

S01 - E50 - Rooted & Unwavering - Nov 22 - Hylke Faber & Simon King

Presenter 00:00

Conversations about courageous connectedness. How do we stay connected to our best selves, especially when we are challenged, what becomes possible when we truly stay committed to our own and others greatness, also when we don't feel it. Join host Hylke fauber, transformational coach, facilitator and award winning, author of taming your crocodiles and his guests as they explore leadership greatness in today's episode of rooted and unwavering.

Hylke Faber 00:32

And welcome to root and unwavering episode 50, where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. Broadcasting today from Pennsylvania and from Arizona. I'm here today with a very special guest, Simon King. Simon, how are you today?

Simon King 00:50

I'm doing very well. Thank you.

Hylke Faber 00:52

Very good. Simon is somebody who I know since maybe 15 years already. He is a chief people officer, and has been in the people domain for quite a while. We'll learn more about him in a second, and before we get to know more about Simon, I want to say a bit more about this podcast of rooted and wavering. We are at episode 50, which means we've spoken to about 49 people since the beginning and the inception of this podcast, and the reason for this podcast is because I see a deep need in the world, in leaders and in teams to connect to what's most important and to call ourselves back from the distractions that our mind incessantly produces every day. You know, the newspapers, the news colleagues, things that happen in the office, things are happening all day, all day, and they will continue to happen all day. The question is not whether they happen all day. The question is what we will do with that. We can also call that the 1% principle, which is, let's focus on what we is within our control, within our purpose, who we want to be and lead and live from that place. And that, from my perspective, is daily work, and I'm so pleased that we're going to explore this idea of connectedness now with, with Simon King, very senior leader, from my perspective, also a very wise and empathetic man. I always enjoy my times with, with Simon, since the very beginning, he is a chief people officer, and he's responsible for leading an organization's us people strategy, building the future together and strengthening culture to realize their 2030 vision, to become an innovative global healthcare company, contributing to the sustainable development of society. Simon's mission is to enable every colleague to be their best selves at work, to serve the patients rely on the medicines that they create. Simon has a beautiful history. Decided early on that he wanted to help improve people's lives, and he pursued a



genetics degree, and then started his career in a biopharma research and development area, before he got into HR human resources, and he has been pursuing his passion to improve people's lives over the last 30 years, with experiences at AstraZeneca, Bristol, Myers Squibb and also Daichi Sankyo. He started in this field, you could say super early. He was 16 years old when he was volunteering in a hospital, and he became very close to a patient who passed away from cancer. Since that time, he has dedicated his career to seeking opportunities where he can make a difference to patients through colleagues to be their authentic selves. I took a walk before this podcast, and I found it so enlivening to think about that purpose, helping people to connect to their authentic selves. And I kept asking, so what is my authentic self? When I have conversations with Simon, I'm always struck by his deep authenticity. So I think you're practicing. I can see you're practicing what you learn from Simon, welcome. And let's go to this first question that we start every of those podcasts with which is, tell us more about what you've learned in about connectedness in your life and leadership. Simon,

Simon King 04:23

thank you, Hylke, and it's amazing that we have now known each other and worked together for over 15 years, and you've been part of my journey in each of the last three companies, and made a really big difference connecting us I find to be such a deep and meaningful topic. And it was a simple question that somebody asked me once that got me really to explore it. It was just be yourself like such a simple question. But who am I? What do I stand for? And it was really that deep exploration which took Me quite a number of years to really understand what was important to me that then frees you up to be your true self, to bring your talents, be comfortable with your thoughts, but pursue your mission in life. And maybe I'll just start with two stories to give you a sense of what, in the end, was actually several years of self reflection led me to the first was the story that you started with around volunteering in a hospital at age 16. It was a small community hospital in a place called North Walsham in Norfolk in the UK, literally 300 yards away from my house. And I would go there on a Sunday morning, and I would do whatever was needed. I would help serve food. I would clean. I can make the best patient beds. I would interact with patients and whatever help was needed, I would be there to do it. And there was a lady who kept coming in and out of the hospital because she had cancer, and it's a small community hospital, so when you have a relapse, you would come in, and I formed a really close relationship with her whilst I was volunteering there, and we'd always have really meaningful conversations towards the end of her time there, we'd formed a friendship, and there was one day when she actually mistook me for her son, and had this conversation about her life, and then she passed away, and I can remember as a 16 year old, just feeling such a sense of loss. Is what could I have done to give her a longer life, to give her a better quality of life? And just felt somewhat empty that I realized gave me this passion for wanting to bring medicines to patients. So whilst it may seem an unusual journey to study genetics and molecular biology start off in research and development biopharma and then move to human resources, it's all being connected in using that experience, my scientific background, and then a sense of humanity, to bring that together, to help people, bring new medicines to patients. And as you say, that's really where I have focused, and that's been a guiding light in both my personal and professional life, so that that was really important, because once you get grounded on what you're here to do, it frees you up to bring your full energy. And I'll just share one more story, and then, and then pause. The



