

I absolutely lived the life of the entrepreneur as a family. My parents actually would pay me a dime for every packet that I collated to help them when I was younger. It was just part of the family life and it was fun, but interestingly, it was never part of my long-term vision to join Impact Group. That actually came along later.

[00:03:48] Nichols: Talk about that a little bit. Do I remember this right? Did you go to Notre Dame?

[00:03:51] Herring: I did. I have my bachelor's in marketing from Notre Dame and I took a year off after college actually to do service work down in Puerto Rico. I was helping people start small businesses and get access to micro-funding in Puerto Rico and just loved every minute of it. It was an opportunity for me to live internationally, which I had a passion for as well as really work on my Spanish.

[00:04:16] Nichols: I remember you telling that story and you were helping with economic development, you loved it. You loved what you were doing and thought that that was probably what you were going to do. Then your mom had what I call a life interruption.

[00:04:29] Herring: Yes, I came back to St. Louis in 2001, after hearing that she had just been diagnosed with breast cancer. Fortunately, she is better today and doing well, but it was definitely a life interruption at the time. It caused me to pause and say, "What do I want to really be focused on here?" I came back to St. Louis and helped out.

[00:04:54] Nichols: The name of the company is Impact Group, I think you maybe started in marketing. You were probably just doing whatever fill-in gaps, Lauren, just whatever you could do at the time to just help, right?

[00:05:05] Herring: Right, I came back in 2001. It was at the height of the dot-com bust then and so I was trying to figure out my next step and being in St. Louis, working at the family business, I just started on projects really. Then before I knew it, I was enjoying the work. I liked the people I was working with. I liked being with family and, gosh, St. Louis was a lot more exciting than I remembered it. It was only a few months before I decided to stay. I started as an account manager once I became permanent.

I was helping with some of our smaller accounts and then eventually took on a marketing role, then took on an operational leadership role until the last five years before I took over for leadership of the organization. I actually led our international business development efforts both from a selling perspective, as well as hiring team members, starting up new entities outside the US.

It was such a challenge and so much fun. I just loved going back to my international roots from some of the work that I was doing in Puerto Rico and studying abroad in college. That was such a wonderful job and it was so critical also to the organization's growth overall long-term as well with that international focus.

[00:06:23] Nichols: Lauren, since you've been CEO you've taken it in a laundry different places, but let's back up for one minute just because I know what Impact Group does. Maybe there are one or two people that are listening that don't know. Why don't you back up and talk about how your mom started? What was the primary mission of the business when your mom started it? Then let's segue into how you've morphed things and expanded the services.

[00:06:48] Herring: I like to joke that Impact Group is St. Louis' best-kept secret. I'm really excited to be able to share with your listeners about what we do. We have been in business for over 30 years now, supporting the HR industry specifically in the areas of helping corporations with the career development needs in their employees. The main areas that we focus on are corporate relocation, outplacement, and leadership development.

When my mom founded the company back in 1988, we were solely focused on helping companies relocate with their employees. What I mean by that is we would specifically work with the individual employees and their families and coming initially into St. Louis and then really everywhere and help the family integrate with the new area, really critically to the success of the relocation, help the spouse find employment in the new area.

We have been providing career coaching since 1988 and then we have morphed that into eventually building an outplacement practice, which means that when someone is laid off, we are providing career coaching to an individual as part of the severance package. The company helps them find their next opportunity. Then we also provide leadership development work. Our niche in that space is actually in helping build strong pipelines for leadership development, that middle layer of management, how do we get them to that next level, and women in leadership. As a women-owned business, that is a passion of mine.

[00:08:29] Nichols: I know. You know I've talked a lot about that. I know that you've got a lot of coaches that work with these individuals and goodness gracious, we're in the middle of a global pandemic when so many people have lost their jobs. How has COVID affected your business and impacted your business, but I'm just thinking the services that you provide are so needed at all times, but especially now, because there's a lot of people that are maybe trying to pivot in their business.

[00:08:59] Herring: Absolutely, we're seeing a big need right now, especially for that career coaching piece for people who've been laid off. That part of our business is definitely up. That's certainly something that we're really blessed to be able to provide needed support during a really difficult time in people's lives.

As you can imagine, the relocation part of our business is down significantly because people are just staying put. The other piece is that relocation is really tied to hiring. That's pulled back a little bit. That part is down, but we are staying very busy right now and focused on what we can do to make people's lives better during this difficult time with getting them back to work.

[00:09:39] Nichols: Yes, and I know that that's your mission. You want to make a difference. You want to empower people to make lives better and employment is the cornerstone, isn't it?

[00:09:47] Herring: Yes, our mission is to make a positive impact on the lives we touch. Then the other piece that I feel really strongly about is our vision, which is we build a better world by empowering people to find and grow great careers. Like what you were saying a minute ago about that career piece being so important to people's lives. It's been proven by Gallup research that the number one driver of happiness worldwide is a good job.

