, stay out of trouble. Like, no idle hands, right? They knew the kid they had, right? And it was best to keep him busy and distracted with sports. But the one I stuck with the most was football, play that all through high school. And Lisa, you know, I had a child young, but actually planned on playing college football. But, you know, life had other plans for me for sure. And, you know, thankfully.

Lisa Nichols 05:47
Don't you guys think that those team sports? Don't you think that there are things that you learned there that have carried forward? Even now about teams? I mean, you know, even like, the things that you learned about and I'm gonna put words in your mouth, what do you think are some of the skills and the mindset? I think it's mindset, really, that is carried forward, even in business?

Chris Lundeberg 06:13
I personally think it's failure. I that was a big one. I think growing up like, I'm, first it was really fun. And then it was really competitive, because that's kind of how I am, I'm sure Jake is too, and then it was like, oh, you can't win every time. So, then the failure really, I think, like, helped hone, you know, emotional intelligence and a lot of stuff at an early date.

Lisa Nichols 06:33
And you can't be, you know, you get to where you can't be afraid of it, right? Chris? And, and I'm always like, it's, I don't like the word failure, although that's really what it is. But it's an opportunity, right? It's an opportunity to learn and goodness gracious, how many times guys do we try and technology to experiment with things and they don't work, right? A lot. You know, but you pick yourself up and you keep going and you keep believing. Jake, how about you? What do you think are some of those traits that you've carried forward in business?

Jake Gower 07:05
Lisa, you probably won't surprise you, right? But I think it's, it's that grit that has to come from being able to accomplish a hard thing. You know, you, as Chris mentioned, you, it's pretty, if you're, if you'd like to have fun in your practice in your backyard, you can go dominate some new sports pretty easily, right? Until you're about 10 years old, maybe 11 years old. And then you run into incredibly talented kids who have a lot more athleticism than you do, right? They might be faster, or they may be more highly skilled, they have more body control, right? They've, they've got an IT factor that you don't have. And I just I loved I loved about football was every coach I ever had, right? Was just would always tell me you're just not athletic enough to play the position you do kid I played middle linebacker by like, that's

all I ever played, played tight end, and middle linebacker, my entire career, right? Of being a kid and playing football. And it was always, but you got to figure it out. And they would always kind of give me a calculator approach. Like, understand that most of these kids you're playing against are significantly more athletic than you are. But if they're putting in 25 hours a week, or 30 hours a week, you can catch him. But you may need to put in 45 you may need to put in 50, you're gonna have to figure out a different path than what, you know, a naturally gifted kids going to.

Jake Gower 08:34
And that worked for me, right? That really worked for me all the way through high school to get it was gonna give me a college scholarship until you know, life had other plans for me. Every day, I tell my kids that constantly rather and I have the same role my parents did, right? Be doing something at all points of the year, right? Stay busy whether it's you know, karate, soccer, Aztecs, football, you know, basketball, whatever it may be. Look at the person next to you. And if you really want to be where they are, you should ask them, how many how much time are you spending a month a week practicing? And if you want to get where they are, you want to get there faster than they did then double that time. When you have got to get in there. I think it just builds that inherent path of everything's possible if you're willing to put the work in.

Lisa Nichols 09:21
Amen to that. Well, that's such a great lesson. It's so true. Because it's sometimes it's the, the talent will only get you so far. But the discipline the consistent discipline, right? To get better at your craft is what's gonna set you apart I believe so that's so good you guys, thank you for sharing it. So, Chris, I have to I have to say this because there may be listeners that live in Asheville a couple years ago, I think during COVID and COVID that you and your wife decided to move to Asheville, North Carolina. Never been there, but have heard from so many friends. The Blue Ridge Mountains are supposed to be incredible. Right. bucket lists, you can tell Greg this one of Lisa's bucket lists. She wants to go to the Biltmore. Have you guys done that?

Chris Lundeberg 10:08
Yes, we're like passholders now. It's amazing. And I mean, I've been remote for so long. And, you know, I've always thought that we're in St. Louis for gosh, 20, almost 20 years. And my wife works for WashU, which is kind of funny, because I work for Washington now too. And she went remote during the pandemic. And we were like, huh, well, you want to do something different. And I mean, she has a lot of family in St. Louis. And they're very, very tight. So, it was a hard decision. But she has family here too. And that's why we chose Asheville. So, it's been it's been a fun move.

