





the value of hard work and integrity and how we invest in other people. I still have a lot of fondness in my heart for the state of Iowa.

**Nichols:** Right, for sure. Well, you and I've talked about that and I said Greg and I over the years have hired a lot of kids that grew up on farms. I'm telling you just the work ethic. It's hard work, isn't it, Dennis? You got to push forward every day and it's not always clean work either. [laughs]

**Muilenburg:** That it is. It's hard work. The chores around the farm are things that have to be done every day. I remember as a kid with my brothers and sister, milking the cows and feeding the animals, gathering the eggs, working in the fields. It's good hard work. You enjoy the fresh air and there's a certain freedom to working on the farm, but it also teaches you a sense of responsibility, things that have to be done every day and done well.

**Nichols:** Absolutely. You grew up on the farm but then you ended up going to, was at Iowa University? Is that where you went, the University of Iowa?

**Muilenburg:** Iowa State University.

**Nichols:** Iowa State University, and you majored in?

**Muilenburg:** Aerospace engineering. I'd always had an interest in airplanes and spacecraft growing up as a kid. I guess in the state of Iowa, you get a lot of open views of the sky so I could see the airplanes flying over. I always had a great interest in that and managed to find my way to Iowa State University and Ames. I'm a Crowd Cyclone. I did my undergrad work there in aerospace engineering and I got my Bachelor of Science degree there.

**Nichols:** I know you've got several degrees and you've got a doctorate.

**Muilenburg:** I went to Seattle to start an internship with Boeing and when I was in Seattle, I got my master's degree at the University of Washington in aeronautics and astronautics. Also, I came back and got my Doctor of Science honorary degree at Iowa State.

**Nichols:** That's great. Let me ask you this, was your competing career at all? Did you ever think you would farm the family farm?

**Muilenburg:** Well, I always wanted to be an architect or an engineer. I had that design desire inside of me. I love to design and build things. I actually at one time thought I might be an architect but went down the engineering path instead. I had a chance coming out of school for internships at







**Muilenburg:** Yes, I would say by direct report team, there was, maybe a dozen people, but this was on a large airplane program that involved thousands of people. Most of the jobs we did at Boeing were big complex jobs with very large teams, distributed across multiple cities, so really put a premium on teamwork and being able to manage virtually and trying to capture the best talents that we had at different sites.

**Nichols:** Yes, I was managing virtually.

**Muilenburg:** We're all getting some practice of that now, aren't we?

**Nichols:** We are getting practice across the board, right? There's nobody, that's not having to do that right now. I mean, and I know Boeing is a global company. Then what was your communication vehicles that you were using, Dennis, at that?

**Muilenburg:** Well, we made use of the video teleconferencing capabilities we had back in that day. It wasn't as sophisticated as what we enjoy today, but we made heavy use of that. I traveled a lot. I loved to get out on the floor of our factories and visit our people and invest time in our teams. I've always had a philosophy of what I call people first, and I think the biggest multiplying effect we can have as a leader is to invest in our people.

I would typically do more than a hundred types of employee engagement events throughout the year. That could be webcast events, it could be round tables with employees, factory visits, but when I laid out my calendar for every week, I always put investing in people at the top of the list, and engaging our teams is by far the biggest multiplying effect we can have as leaders.

**Nichols:** Yes. I think you've already answered it, but what were your leadership styles, if you had to say what those were? They're probably a couple.

**Muilenburg:** Yes. I always tried to be very purposeful, so I think it's really important to understand your purpose and mission and to communicate that with your team in a way that generates passion for what you're doing and the importance of what you're doing. I always thrived on that. At Boeing, we talked about-- Our mission was to connect, protect, explore, and inspire the world, and it was something that our team could connect with. Having that purposeful approach, I think is important.

Heavy emphasis on our values, bringing excellence and integrity, safety, all of the fundamental core values of being a values-driven leader, I think it's important. Then, as I said, probably most importantly is people first, and just recognizing the importance of investing in people, be a genuine, authentic leader, care about the people that are around you, invest in them. That's the biggest



multiplying effect we could have. That was my style, I guess. It's difficult to describe it in one word, and I learned a lot from a lot of other great leaders, but that's how I'd characterize it.

**Nichols:** Sometimes you learn what to do and what not to do. [laughs] Right, Dennis? I mean, you can learn both ways. It's like, "I don't want to be that." That is awesome. You're purposeful, your people first. How did you keep to that, because sometimes, you can start out that way and then go down a slippery slope of not being that way? I mean, but you had to do something to ground yourself. What was that for you?

**Muilenburg:** Well, for me, my faith is very important to me and that's really what keeps me centered. I always reminded myself that, ultimately, I was the CEO of Boeing, but first and foremost, I'm a servant of God and a follower of Jesus Christ, and that kept me centered. My faith was important and whether we're in good times, we are in tough times, that faith is what kept me on the right track.

