

Something Extra EP 131 - Bob Burg

[00:00:03] **Lisa Nichols:** Chromosomes, little strands of nucleic acids and proteins are the fundamental genetic instructions that tell us who we are at birth. Most people were 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'll 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 in is 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 as 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.

I'm thrilled to have Bob Burg on the show today. Bob is the author of a number of books on sales, marketing, and influence, with total book sales of well over a million copies. His book, *The Go-Giver*, coauthored with John David Mann has sold over 975,000 copies and it has now been translated into 29 languages. Bob, welcome to the *Something Extra* podcast. I am so delighted that you're making the time to be on the show today.

[00:01:58] **Bob Burg:** Lisa, my honor and pleasure. It's so great to be with you.

[00:02:02] Lisa: I told you, I still remember in about 2008 you came to St. Louis, you came as a keynote speaker for an event, and you had just published *The Go-Giver* book. That book, your message had such a profound impact. You truly influenced my thinking when I came to hear you. Thank you so much for that. I know you've influenced many people.

[00:02:29] Bob: Thank you. That's always so nice to hear. Not something I ever take for granted, believe me.

[00:02:36] Lisa: Then just recently you and I have a mutual friend, Bill Ellis.

[00:02:39] Bob: Bill's a great guy. One of my favorite people.

[00:02:40] Lisa: He reconnected us. I'm just so glad that it worked, and you're sitting in Florida and I'm sitting in St. Louis and we're making it work because of the wonder of technology.

[00:02:51] Bob: That's right.

[00:02:52] Lisa: Let's just get into it. People may not know about you, like, your background before you became this best-selling author. Tell us a little bit about how you grew up. I know you didn't grow up in Florida. You grew up on the East Coast, right?

[00:03:04] Bob: Yes. Grew up in Massachusetts, and actually began my career as a broadcaster first, doing radio sports for a local Massachusetts station. Then I moved to the Midwest, worked for a very small ABC TV affiliate, and eventually worked my way up to the late night news guy. I really wasn't very good at that. I could tell that this was not going to be my career. I like to say I graduated into sales. The challenge I had was that I knew nothing about sales on any formal basis. I had had no training.

The company that I was with, nice people, but their training was, we'll say, negligible, [laughs] meaning non-existent. I was really out there on my own. I floundered for the first few months till I was one day in a bookstore. I came across a couple of books on selling which, by the way, this was about 40 years ago. I did not at that time even realize there were books on selling. I didn't realize that was a thing. Now, of course, that's ever-present. Back then, that wasn't as big a thing. The two books were by two people who'd become real heroes of mine eventually, Tom Hopkins and Zig Ziglar. I know you're familiar and have studied both of those too.

Really, I got their books. I like to say that I did not read the books, I devoured the books. Every night when I'd get home from work, I would study them, I'd read them, I'd take notes. I would rehearse and I'd practice and I drill. Within a few weeks, my sales really began to go well. It became predictable. It was really a neat thing. It opened up a new world to me. I had a methodology now, and I think if you have a methodology to follow, you can pretty much accomplish anything within reason.

I call it following a system. I personally define a system as the process of predictably achieving a specific result based on a very specific set of how-to principles. I think the key, Lisa, is predictability. If it's been proven that by doing A, you'll get the desired result of B, then that all you need to do is A and continue to do A and continue to do A-

[00:05:17] Lisa: Keep doing it.

[00:05:18] Bob: -and eventually going to get the desired result of B. Just to learn that was a big boon for me. I also quickly began to realize learning sales was not just about learning the skill, as important as those are, of course, like any business, any profession, it was really a matter of developing myself personally and growing personally. I began to get the books I kept hearing about from everyone, from Carnegie's *How To Win Friends And Influence People* to Hill's *Think And Grow Rich* to Clason's *The Richest Man In Babylon* to Maxwell Maltz's *Psycho-Cybernetics* to *The Magic Of Thinking Big*,

all the classics of the sales and really personal development field, because really what we need to do is grow ourselves on the inside. That inside growth will manifest itself as outside success.

[00:06:09] Lisa: There's so much packed in there, Bob. As I think about organizations, our core values follow the acronym delight because we want delighted clients. It's what we say, but the L stands for learn and share. We really do encourage our people to learn. The G is grow as individuals because I think leaders need to understand that the best thing you can do is to give your people permission to grow themselves because when they grow themselves, the organization is going to grow. The organization is going to go to the next level, too, but you've got to start with your people.