Lisa Nichols 10:43
Oh, good. Well, I definitely need to take a trip and come see you. Because I I've heard it's just beautiful. Well, let's, let's move into this, because you know, you guys have both had wonderful careers. We're not going to get into that too much. Oh, Jake, one thing I did want to say to you, I know you guys both had your career, you know, your, your education. But Jake, I'm so proud of you. I love what you did, because you just recently went back to Wash U and got a very long certificate it's called AI applications for health data, advanced learning. Tell our listeners a little bit more about that certificate. What was the precipice for that? And how was it been back in academia?

Jake Gower 11:30
That's a great question. And it was that's hard to do, right? As you mentioned, I've got, you know, five kids, and, you know, certainly more than a week days workload or a week's workload here at work, right, for sure. But again, I think it gets back to what I brought up earlier, you have to put the time in to be the best, right? It's not going to come to you know, opportunities find you, they just don't right, maybe for a few lucky people they do. But you have to go create the opportunity to have the best platform possible. And I felt like our clients needed that, for me as a leader. And so, the advanced AI applications in healthcare is really about taking, I don't want to call it the hype, because it's real. But taking the plethora of artificial intelligence tools, from machine learning through deep learning, general pre train transformers, and really creating applications that can fit into healthcare and the workflows.

Jake Gower 12:28
What's really important about getting this right is Chris and I talked to a lot of clients, believe it or not, the technology, the foundational technology is very doable. It's very, very doable, right? That's not the part we typically spend a lot of time scoping where we spend a lot of time scoping and getting the work right is ensuring we have the right workflow, do we truly understand what the outcome should be? And really ensuring that you get the right mix and match of human interaction with computational interaction? How do you take that, that one plus one equals three scenario? How do you create that of here's the human computational ability to get work done, and know the right thing to do and marry that right with a computer's ability to be able to add a serious amount of velocity to get that workflow. That's where we spent a significant amount of time and the focus of going back to academia to learn that really well was truly wonderful. I wish it was more time, I would certainly, you know, continue to push more into advanced learning.

Thankful to have Washington University here in St. Louis, right? Available to us and our community has amazing institution to offer those, those classes that you're just you're not going to find right at a lot of institutions. So, be able to go back and learn at an institution like that for sure.

Lisa Nichols 13:51
Jake, I absolutely love that. I mean, to your point, it's no small feat. There's a lot packed in there. There's a lot packed in there. I when I think about the two of you. You know, one word that comes to mind is passionate. You're both so passionate about what you do, it comes out when you're speaking to our clients, it comes out when you're talking to us internally. I think you believe in what you're doing. You guys both have impeccable work ethics, but I also think you guys are lifelong learners. And you know, Jake, I love the fact that you went back and what you said to me, just then that really resonated. You said I felt like our clients needed that. And you are both incredibly customer centric. And I think that that is so, so important.

Lisa Nichols 14:42
But we also know that technology, what is here today may be gone tomorrow, it was moving at such a rapid pace. In fact, I think I may have told you guys this but one of my podcast guests is this emotional intelligence guru out of Canada. His name's Phil Johnson. And he said something that I will never forget, he said that we are going to have 20,000 years of change in this century alone, because of the fast pace of technology. So, I have to ask you both, how do you stay on top? Now Jake, you went back and got an advanced degree. How do you stay on top of what's going on? And what is trending? What's around the bend? You know, so our listeners can maybe learn, and maybe get some tips from the two of you. So, Chris, you want to go first?

Chris Lundeberg 15:32
Similar to Jake, I mean, it does definitely help if you're passionate about what you want to do, because you do want to learn about it. So, I you know, I mean, some of the easy stuff, I think subscription to Medium, a subscription to Wired subscription to, you know, some of the magazines that, you know, it doesn't have to be those, obviously, but the ones that you're interested in. So, I do a lot of that I know, Jake, you, you do Wired as well, I like Medium. And it just, it's not that, that's gonna give you 100%. But it's kind of neat, because it gives you a different perspective on what other people are doing. Because it's not just completely curated, you know, publicity, it is the mes of the world that are like, I'm gonna write an article about this. And then that gives me a completely different perspective of like, oh, that's interesting how they're doing that.