I had a great family, so, having a strong family framework, I think is important, but to always keep in work and perspective. I always told my team and said, "Even as the CEO of Boeing, there are more important things than work." I'd pause and repeat that, "There are more important things than work. While you're working, we expect excellence, but keep balance in your life, and remember there are more important things outside of work, and when you invest in that, you're better at work as well."

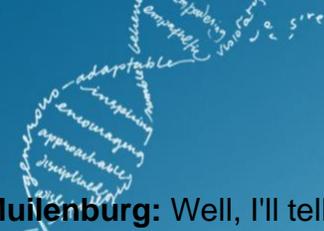
**Nichols:** That is so true and such great advice, and I know your team appreciated that about you because we're holistic people, and to your point, everything we put our hand to needs to be done with excellence, but it is not the thing at the end of the day.

**Muilenburg:** Exactly.

**Nichols:** Well, very good. There's a lot more I want to talk about, but we need to take a quick break and then we'll be back with Dennis Muilenburg.

**Placements:** Are you a rising IT leader? Could you benefit from a network of like-minded peers? Let me introduce you to the St. Louis Technology Leadership Experience, this one of program that gathers cohorts of IT professionals for three workshops. Peers, small group problem solving, one on one mentoring by IT executives, and multiple networking events. You'll be prepared for your next steps as an IT leader by gaining core leadership competencies and a strong, powerful network of peers. To apply for our next Tech LX Cohort, visit [tpi.co/tlx](http://tpi.co/tlx).



A stylized graphic of a DNA double helix in the top left corner, with handwritten text in blue ink along its length, including words like "empathy", "communication", "collaboration", "innovation", "resilience", "adaptability", "growth", "learning", "curiosity", "openness", "humility", "integrity", "honesty", "transparency", "accountability", "responsibility", "ownership", "commitment", "dedication", "passion", "energy", "focus", "determination", "perseverance", "courage", "bravery", "strength", "resilience", "flexibility", "adaptability", "agility", "speed", "efficiency", "effectiveness", "productivity", "creativity", "innovation", "imagination", "vision", "inspiration", "motivation", "drive", "ambition", "goals", "dreams", "aspirations", "passions", "interests", "hobbies", "sports", "travel", "adventure", "exploration", "discovery", "learning", "growth", "development", "improvement", "progress", "achievement", "success", "excellence", "quality", "precision", "accuracy", "reliability", "consistency", "stability", "durability", "longevity", "endurance", "persistence", "tenacity", "perseverance", "determination", "resolve", "willpower", "courage", "bravery", "strength", "resilience", "flexibility", "adaptability", "agility", "speed", "efficiency", "effectiveness", "productivity", "creativity", "innovation", "imagination", "vision", "inspiration", "motivation", "drive", "ambition", "goals", "dreams", "aspirations", "passions", "interests", "hobbies", "sports", "travel", "adventure", "exploration", "discovery", "learning", "growth", "development", "improvement", "progress", "achievement", "success", "excellence", "quality", "precision", "accuracy", "reliability", "consistency", "stability", "durability", "longevity", "endurance", "persistence", "tenacity", "perseverance", "determination", "resolve", "willpower".

**Muilenburg:** Well, I'll tell you diversity inclusion again is one of my core values for building a team and one of the principles that we built on at Boeing. During my tenure as CEO, that was a big area of focus for me, and I'm a big believer that when you can bring diverse perspectives and experiences to a team, that's what really makes for a great team.

I tried to surround myself with people who brought those different experiences and backgrounds, and I was proud to say that during my tenure, as CEO, that we went from a Exco, an executive committee, direct report committee, that was mostly white men, people that looked like me and had experiences like me, to a team that was more than half minorities and women. I think it made us a better, stronger team.

I was so proud of those folks that you mentioned, Leanne and Ted, two great leaders who have done fantastic work in their assignments, running their business units inside of Boeing. Our leader of manufacturing and supply chain, Jenette Ramos was another great example, our leader of human resources, Heidi Capozzi. It's a fantastic team and diversity and inclusion brings real power to the company.

**Nichols:** That is just an amazing accomplishment. I want to talk to you a little bit about AI and we talked a little bit about this and I laughed because sometimes people think, it's the new thing, but it's really not. McDonnell Douglas was using AI on the shop floor 35 years ago, but Elon Musk talks a lot about-- he believes one of the potential great threats to our society is AI, and what AI can do. Do you have that same fear? I mean, what were your feelings about artificial intelligence and machine learning in that?

**Muilenburg:** Well, I have a bit of a different view on that. I believe AI and all the associated technologies are going to be a real benefit to our businesses and to society. As you said, the idea of having intelligent systems helping us do our jobs, that idea has been around for a long time. Now, the algorithms and the technologies are accelerating and getting more sophisticated, but we see the advantages of that. I know at Boeing, it gave us improvements to our products, it made our airplanes smarter so that we could improve maintenance, for example.