[00:06:45] Bob: That's such a great leadership principle and obviously you're creating that culture of growth. As the saying goes, you can lead from anywhere. However, the culture of that leadership comes from the top and trickles down.

[00:06:59] Lisa: I just love what you said. You went into that job not really knowing anything, but here's what you did say, and I'm just going to reiterate it, "Sales improved dramatically." You don't really have to know it all, but you need to know where to look, either in books or seminars or webinars or listening to podcasts or just having a mentor. We'll talk a little bit more about that, too, but let's get into it. Because I really want our listeners to get a sense of what you've done with these books. You did finally- you pivoted because you started learning sales for yourself, you were very successful. Then you wrote your first book. Can I ask you why did you decide to write your first book?

[00:07:40] Bob: It started speaking as a career. I had been doing it for about probably three or four years or so. I had gotten to the point after a bunch of ups and downs and not knowing if I was going to actually be able to make it or not, got to the point where I was achieving some success as a speaker after about four years or so, I'd say.

I was at a National Speakers Association convention and I was talking to a few people, some of the older, wiser speakers who'd been around longer than I have, as you said earlier, you can find wisdom in many places and often it's from the people you speak to in the hallways of a convention. They just said, "Berg, you really- at this point, you need to have a book. You need to write a book. It's going to make you more marketable. You're going to get higher fees. It's going to be easier to get the bookings. It's going to create really good credibility and positioning for you in the marketplace."

At that time, I really had no desire to write a book, but I thought it sounded right. I did write the first book which was called *Endless Referrals*. The subtitle was 'Network your everyday contacts into sales'. So it was really just for utilitarian purposes, and they were right. It helped me a lot. I used it as an outbound positioning tool and it really did exactly what they said it was going to do. It was good advice. After that, I think most of my books that I wrote were because I felt I had a message to communicate, and that the best way to get it out to the most people was to write. The first book was, again, just for the purposes of marketing. All the other books after that is because I really felt I wanted to share a message.

[00:09:17] Lisa: I love it. It's the one to many. Here's the thing about books. They live beyond you. They live in perpetuity. You can hand them out to people. Like I said, I heard you in 2008. You just published *The Go-Giver*. Very quickly after you publish it, it shot to the number six spot on the Wall Street Journal's business best sellers just three weeks after it released, and it reached number nine on Business Week. It has been translated into 21 languages and sold close to a million copies now, something like this, right?

I remember hearing you speak about *The Go-Giver*. I had bought the book and it just impacted me so much. You wrote this book as a parable, and what you did in this book, it's the five laws of stratospherical success. Maybe we can cover just a couple of these, but in the book, the Pindar is the mentor, if you will, and then Joe is the young man, and Pindar promised to reveal to him his secrets if he would meet with him every day for an hour, for a week. The whole parable is written around that. There's five of these laws of success. I don't want to take the words out of your mouth, download a little bit of that to us, Bob, if you would.

[00:10:38] Bob: Sure. The book was co-authored with John David Mann, and John was really the master storyteller, the lead writer. As you can tell, I'm more of a how-to guy, I'm step one, step two, step three. John is a wonderful storyteller, so it was a neat collaboration. The five laws are really built around a basic premise. The premise itself is that shifting your focus from getting to giving. When we say 'giving' in this context, we simply mean constantly and consistently providing immense value to others, understanding that doing so is not only a more fulfilling way of conducting business, it's actually the most financially profitable way as well.

Not for some woo-hoo way out there, magical mystical type of reasons. It actually makes very logical sense, very rational sense. When you think about it, when you're that person who can take your focus off yourself and place it onto others, focusing on their needs, on their wants, on their desires, helping them solve their challenges, helping make their life better, helping them get what they want, helping them to get closer to happiness, just by virtue of you being in their life, people feel good about you. People want to get to know you. They like you. They trust you. They want to be a part of your life, a part of your business, if that's appropriate, if they need what you have, but they definitely want to be your personal walking ambassador and tell others about you. It's actually very rational that this would be.