Chris Lundeberg 16:22
And then that, you know, is a little thread, there's something else that I can go and read, you know, a different article, or whatever, and then get your hands in it. So, I would say if I'm, if I'm at a place where I just don't understand something completely, and there's not a class for it, or maybe a formal class, a lot of these technologies are so new, you get a document. So, you know, I read the docs a lot. And I like Udemy, I usually kind of recommend Udemy for a lot of the new developers that we bring on, because it has a lot of cool hands-on modules. And that's, that's it.

Lisa Nichols 17:03
I love it. I love it. I love it. Well, Jake, let's, let's move on. And because we've got so much to talk about here, but you know, why don't you tell our listeners a little bit about the cool work that we're doing with WashU and Dr. Phillip Payne?

Jake Gower 17:17
We can certainly start there. You know, Lisa, you brought it up now, right? About four and a half years, right, that, that we've been, you know, working in this space, right? The data and AI space. And that work really kicked off at Washington University in St. Louis. And, you know, again, we're lucky to have that institution here. But they had a common problem. And I think, you know, Chris, and I, one of the things that I think help comfort, a lot of our clients, when they talk to us about these incredibly complex challenges is that there's a common framework, right? There's a journey that many enterprises have been on that are kind of helped them get to where they are now. And there's a framework for, for moving forward. So, a lot of our framework gets back to Washington University.

Jake Gower 18:05
And that common problem for them was, they had incredibly critical data, in this case, electronic medical record data from their sister hospital system here, BJC, and third-party research data, right? That power is one of the most, you know, premier research institutions in the country. Across 30 different departments, right? You can think about pediatrics and pathology and neurology, right? All of these departments that rely on a centralized institution to provide data. That's absolutely critical, not only for that institution, but for all of us, right? To have the best care possible going forward. But like a lot of critical data, there's a lot of code that is around that data, how it gets moved, when it gets

moved, where is it stored? How is it stored? And then how is that data model? How can it be utilized, and that complex code in data was living on prem for them, right? So, they had an on-premise architecture. And they had to Dr. Philip pain, I should say, their chief data scientist, Director of Institute for Informatics and so many other titles as one of the most talented humans you may ever meet, had this vision of, it's going to be truly impossible to keep up with Cloud Managed Services. And what they're going to allow us to do to fully empower the end users to extract the value from our data-to-data science level, right? Once it's landed, what can we do with it?

Jake Gower 19:31
Well, the problem was, there's not a great framework for moving this level of critical data, the amount, the volume of that data, and the complexity of the code, right that's attached to it to the cloud. And so that was a problem that we came in to solve. It sounds complex, but very common, how do I get my data into the systems that I know that can truly empower us going forward? After you know, a journey, right, a few months thankfully, his vision allowed us to be very iterative in the things that we did, right, we went through a lot of Microsoft technologies, thought through a few different cloud vendors, and then you know, thought through a lot of platform strategies. And within about, you know, six months, we really landed on the right strategy. And then moving that forward is now I don't want to dive too far in the weeds here. But over the course, now, four years, right? They have maybe the most mature cloud data platform in the country, in healthcare, right, that data resides in the cloud. That data is incredibly secure. And most importantly, it resides in a platform that we've built a good partnership with in Databricks, that happened to be the right tool for Washington University, School of Medicine.

Jake Gower 20:48
But now their users across the totality, right of their research and care departments have the data they need at their fingertips, it's all united in the cloud. So, all that data is no longer disparate. It's governed and secured in the cloud. So, they can be confident about who can access what, and, and then it's infused with intelligence. So, now the researchers can come in and do the research, they need not spend hours or weeks or months putting in data requests and modeling data and trying to get the data they need to do the work that's critical to them. And again, all of us is a population in the region and nationally. So, that's the work that we've been recognized for out in the market with Microsoft and Databricks and others. And it certainly propelled us.