The fact that we get to help people find and grow great careers means so much to how people see themselves. They go home and they're better parents. They're better spouses. I truly believe that we are able to do our part in building a better world through the work that we do.

[00:10:34] Nichols: I could not agree with you more. You and I have talked a lot about women in leadership, and there's not as many women CEOs. I know, Lauren, that you never really aspired necessarily to be a CEO, but what would you say to young girls that are possibly listening and they're like, "I would like to be a CEO one day," or do you have a few words of wisdom for them?

[00:10:59] Herring: The key for young girls I think is, first of all, just recognizing that they can do anything. Then if you decide that you do want to be in corporate America or in some sort of a business or frankly, any type of job that you want to grow in and be super successful at, I focus on three main pillars that we proclaim at Impact Group are key to women in leadership. Those are corporate visibility, personal effectiveness, and business acumen. What I mean by that is corporate visibility is about who you know, making sure that you're connecting with people that can positively impact your career is really key because those are going to be the people that are going to keep their eyes open for the next opportunity for you. As we all know, the majority of jobs are found through networking purposes.

Whether you're in a job or looking for a job, that piece is really key. Personal effectiveness. You need to do a good job at your day job and then business acumen. Do you understand how the business makes money? Do you understand how the business operates and what the key things are that drive success? If you can focus on those three areas, that will put you heads up above the others out there.

[00:12:14] Nichols: Great words of advice. We're going to take a quick break and we'll be back with Lauren Herring.

[00:12:20] Ad: Let's face it. The future is mobile. There's a good chance that you are listening to this show right now on your phone. Have you explored how you can move your business mobile too? Our mobile apps team at technology partners makes it their mission to move our clients into the hands of their employees and customers and change their business processes to meet the demands of their users.

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[00:12:54] Nichols: Lauren, one of the things that you and I have talked about a lot is the giving back. I know that you-- I mean, goodness gracious, you and I sit on JA together, we're in YPO, you're on the RCGA board. We both love Connections to Success with Kathy and Brad Lambert. Why do you think that's important? Why is giving back even important?

[00:13:16] Herring: Giving back is just core to who I am. Our family mission growing up was to make a positive difference on the lives we touch that has translated into the work we do at

Impact Group. I grew up going on mission trips with my church. It was natural for me, even right after college to go and do a year of service.

Beyond that, as I've grown in my career, I feel like I have so many gifts, both financially, as well as in the work that we do at Impact Group that I want to just make sure to give back, to build a better world here in St. Louis and to help others.

[00:13:55] Nichols: Well, here's the thing. Lauren is a mom, a wife, a community leader, the CEO of Impact Group. There's a lot of things and there's a lot of women out there, aren't there? I call them plate spinners. [chuckles] Baby Luke is about four months old. I mean, you probably have a little bit to say about that now. We kind of talked about morning routines and taking care of yourself. Give me your thoughts on that.

[00:14:22] Herring: Well, there's a lot of plates being spun right now. I do my best to honestly like they say about a lot of women. Everyone else is getting a lot of attention, especially baby Luca right now because he just needs it. I'm blessed with a lot of family here in St. Louis that is willing to help. Both my mom and my mother-in-law are very involved in taking care of Luca and our eight-year-old daughter Kennedy as well.

The other thing that I really put out there to women is when you're choosing your spouse and I had a lot of time to think about choosing a spouse. I was about 38 when I got married. It's just so important to really be thinking about, is this person going to be a life partner through the ups and the downs and the challenges when things are busy. Do you have someone that is willing to help share that load when things get tough? I'm very blessed that my husband Ted absolutely is that. I don't feel like I need to shoulder all of this all by myself.

[00:15:24] Nichols: Well, I think you bring up such an interesting point, and I think sometimes there's this misnomer out there that we can all be superwomen. It is not true. I don't care what kind of cap you're wearing. I'm like, "You can't do it all." Sometimes you may be overwhelmed and it's okay to raise your hand and say, "I need help," and not be afraid that people are going to look at you the wrong way about asking. I need somebody to help me clean my house. We can't do it all.

[00:15:55] Herring: I get that. I even feel that way sometimes with my husband, because he takes such an active role that he's out helping make play dates with other moms. Sometimes it

makes me even feel like, "Wait, I should be making the playdates," but instead I really just need to be appreciative of the fact that he's doing it.

[00:16:15] Nichols: Absolutely, you're blessed. Well, you've got something really exciting coming up and I want you to have the time to talk to our listeners about this amazing new book. Now you're not new to authoring, you've got other books and you can talk about those but you've got a new book coming out and it is so apropos, I believe for where we are and you could have planned that any better.