The five laws which are built around that are the laws of value, compensation, influence, authenticity, and receptivity. The law of value is the foundational law, if you will, a foundational principle, and this is really all about the experience you're providing another person. Any product or service is designed to do a certain thing, which is usually good. It's something that, by its nature, will bring that person more in value than what they're paying for. Otherwise, why would they buy it? If you have a pizza restaurant and a family comes in and they buy a large pizza with certain things on, and it's \$20, they're paying \$20, but they're doing that because they feel they're getting much more than \$20 worth. Aside from the taste of the pizza, the fact that it could feed the family for the evening, it meant neither of the parents had to cook or clean.

It means they could all go out for a good family bonding experience, perhaps the atmosphere and the ambiance is really pleasant and wonderful. The wait staff is really nice. The owner comes over and says hello and makes people feel good about themselves. They paid \$20, but they may have gotten a \$100, \$200 worth of value. They got more than what they paid for.

[00:13:26] **Lisa:** It's more than pizza. [laughs]

[00:13:29] **Bob:** Exactly.

[00:13:29] **Lisa:** More than pizza.

[00:13:30] **Bob:** Exactly. At the same time, that pizza that the restaurateur sold for \$20 probably cost him or her \$3 in terms of ingredients, in terms of the staff, the electricity, keeping the place open. What happened is both parties profited, which is exactly what's supposed to happen in a market-based exchange. There should always be two profits, the buyer profits and the seller profits, because each of them come away better off afterwards than they were beforehand. Basically the law of value says, it's not a matter of just exchanging your product or service for an equal amount of money, it's making the experience so wonderful that that other person has gotten more in value than what they've paid for.

[00:14:13] **Lisa:** You know what's going to happen. They're going to come back there, right? Because it is more than pizza. It's how you make people feel. I'm reminded, Bhavani Amirthalingam is the CDTO for Ameren which is our big utility here in St. Louis. Never forget her saying, "I've never worked to build my resume." She said, "Every job I've ever had, I've just gone in there and tried to bring more value."

[00:14:41] **Bob:** That's wonderful.

[00:14:42] **Lisa:** "Bring more than I take to the organization." She said, "My resume has built itself. I've never worried about that." It just reminds me of that, but we need to take a quick break and we'll be right back with Bob Burg.

[00:14:56] Hi, everybody. I just wanted to take a second and tell you about something our team at Technology Partners can do for your business. We have spent over two decades partnering with organizations and helping them solve their IT needs from a 360-degree perspective. A huge part of how we solve those needs is by developing custom applications of all shapes and sizes. If your team is looking for software and an out-of-the-box solution just isn't right, it's time to consider how we might be able to help. Go to tpi.co/customapps and learn more about our awesome capabilities.

[00:15:33] Lisa: Well, welcome back. Bob, I want you to talk about one of the other laws in *The Go-Giver* book, and that is the law of influence, because we hear that so much now. Let's talk about influence. Talk about what you say is the law of influence.

[00:15:49] Bob: Law of influence itself simply says that your influence is determined by how abundantly you place other people's interests first. This sounds rather counterintuitive when you first hear it, until you realize that the greatest leaders you know, the top influencers, the most sustainably successful, highest money-earning salespeople, this is simply how they run their lives and conduct their businesses. They're always looking out for the other person's benefit.

Now, let me clarify and qualify this as well, because I think it can easily be misunderstood, I think it's very important, that when we say place the other person's interests first, we certainly don't mean that you should be anyone's doormat or a martyr or self-sacrificial in any way. Absolutely not at all. It's simply as Joe, the protégé in the story learned from several of his mentors, the golden rule of business, the golden rule of sales is that all things being equal, people will do business with and refer business to those people they know, like, and trust. Lisa, there's simply no faster, more powerful, or more effective way to elicit those feelings toward you in others than by genuinely and authentically moving from what we call an 'I' focus or 'me' focus to an 'other' focus, looking to at Sam, one of the mentors in the story advise Joe, "Make your win all about the other person's win." Now, when we talk about influence in today's vernacular, as you said, a lot of people think of influencers as people online who utilize their name or their brand to sell.

This is great though, because it means that that salesperson or leader who understands this, they understand their focus must be on bringing immense value to others. This is why John and I say that money is simply an echo of value. It's the thunder to value's lightning, meaning nothing more than the focus must be on the value you're providing another person and the money you receive is simply a natural result of that value. Well, it's the same with leadership. They're not going to follow you because you want them to or because you have a goal. The great leader, the genuine influencer constantly asks themselves questions such as, "How does what I'm asking this person to do, how does it align with their goals?"

[00:20:43] Lisa: Absolutely.