Jake Gower 21:33
But at the end of the day, it gets back to the three pillars of what we do. You have to thoughtfully unite your data in the cloud, you have to govern and secure that data, right? As the next step and be very thoughtful about the assets that you have. And then you have to infuse it with intelligence, right? How do you let people go do their best work, to infuse that data with intelligence, empower them to go work at the top of their license. And I'm proud to that we have that partnership, not only with Washington University and others, but more specifically with the folks that believed in us as we were getting off the ground with Dr. Phillip Payne, Dr. Albert Lai, others at that institution.

Lisa Nichols 22:08
Absolutely. Well, you know, you guys have done really great work cutting edge kind of stuff here. We got so much more to talk about guys. But we do need to take a quick break. And we'll be right back with Chris and Jake on the Something Extra Podcast.

AD 22:22
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Lisa Nichols 22:52
Welcome back, everyone to do Something Extra Podcast with my friends and colleagues, Chris and Jake. So, Jake, and Chris, the buzzword on every CIOs lips these days, you know, is AI, and I know that you guys have done some things with our clients on AI. You know, I'd love for you just to kind of just touch on one or two of those case studies and then talk to me really more about like, what were the efficiencies? What were the outcomes? What were the benefits that those organizations saw with AI? So, either one of you, whoever wants to talk about that?

Jake Gower 23:31
Chris, I can take that if you like. Well, I think, you know, Lisa, for one, we're not believers in AI for the sake of AI, right? It's got to be you have to, you have to have the right balance of how do we unite the data that's necessary for our enterprise to be successful? How do we govern that data? And then how do we infuse it with intelligence in a way that

impacts the business? So, that's how many of our conversations actually start, Chris and I were just at a, you know, new client meeting yesterday, right? And that's where the clients where the meeting starts and ends? Are we sure we're aligned on the impact that the business needs. And how can we, we can work through the technology, right, but you've got to start at the edge case.

Jake Gower 24:12
And so, you know, for us, once we have that business impact, the world of large language models, and, you know, general, pre trained transformers and the architectures that are now available, right, and readily available to us, kind of open up the world to thinking a little bit differently, right? I mean, Chris can comment, but much of the work that we've done, has saved the time and efficiency not only for the end user to have a co-pilot to be able to work with to get a job done. But just as importantly, as save the time and writing a significant amount of code that can break or will break and need to be maintained. There's operational gains, not only on the end user, but also on the back end is what I'm saying. You know, in our examples might kind of break down into a few different approaches, right? I think I should be clear on that.

Jake Gower 25:03
You know, our strategy is not to replace people, right? We don't see AI as replacing individuals and work. But more specifically, how do we help those individuals operate at the top of their license? How can we be clear on how they can add more value not only to the organization, but to their career and the work to be done and job to be done as well? So how can we break down that work? And then discuss what can be really thoughtfully predicted? And then what can thoughtfully be, you know, adjudicated where we can make a decision on it? There's a lot of things that you can predict. But does it really add a lot of value? I don't, right, we've got to be thoughtful about what can you predict? And also what can you make a decision on? And how does that impact the business and the work to be done.

Jake Gower 25:46
So much of ours are almost exclusively our AI work is thinking about the multi modalities, right of data, you've got PDFs, right, that people want to get knowledge from, but I also have an Excel sheet that I need to get knowledge from when I've got an SQL database, I want to get knowledge from. How do you allow, you know, a supporting technology, like a large language model, to use another supporting technology like vector search and other pieces to go look at all of our collateral? And say, are we compliant? Because now maybe now I have in one example, there's 10, people looking at compliance, right now we could audit and they're looking at 2% of the total use cases for this client, 2% of the total clients are getting fully audited with a team of 10. We're going to automate that to 98% or above. So, they can actually focus on the pieces that aren't compliant actually fixing them, instead of going to document what isn't, isn't compliant. Where are your profits? What projects are the most at risk? Right? Where's your where's your business changing in terms of salary and hires? And where might you be, you know, overweighted, on some of the expenses that you have? Precision finance certainly is another large use case.