That produced new ways of running our factories, so, we could optimize our supply chain as an example, and we even had technologies where we had robotic capabilities and humans working together in our factories building airplanes and the result was that our people had a safer environment to work in, and we could have some of the robots do some of the very difficult and dangerous jobs. I think there are opportunities to leverage the technology, to create better capabilities, and to benefit society. We have to be thoughtful about it, that's our responsibility as leaders. I think the upsides very much outweigh the downside.

**Nichols:** I couldn't agree more. We say it all the time, there has never been a better time to be in technology. You see technology improvements in healthcare, all kinds of



things. Dennis, I want to talk about this a little bit. 2020 has been hard on so many fronts for so many people. However, you and I've talked about this, there's been a lot of silver linings. I'm always looking for the silver linings in the clouds, and there have been a lot of silver linings.

This whole last year has been a little difficult for you and you've faced some crisis, not the first crisis. We've had crisis, but you talked about 911. That was certainly a crisis but this last year has been hard. What would you say for somebody who's going through a crisis? What kind of advice would you give them? How did you get through it?

**Muilenburg:** It has been a challenging year with what occurred at Boeing and the difficulty around the 737 Max accidents and the families that were affected by that. That'll always weigh heavily on me and I know it weighs on the Boeing team. Through all of that, you can also see this strength and the courage of our people and the commitment to things like safety and integrity in everything they do.

I talked earlier about the importance of values as a leader. I think those come to the surface even more during crisis as they should. Now this year with COVID and the pandemic and has had a horrendous impact on the airline industry, in our aerospace customers and the traveling public. Again, in these times of crisis, it's important as leaders to remember where our foundation is.

I talked earlier about the importance of my faith. That has been a constant through all of this. In everything we do, we need to pay attention to excellence in how we do it, and the integrity in how we do it. Some of this goes back to what I learned from my parents growing up on the farm. The value of integrity and excellence, and the importance of how we treat people around us.

**Nichols:** I know that was an awful, awful time and our hearts go out to those families who lost. I watched that and I read and I know that you approach that very humbly and contritely. The year before that, Dennis, I know Aviation Week in 2018, they named you the person of the year.

**Muilenburg:** I was humbled by that. I give all the credit for that to our people and our amazing customers. We had a great robust growing business at Boeing. We were transforming the company. We had some record-setting yours in 2017-2018. Along with those great times, you end up at times of difficulty and storms come and you have to be prepared for those as a leader. I will always treasure my 35 years at Boeing. As an incredible company and we have accomplished some amazing things. There's a lot of transformations still to come.

**Nichols:** I couldn't agree with you more. We've already talked a little bit about something extra. I'm going to ask you what is the something extra every leader needs and I know what your answer?

**Muilenburg:** I go back to this theme of being purpose full. I think that's so important as a leader. I mentioned earlier about in the business having a mission, understanding the importance of it. At Boeing, we knew that lives literally depended on the work that we did. That gave us a passion and commitment and excellence for the business. As a person, as a leader, the same thing, knowing what my purpose is in life, it goes back to my faith.

I said I'm a servant of God and a follower of Jesus Christ. My purpose is to glorify Him and honor Him in everything I do. Those two come together. That business purpose and that purpose as a leader can come together. When they do, it gives you great power in an organization and people can accomplish a lot more than you can ever imagine when you can get aligned on purpose. I love that theme of being purpose full and investing in the people around you.

**Nichols:** You hear that a lot that there's a segregation between your faith and your work. I think there's an integration [laughs], don't you Dennis? You bring your faith to work.

**Muilenburg:** I'm with you, Lisa. I think it's important as a leader to know who you are and to be genuine. You're a whole person. You bring that whole person to the workplace. Being able to bring your faith to the workplace as a leader is important, I believe. One of my favorite organizations and you know it well, but locally Biblical Business Training, BBT.

A great organization, I have the privilege of serving as the chairman of the board there but that team is producing applications and training materials and coaching for leaders in the workplace, to help them bring their faith to work in a way that's productive and effective and builds others up. If I could, I'll give a little plug to BBT and suggest that people check them out online. A lot of great opportunities there to leverage those materials.

**Nichols:** Great resources. It makes it easy to do that in the workplace. It doesn't take up too much time and great questions and makes it easy to bring a group together.

**Muilenburg:** It does. It's a wonderful way to have a meaningful discussion and again, to invest in the people around you. I think, in the end, it builds better teams and a better business as a result.

**Nichols:** Very good. Well, Dennis, I cannot thank you enough for making the time. It's been such a delight for me and I just feel like it's full circle. 35 years ago, I would never have dreamed



that I would have been talking to the CEO for Boeing. Thank you so much for the time. It's been a delight.

**Muilenburg:** Lisa, likewise thanks for the time today. I very much enjoyed it.

**[END OF AUDIO]**