[00:20:45] Bob: "How does what I want this other person to do, how does it align with their values? How am I solving a problem for them? How am I helping them get to where they want to be?" When we ask ourselves these questions thoughtfully, intelligently, genuinely, authentically, not as a way to manipulate another human being into doing our will, but as a way of building everyone in the process, now we've come a lot closer to earning that person's commitment rather than trying to depend on some type of compliance, such as manipulation or force or threat or what have you. One of my great friends, a wonderful leadership authority, her name is Dondi Scumaci. I love what she says. She says, "When it comes to leadership, when it comes to influence, compliance will never take you where commitment can go."

[00:21:39] Lisa: Two different things. [laughs] Two different things. They may be complying on the outside, but they're standing up on the inside.

[00:21:46] Bob: Oh, that's for sure. It's not sustainable.

[00:21:48] Lisa: Right, it's not sustainable. Well, I think this is why it just resonates with me so much, Bob, because I believe that's the way I've always tried to lead. It's really putting yourself in the other person's shoes. I wouldn't be compelled, unless I really trusted the person or if I really knew that they cared about me.

[00:23:59] Bob: Without it, it doesn't really work. You have the greatest odds, best ideas, the nicest intent, but without action, you know, good luck in making anything happen. We like to say, "Be a go-getter, person of action, and a go-giver, someone who is absolutely laser focused on bringing immense value to others. Just don't be a go-taker," and that's the person I think you and I are talking about who feels almost entitled to take without having added value to the person, to the process, to the situation. They tend to be very frustrated because they rarely attain the level of success they feel they deserve.

Even those times when they do, and they do it a lot, it tends to be very difficult for them to maintain and sustain because it hasn't been built on a foundation of relationships. It's very difficult to sustain that for so long. You got to work a lot harder when you're a go-taker than if you're a go-giver. [laughs]

[00:24:52] Lisa: I agree. I could not agree more. Well, I told you I loved this book. I downloaded it and then I bought it. I've now bought a copy for our son, Jordan, because he's looking at a new enterprise and I thought it would be great for him to read it. Again, it's a parable, and you've got Jillian and Jackson. You don't have Pindar. You have the Judge and the Coach. This is so fun to me, Bob, because I know that you were a golden glove amateur boxer.

[00:25:25] Bob: Oh, yes. Way back. Many a moon ago.

[00:25:27] Lisa: What we find in *The Go-Giver Influencer* is that the coach is too. [laughs] I love that you brought your own personal experience in there. We go through here and we talk about a winning strategy and I think that is Coach talking to Jillian. Then the natural negotiator, the Judge is talking to Jackson. These two people are coming together. Tell the listeners just the premise. I think, again, this is where your personality is coming in, Bob, to this book because I know you're an animal lover. What's Jackson trying to do?

[00:26:06] Bob: Well, he's developed a line of pet food that is really good and healthy and nutritious and locally sourced and all those good things. Jillian, who is a buyer for the big pet store, and they want to carry Jackson's line. However, to do so and to scale it, it's going to lose some of the quality that Jackson is very concerned about. The two of them, really, if they could get together on this, have a win-win in the highest regard, and they both have what the other wants because Jackson also needs the funding because he's about to go broke, basically, in what he's doing. It should be a business match made in heaven, the two constantly-- They're both nice people, but they're coming at it based on their own needs and wants.

[00:26:48] Lisa: Their own values. Yes.

[00:26:52] Bob: Every conversation seems to take them further apart, and then, of course, they both have mentors, Judge Celia Henshaw is Jackson's, and then there's the Coach who is Jillian's. They come to realize that if they can step into the other person's shoes, if they can get to know what the other person needs, wants, and desires, they're probably going to end up finding out how it works best for everyone. It's not a matter of giving in. It's less negotiation than it is collaboration and building a bigger pie for everyone. Really, the premise of this story is that to be able to learn how to communicate with people in such a way that you can get the results you want while making other people feel genuinely good about themselves, about the situation, and about you.

[00:27:38] Lisa: Well, it is just a terrific book, and I have to tell you when you introduced Miss B, it says Miss B is feeding children that don't have enough at home. They're feeding them breakfast and lunch, and they stop in just as Jillian reached the table, so did a trio of children with empty trays, clearly angling for seconds, which the hairnet woman which is Miss B began enthusiastically serving Jillian, heard her address one as Master Ryan, the other one as Miss Tamika, as she was addressing them like royalty. She all but curtsied to them. It goes on just talking about, and then the Coach says, "We feed over 500 kids here every weekday morning before school." I'm reading this. From this point on in the book, I'm crying. [laughs] This book evoked a lot of different emotions.