Jake Gower 26:58
But it's really always comes down to defining value for the business, right? Leveraging large language models and GPT is to increase the modality of data that we can search more holistically. And then bringing that back in a natural language system where you can just use your language. I don't want to have my hands on my key that I want to type SQL. I don't want every person in my business to be a data expert. But I want them to be I want them to have the data insights they need to do their job better,

Lisa Nichols 27:26
Right. Sounds good. Well, Chris, I want to get to you because you guys, you've co-created with each other this amazing product, that we are seeing tons of value to our organizations that we serve from, and it's called Databasin. And I'd love for you to just tell us at a high level, what is it? What does it do? You know, and then I know that there are other competitive products out there, you might just touch on that and tell our listeners, why is it different? Why is it different?

Chris Lundeberg 27:59
No, that's great. Thanks, Lisa. So yeah, we, we so as Jake mentioned, we went through this journey with, with Wash U I was I still work at Wash U. I was I think employee number one there. So, I at least it for our team. And, you know, we, we went through several technologies to try to figure out what was the best fit, at least for them. And Jake had mentioned, we ended up on Databricks. And we went through many, many before that, before we landed on Databricks, but it was a good fit for them. So, what we noticed, though, even with these more modern platforms, and you can say about Databricks, for any of them, Databricks, or Snowflake, or anything in GCP, for that matter, is, we have a really brilliant people, researchers, scientists that are using the system. And those tools work really well that's

kind of the bread and butter, I think for Databricks. But as simple as it sounds, we still had a lot of issues with managing the data lake and getting the data into the data lake.

Chris Lundeberg 28:58
So, on day one, you know, I think we're like, here you go, you're, you're ready. And they're like, no, we're not ready, we still have SQL server sitting under a desk and flat files that we need to do this with and PDFs that we need to do that with and we just don't, we don't have an engineering team to do that type of stuff. Because it's, it's not glamorous, this ETL this extract, transfer or load or the newer word ELT extract, load transfer. But it is a crucial part of ensuring that your data lake is healthy. So, that's kind of where database, database is started. So, you know, in the very beginning, we did what probably normal developers do, we're writing these ETL packages to push the data in and then we just kind of hit a wall and said, okay, this is this is not sustainable. This can't grow. Unless they want to have a really big technical team managing this with hundreds of these, they call them pipelines, hundreds of these pipelines, it's just, it's just not going to work.

Chris Lundeberg 30:03
So, we looked at there are tools in the industry that support this type of thing. So, Fivetran is a big one. They have these pre built connectors, we decided to build kind of like a more private version of Fivetran. And the reason is, so some of these tools are hosted on other cloud vendors and Fivetran being a big company they are they have it hosted in all of the cloud vendors. But data still leaves your ecosystem, and you still have to give access to this person to take the data and then they count the data. That's how they charge you. So at least for what we wanted at Wash U. And now we're seeing lots and lots of people are the same way. The optics of that no matter how secure it is, was just not great. So, we said okay, well, we can build something better that sits within the each customer's tenant, so it doesn't leave it as a black box, even to us. So, we have these installers, it installs all of our software. And that's it, we don't click metrics. We don't know what they do with it. It's designed to be completely private. But it gives you the same benefit.

Chris Lundeberg 31:11
So, what we have now is this really easy to use interface users, non-technical users can log in and say, you know what, I have all of these files that are sitting in box, or I have data from Workday, or I have data from Salesforce, whatever it might be, we have 240 connectors, I think that we support something like that. And they can just point and click, oh, I'm gonna move my data here, I'm gonna move my data there, and behind the scenes Databasin, and moves it securely. And probably even more importantly, it sets up the entire structure for the data lake. So, it loads the data, the way that we believe it should be loaded, it sets up what we would call the medallion architecture, it sets all the permissions according to who's loading the data. And then it just gives the user some self-service capabilities where otherwise, they're going to have to submit a ticket with the IT team to say, oh, I need this data, and then wait six months, now it's in 5 minutes, I can have the data in the data lake, and I can do something with it, which is really, you know, outside of all the technical stuff. That's the important part is how fast we can go to market.