[00:16:38] Herring: Exactly. I have been writing for about the last year and a half a book that is called *Take Control of Your Job Search, 10 Emotions You Must Master to Land the Job*. I had originally planned on launching it later in the year. Then when I was out on my maternity leave, everything started snowballing with COVID and the economy and the job market. It became very apparent that I needed to speed up the publishing process. I'm excited to announce that *Take Control of Your Job Search* is now live on Amazon and it is coming out on July 14th.

[00:17:16] Nichols: Can you give us a little appetizer? You talk about these 10 emotions. Tell us one of those.

[00:17:22] Herring: Well, the first one that I start out with is grief and sadness. A lot of times when someone has been laid off, there are a lot of emotions of sadness of, "Hey, I have unfinished business there," or like, "Was I rejected?" and the sadness about that. Then you take it to the other extreme after that kind of event and maybe there's a lot of anger.

If you don't deal with that properly, an interviewer can pick up on that in a heartbeat or same thing. Fear. One of the things that helped me realize the importance of dealing with the emotions during the job search is I was having a networking meeting with a high-level individual here in St. Louis. He was almost manic in his actions telling me everything that he had done, all the spreadsheets, all the PowerPoints.

It was like he was just sending so much energy my way that instead of actually making him seem competent and powerful and strong, it was coming across like fear was driving his search. He was just doing action, action, action but not really being as thoughtful about what needed to happen.

[00:18:29] Nichols: Wow. I'm telling you everybody needs to go out and get that because even if you have not been laid off just being prepared and we all probably know somebody. I'm thinking I want it because I want to be a better coach for somebody else.

[00:18:42] Herring: Well, not only that, but you hit the nail on the head. To be a better coach, I actually include in the book a guide for the spouse's partners, ministers, you name it. If you're supporting someone looking for a job, there's actually a resource in this book that can support you.

[00:19:01] Nichols: Wonderful. I can't wait to read it. Well, Lauren, this is something extra. In your own career, has there been a leadership misstep because sometimes I believe the listeners hearing that will give them permission to go yes, we're not perfect? Nobody's perfect. We're all going to make mistakes. The big question is, are we going to learn from those mistakes, but did you have a misstep in your leadership journey?

[00:19:25] Herring: Yes. If I were to go back and do one thing differently about the transition of leadership between myself and my mom, I would ask more questions. I would listen more. I think as leaders, especially if you're transitioning into a new role, but any situation that requires leadership, asking more questions, listening more, not jumping to conclusions, not wanting to show how smart you are and that you have all the answers or in this case, I, as a young CEO wanted to prove that I had all the answers.

I wish I had asked more questions and I think I would have had a stronger transition in that process. That's not to say that we didn't have a good transition. I think we did a lot of things right, but that was something that I've looked back on and thought that's a learning opportunity.

[00:20:13] Nichols: Great words of advice. Well, what do you believe, Lauren? Is this something extra that every leader needs?

[00:20:19] Herring: In this time when our world is so challenged in the age of COVID and the issues with social justice, I feel like we need more humanity in our world and in our leadership. Impact Group, we have a leadership program. We call it high impact leadership. One of the things that we talk about is how all of us are people first and employees second. That's something extra of treating each other with dignity and respect and making sure that we're asking people about their personal lives, just some of those personal basics, but more than anything right now, I think we need more listening, more humanity in our leadership.

[00:20:59] Nichols: Yes, I could not agree more. I had read something where you had talked about that and you said, just a great leading question when you are talking to somebody is, "How are you doing?"

[00:21:10] Herring: Just basic.

[00:21:11] Nichols: It's very basic, but don't just jump into the work situation and the challenge or whatever it is that you're talking about, but just get to know that person as a person because you're right, we're people, people make up organizations. We're not robots, we're not a piece of machinery. Great, great advice. Well, Lauren, obviously your new book is coming out. It's released on the 14th, but you can preorder now. I think this is so cool, but I want you to tell our listening audience, what are your hopes and plans for book?

[00:21:44] Herring: Well, I'm just so excited for *Take Control of Your Job Search* to hit the stores on July 14th. When we hit Amazon bestseller status, it is going to be my joy and pleasure to be able to donate between myself and Impact Group \$100,000 worth of career coaching services to people in underserved communities. That's something that more than anyone else, the people in the underserved communities have been hit by this economic crisis. We want to be able to give back in that way and support those individuals, especially in St. Louis, where we've had our share of challenges on that front.

[00:22:30] Nichols: I love that. Well, thank you so much. There you go again.

[00:22:33] Herring: Help us reach bestseller status.

[00:22:35] Nichols: Absolutely, but Lauren, I just think about your heart and there you go again, just giving, giving, giving back. We appreciate you, St. Louis is lucky to have you.

[00:22:44] Herring: Thank you.

[00:22:45] Nichols: Thank you so much for making the time to be on the show today.