second story is about my mother. She was born in 1940 in what is was the Dayton land then, now the Czech Republic. And she grew up in a small place called Ross Bucha in one of the typical farmhouses, which had a living room, a kitchen, there'll be a barn directly attached in the middle of the countryside. And she lived through the second world war with either the Russian army or the German army coming through. She tells of one experience when she was walking through the streets of the town and a farmer quickly beckoned for her and her mother to come into their barn and hide underneath the haystack because the soldiers were coming. And she remembers being absolutely terrified at the far side of a huge stack of hay. Her mother holding her hand over her face, making sure she didn't make a sound soldiers coming up, searching that haystack with bayonets and feeling terrified. She was probably about four at that time. She clearly survived. They get to the end of the Second World War, and all the German speaking Czechs end up moving to Germany as refugees, and there she had absolutely nothing. She had a happy family life, even with nothing. But it doesn't make me feel sorry for her, because she has lived the life she's always wanted. But what truly inspired me was the ability for anybody to live the life and career that they really want. And hence, this was my second deep reflection, which is I really want to help people be their best, and hopefully to help people bring out skills and talents they never knew that they had. And so I share that because it's took me a lot of self reflection to get there, but really my purpose, and when I feel connected, is when I'm helping bring medicines to patients and when I'm helping people grow and develop. It's beautiful.

Hylke Faber 09:40

I'm struck by Simon, how both of these stories, you're helping people through a times when there are they were going through their most vulnerable times, the your your mother underneath the the haystack and that experience, and then the woman in the hospital in in England. You. Uh, where they that are most vulnerable, and you're helping them in some way. So tell us about this. This helping people through something that's really hard, right? How does being authentic help in these situations? How does being authentic, being yourself, help? And how does that help? As being in a in a pharmaceutical company, how does that

Simon King 10:28

help? What I found is that for you to truly lead and to have the courage to do things differently, you first need to be really comfortable with yourself. And all of us have weaknesses. All of us have strengths. Once you have that level of understanding and you're comfortable with who you are, thoughts and all, then that allows you to really take energy that you've invested inside of yourself and bring it to others. And the word authentic is really important because it means that you are fully there with that person for that period of time, creating a connection. There are so many things in this world that can distract you, but if you can be your authentic self and just be there for that individual, you create a connection or level of conversation which is much deeper.

Hylke Faber 11:28

You use the word fault or misfolds Twice in this conversation already. So I just have to ask you, Simon, what are some of the faults, or quote, unquote, faults that you have learned to accept in yourself. How



have you? How did you do that? And how does that help you to be present to the people that you serve today? How is that working for you?

Simon King 11:53

So Hylke, we only have an hour, so I probably won't go through all of my faults, because we'd be here for a long time, but there are some key areas that I have really learned, and some of them were hard to come to terms with. And I'll share just two. I remember when I had my first job, we did a psycho a psychometric assessment, and when the assessor came back to me, he said, You are an optimist. If I could score you 12 out of 10, I could, but my scale only goes to 10, so one of my outstanding strengths is being an optimist, and that identifies with who I am. I tend to bring energy. But being an optimist, there are downsides that sometimes may mean that you're looking for what's going well in every situation, and you miss the issues and where things could be going wrong. So I've had to really get comfortable with knowing that I will tend to look at situations too optimistically, and I've learned to really ask questions and say, What could go wrong? What am I missing? What are the areas that I'm not thinking about? The other thing about being an optimist is when you get negative feedback, you can react disproportionately. So one small comment can actually make me react far more than I need to. And so I've also had to learn to really embrace and listen to criticism. I spent the first half of my career either trying to avoid critique or feedback or trying to look at the positive of it, and what I've learned to love in the second part of my career is I really want people to tell me exactly how it is, because what I discovered about myself is if people are critical, they give you that meaningful feedback, you grow far more that way. And I've probably grown more in the second half of my career, honestly, than I did in my first half. So that ability to recognize what your strength is, but the downside of it, and then to develop the habit of really learning, taking on critique, have been too curious that a life's work for me.