Lisa Nichols 32:20
Absolutely, that was a great summary, I was hoping that you would talk about because I couldn't remember exactly what it was. But I knew it was out there 200 sources, you know, and connectors, which is incredible. And really, like you said, gives that power to the end user. That's, you know, to see what they want to see. So, and it's all private. So, I love that. Well, I've got to ask you guys this. And then we're gonna talk about HIMSS and a few other things. But you know, let's talk about leadership. Let's move to leadership for just a bit. You know, Jake, and Chris, you guys are co leading this practice within technology partners. What would you say is your individual leadership styles? And then I've got two other follow on questions after that. So, Chris, you want to go first?

Chris Lundeberg 33:08
I am definitely like squarely in the servant leader. And I think that's, that's probably pretty common of like, technical leaders. You know, we do lots of programming, we're pretty open to change, you have to be, you know, very adaptive to these things. So, I think that kind of forces you in that forces, but you know, that puts you squarely into kind of that camp.

Lisa Nichols 33:33
That's good. Jake, how about you?

Jake Gower 33:35
Certainly in the servant, leader camp as well. But Chris, and I have a wonderful trade off with each other, right? Chris is Chris's, he's mentioned as squarely a servant leader. And I think I've certainly have many of those same characteristics. But really having gone through, you know, almost a decade at AT&T, right? before kind of coming into

this space. A lot of my leadership is focused on, you know, coaching and development. We've got to empower people to do the best work, right? You there's times to lead from the front, right? When it's challenging, right, you, you, you always take the blame, right, but you never take the reward as a leader is kind of always been my piece, right? You lead from the front when times are hard. And then you lead from the back to push everyone forward, you know, in every other moment. So, I still continue to do that, right? It's been, Gosh, 20 years, right? It's 15-16 years of kind of that same strategy.

Lisa Nichols 34:42
How important do you think humility is to leadership? Is it important?

Jake Gower 34:49
Chris and I have probably been through, you know, more. We got things wrong or failures in our career than what we probably want to acknowledge on this podcast. But certainly me, right? One of the things that helped me so much grow my career was I was always very transparent about how much I struggled and my first leadership role, I wasn't ready. I was 20 years old, was 20 years old when I had 6 people working for me and like, I had no clue what to do. I had no training. And you know, you do you think I grew up in Southern Illinois, right? Like, you know, my dad didn't always ask politely when he wanted something done, right? It was country you did with the work that needed to get done. You didn't ask a lot of questions, right. And so, I brought that same mentality and struggled for six months, right?

Jake Gower 35:33
So much turnover, people quit, I was hated. It was just not where I wanted to be. I was going home and wasn't happy with myself or the work I was doing. And you know, it took a it took a lot of humility in that moment to say, well, the because you're worried about yourself, you're worried about your own career progression, you're worried about your own metrics, your own results, what if what just quit on that focus, moved to everybody else and said, if you could help empower them, you know, you'll, you'll go where you need to. And I think once you have your head, that you'll move forward, it's hard to lose.

Lisa Nichols 36:08
You know, I'm probably going to mess this up. But you know, there is a quote out there that says, you know, if you want to go, if you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go farther, you go together. And I think it's so important, really to understand. And another quote that I love, if you think you're the smartest person in the room, you're clearly in the wrong room. You know, I mean, we truly do need one another. And so having that humility, to your point, Jake, you know, you may think, oh, you know, it's kind of hard to do. But see, I think that that humility and vulnerability are really signs of strength. Truly, but okay, guys, I have a lightning round for you. Okay. And we're gonna go fast on this. But, you know, what are you most excited about right now, Chris, what are you most excited about?

Chris Lundeberg 37:00
I hate to talk about buzzwords. But you know, AI is very excited right now, I think from a just purely a technical standpoint, it's going to be really interesting to see what the next generation of people like me are going to be programmers in the next 15 years. It's going to be completely different than what I am today, which I think is really neat. So, I'm excited to see how that unfolds.

Lisa Nichols 37:22
Me too. Well, let me ask you this. Jake. We've already talked about this a little, you have 5 kids? You have a wife yet? You guys both have big jobs. What do you do for fun? How do you unwind?