[00:28:34] **Bob:** Well, that's the writing of John David Mann, believe me. He's the guy with the writer's touch.

[00:28:48] **Lisa:** It says here, Jillian followed the glance. She said, "I noticed how you treat these kids. It's like, they're like royalty." "Every one of these children needs food in their belly," said Miss B, "providing that is the easy part. We also make sure we send them off with some self-respect and some dignity under their belt. Malnourishment, sad to say, comes in so many forms." I loved it. I just cried, cried, cried. You got animals in the book.

[00:29:06] **Bob:** Oh, yes. They play a big part.

[00:29:08] **Lisa:** Solomon is Jackson's doll.

[00:29:10] **Bob:** Solomon, the wise dog.

[00:29:11] **Lisa:** The wise dog.

[00:29:12] **Bob:** Cleocatra.

[00:29:14] **Lisa:** Yes, and is a blue Russian cat. I love it. There's just so much wisdom there to learn and I would just encourage our listeners go out and get it. I do want to ask you one question. Can you talk about the elephant in the park?

[00:29:26] **Bob:** Well, it's all about belief systems and understanding that the way we see the world limits us based on our belief system, what I call our 'unconscious operating system'. We all grew up with a set of beliefs that were handed to us and we see the world a certain way. It's a combination of upbringing, environment, schooling, news media, television, and everything. We tend to see the world from our own viewpoints. There's a very, very old story about the six blind men from Hindustan, and they all were feeling different parts of an elephant.

The one who is feeling the legs said, "Obviously, an elephant is a tree trunk. What else could it be?" The one who was feeling the tail said, "No, obviously an elephant is a rope." The one who was feeling the torso said, "No, you're all wrong. Obviously, an elephant is a big wall." All of them had their own views of what an elephant is. Often in life, that's what we do. We see everything from our own viewpoint, and we fail to see that there are other perspectives.

[00:30:27] Lisa: That's the whole point, is to put yourself in the other person's shoes to see their viewpoint. That's the whole point. Bob, this is called *Something Extra*. What do you believe is the something extra that every leader needs?

[00:30:40] Bob: My feeling is that empathy is the difference maker, and I know empathy is a word that is bandied about now. Obviously, emotional intelligence has really taken on a life of its own in the mainstream and I think for good reason. I think empathy, which is also a learned skill. Some people come to empathy very naturally, for others it's a learned skill, and it can be learned. The dictionary definition of empathy is the identification with or vicarious experience and of another person's feelings. The challenge is we're not that person, so we don't necessarily know how they feel.

I think in communicating empathy, it's not that you have to understand exactly how they feel, because you might not. It's understanding that they're feeling something and then showing up in such a way that they know that you are there to help them through whatever is distressing to them. I think that when we can do that, when we can really feel, maybe not exactly what they're feeling, but feel that they're feeling something and focus on being there for them, I think that you do that, you're nine steps ahead of the game in a 10-step game.

[00:31:48] Lisa: I could not agree more, and we certainly need that today now more than ever I think. One other thing I want to say about this book that I love is you even give some reflection questions. I've got a really dear friend, Sheryl Batchelder, and she says, "Sometimes it's not that we need more input in our life, we need to rumble with what we already know."

[00:32:10] Bob: Sheryl's certainly a wonderful example of leadership, isn't she?

[00:32:14] Lisa: Oh, she sure is. Servant leader through and through. She's definitely a Go-Giver. Bob, I want to give you the opportunity to pitch something. I don't know if you want to talk about the book, but what do you want to tell our listeners?

[00:32:27] Bob: They can come to Burg, burg.com and they can check out the books that they'd like, read a free chapter so that they can see if they like it first, and then they can always click through. We also have an online membership community called the Go-Giver Success Alliance. We welcome people to check that out as well. So Burg, B-U-R-G.com.

[00:32:47] Lisa: Very good. Bob, thank you so much for being on the show today. I can't wait for our listeners to hear all of your wisdom and insights, and enjoy the rest of your day there in Jupiter.

[00:32:56] Bob: Thank you much, Lisa. I greatly appreciate you and thank you for all the wonderful work you're doing.