Hylke Faber 14:08

I love the humility in this. I hear you connect Simon by seeing that, hey, there's the optimist, and if the optimist is in charge, then I don't see feedback for what it is, or I see only part of it, and I miss out on the real opportunity. So you've been in this for 30 years being a leader, right? And so what I'm curious about is, do you still get disconnected, and what do you do to get back? So do you still get disconnected at this time in your career, or have you mastered so much presence, and I don't know whether this is a possible state where that's not happening anymore. What do you do? Yeah,

Simon King 15:00

I get distracted every day. I think the world we live in now, there are so many things happening that it's very easy to get off center, and hence, I'm much better at recognizing when that is the case now. So when I start to have lots of different thoughts that aren't connected, or my energy is high and my shoulders are high, I'm just not feeling grounded. I can now sense that. And so one of the very simple things, and I've listened to your previous podcasts, a number of your speakers mentioned, this is the simple act of breathing. I think it is the best thing that in a few seconds you can go from being distracted, somewhat scattered, to being centered and in the moment. And I just give you an example that I learned when my kids were younger. I used to come home from work, I'd walk over the doorway,



and I'd bring all my work issues into my family, and within three minutes, we were either having an argument or somebody was upset, and I thought it was them, and then I realized, no, this is me. I've brought all the energy and things that happens in the day into the workplace. And so a colleague of mine said here, just try something when you drive home before you walk over the threshold, take 20 seconds to do three deep breaths and say, I'm now the husband and the dad. Then walk through the door. See what happens. It made such a difference, because it just completely changes your mindset,

Hylke Faber 16:42

beautiful So, and I sense you do this in meetings too. Is that right?

Simon King 16:47

I do one of the habits we've actually created where I work now is 62nd resets. It's a simple video. Could be of a rainforest. It could be of a hummingbird, but you do your breathing to it, because everybody runs into a meeting having done 1000 things beforehand, to take 60 seconds to ground everybody and say, right, what are we here for now? Makes for so much more of a productive conversation. Again, sometimes it's the simplest things that make the biggest difference.

Hylke Faber 17:27

I was very struck by you. Thank you for this. I was very struck by you saying earlier that the level of distraction is intense. Paraphrasing you, the level of distraction is intense these days. I noticed that in myself too. So look, if you sort of look back and would you say that the level of distraction in the last years, last decade or so, has increased, and if so, what does that require from us as leaders to stay connected and help others to connect.

Simon King 18:04

Yeah, I had some very interesting conversations, particularly with my dad, around what is happening in the world at the moment. And in a way, we're a very lucky generation in that we have had peace for an extended period of time. There is a level of change and conflict in the world now which is definitely increasing. The biggest difference we talk about is social media, the fact that we have more power in our phone now, then had an entire computer occupying a room several decades ago. So the information is immediate, and I don't know about you, Hylke, but it's also very short, sharp bursts. So you can spend time on your phone and you look at something for 10 seconds, something else for 10 seconds. So that ability to really focus and remind is much harder to do, and so for me, it is about, how do you really get the benefits of living but at the same time, recognize the distractions and a time step away from it, whether it's making sure that your phone is switched off overnight, you're not listening to every ping that happens, so you can get a good night's rest that you don't look at it an hour before you go to bed, and you go to bed with all those thoughts in your mind. So I think it's about how you manage yourself, because there's always going to be distractions. You can just choose how you manage them.

Hylke Faber 19:47



That's great. That's great. Yeah, I see that level of of distractedness all around me and in myself as well. I was struck by no THE WORLD NEWS how it happens these days on our phone. Owns. It's almost like being in a real time movie all day long. And when I was a kid, you get the newspaper once a day, and maybe you watch the eight o'clock news and you learn a little bit, but it always felt many more degrees of separation than we have we have today, which to me, calls for more discipline within ourselves and say, Okay, no, I'm not going to do this like it used to be. I don't. I'm not going to pick up the newspaper once, but now today's I'm not going to pick up my phone look at the news or the email or whatever, or the text, whatever it might be going on. So that Okay, so I'm very struck by the first two stories that you told me, Simon, I told us some about your your mother in Sudetenland, and then you with this woman in in the hospital, and I can tell from having observed and worked with you the last 15 years that there's something very deep in you that propels you forward. So can you tell us, as a leader, what moves you?