Jake Gower 37:37
So, I you know, it's so weird to say, but we put a pool in two years ago, Lisa, and it's like, that's the time that I have, right? We don't have with, with kids and sports and all this stuff. That's where that's like the family cool down space. If we if the weather's nice, and there is not a sports thing, or a school thing to be at, then that's where you will find our family, right? That's where the time is spent. Other than that, we do try to make as many memories as we can together. Traveling. And, you know, I shared a little bit about our trip to Costa Rica, right? Certainly, continue to look forward to making memories as we travel as well.

Lisa Nichols 38:21
Yes, for sure. I always say our hobby is our family. That is our hobby, you know, I mean, there's really no place I would rather be but you know, you do need to take that time to just kind of decompress. You know, some so best piece of personal or business advice you've ever received. Chris, you want to go first?

Chris Lundeberg 38:44
Oh gosh, yes. I don't remember how it was phrased, you'll laugh at this. Jake. One of my bosses talked about the difference between being able to have like, good emotional intelligence and be a technical person as well, because it's not something that we see very often, or at least, maybe not necessarily emotional intelligence, but being able to talk to people in a way that, you know, it's mutually beneficial for both people and you really get your point across. So, he had mentioned, you know, the technical aspect, what you went to school for, for the last whatever four years, is 5% of what you're going to be doing in the real world. What you're going to do in the real world is talk to people and try to negotiate and you know, all of the things that you are going to be very uncomfortable with and I think just like knowing that going into it was, was really beneficial because, you know, it's a struggle today, I think with a lot of highly technical people that really just want to like, be at the keyboard writing code. Those days are probably going to be gone soon.

Lisa Nichols 39:49
I think they already are, Chris. I say Long gone are those days where you can just sit in a cubicle with your laptop. Okay, I have to ask you guys both this, this is called something extra. What is it something extra that every leader needs? Chris, you want to go first?

Chris Lundeberg 40:09
I mean, I think the theme here today is adaptability. I think that that's a really big thing, whether it's technical or non-technical, you really have to be cognizant that the world that you, you know, your professional world that you went into, at least in my case, in 1999, is much different than it is in 2024. And the tools that we use and the processes that we use, I mean, if I had to, somebody gave me a dime, every time I had to learn a different way to do something, or a different programming language or a different this.

Lisa Nichols 40:43
You wouldn't need this job, right?

Chris Lundeberg 40:45
But I would still do it because I love it. And I think that's probably you know, why I'm pretty adaptable is like, I, I see fun in it. So, I think if, if you have a good sense of adaptability, it's, it's gonna take you a long way.

Lisa Nichols 41:00
I could not agree more. Jake, how about you?

Jake Gower 41:04
Maybe two quick ones. You know, one, my grandpa would always tell me this, right, he's like, you can make a million dollars a year selling popcorn on the street, if you love it, and get good at it. So, figure out whatever you want to do, and build the right skills to be happy and great at something. Don't be good at something, be great at something you can be, you can be good at something not be happy doing it. But be happier doing something first and then find a way to be great at it. So, don't let don't let money or the kind of a trajectory of somebody else's expectations right kind of tell you where to go. The second one would be I had a mentor in AT&T, John Hoyt, wonderful human being. Who would always tell me, no one remembers when you win, and you were expected to win. That's just doing your job. Everyone remembers when you won, and no one thought you would. So, you got to take those chances. You can't be scared to fail, you've got to go out and take the chance that everyone else out there, you kind of look around at your director level or senior director or VP level peers and they're like, oh my gosh, I don't think I'll go to that job. I don't think I want that new opportunity. You have got to stretch into those pieces. Because that's how you're not only going to build a career and build a brand for yourself, but it's where you're going to build those skills that is going to allow you to outpace the market is go do something that people may not and hopefully don't expect you to win at.

Lisa Nichols 42:41
That is awesome. I love it. Well, guys, oh my word. I could talk to you guys for hours and hours and hours, but you guys need to go and take care of our clients. I'm gonna let you go but thank you both so much for making the time this morning to be on the show.

Chris Lundeberg 42:57
Thanks, Lisa. This is fun.

Jake Gower 42:59
Lisa always wonderful to connect with you no matter what it is. Certainly, appreciate the invite today.

Announcer 43:04
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