Simon King 21:13

That's a that's a really big question. Hylke, so I do my best to share my reflections. What really moves me is when I see an individual have this insight that they can do more than they ever thought they could do. Then imagine multiplying that to a team, realizing that together, not only can do can they do more than they can do individually, but they can do more as a team. Then imagine that multiplying to 10 teams, and then imagine that applying to an entire organization. What moves me and what I've had the privilege to be part of, is starting with an individual, a team, an organization, with a mindset or belief that perhaps they can't achieve everything they want to, and then in the course of the journey, seeing them achieve far more than they ever thought. That's what really moves me. And if I if I make that more specific in each of the three companies I've worked for, it's been the ability to bring new medicines, which have changed the standard of care, to patients, and I can connect that back to both individuals that had such a depth of insight that no one else had diverse teams coming together, having really robust conversations, disagreeing with each other, trying things out, failing many times, and then succeeding to eventually arrive at success. That's what moves me. That's

Hylke Faber 22:57

beautifully said. So this sense of I really want to help people be their best and maybe even dig deeper and find things in themselves that they might not have found possible or thought possible, and then they do it anyway, and also bring the teams together to create things together that they might not have been able to do it by themselves. So the question I have for you, Simon is so the best wisdom is often hard won. So tell us about experiences you've had where you might have had doubt whether you're able to actually do this and and how you maybe overcame that. How you move through that?

Simon King 23:44

Let me use a recent example of COVID. And I think everybody has been through this. You remember the early 2020s there was something happening across the world. It seemed to be getting closer to home. And then I think if you look back, March the 13th ended up being a pivotal day, which is when most companies went virtual. And I remember the week beforehand thinking about, how do we balance



health of our employees? What's happening? When do we make the decision? And we we had a small team working together as a team. We said that too much had happened, so we should go virtual. And so our entire company went from being in the office to working at home, and then it's that moment of like, what do we do now? There isn't a playbook, there isn't a consultant. So you can go to say, okay, you've been through this many times. No one had been through this before, and so at that point, I had self doubts. So you think, Well, how would I manage this intuitively? So what we said is we. To be re grounded on our principles. So how will we manage through this? And we had four guiding principles. Number one is, we're going to trust every one of our employees. Number two is, patients are paramount. How do we make sure that we safeguard the supply of medicines to patients. Number two was people safety. How do we make sure we don't put anybody in harm's way? And number three was fiscal responsibility, because without the resources and finances, you actually can't continue to operate. Then it was that's good, but what do we do practically? And we said, if we trust our employees, they probably have the answers. So our first action was to call an all employee meeting and just be very say, Look, we have not faced this situation before. It's scary. We don't know how long it's going to go on for. It's best that you're at home, but we're going to need your help, because we actually don't have all the answers, so we really need you, and we're going to meet with you every week to figure our way through this together. And I always remember one of our colleagues bravely raised their hand on a big old employee meeting and said, Thank you for saying that I'm now sitting on my washing machine in my laundry room. How am I going to manage for the coming months? And it's like that's such a good point. So we did a simple thing, like an office stipend so people could set up their home office. And we came through that journey with high levels of engagement, all our people being safe and actually higher productivity. And so for me, that was a case where I really did not know how to achieve it. To go back to what's important, those principles, that conversation, and I give credit to our employees, it's their ideas and thinking that us listening to are able to act upon, helped us truly manage through that. So that's the example that comes to mind. Most recently,

Hylke Faber 27:13

I'm so struck that somebody that I know like you, who is very irrational and also very human, but somebody's very like has very good ratio, is able to say, I'm going to trust my intuition, and I'm going to trust the people around me, and I'm going to grab myself and those four values, the first one being, you know, trusting Our people, trusting our people, that, to me, is so both obvious and revolutionary. So tell us, why did you choose that first principle that's very interesting to me, that you chose that

Simon King 27:56

I had had so many conversations with colleagues, so I knew that people were dealing with having kindergarteners that they would have to homeschool, having second or third graders they would have to homeschool, having dependents that were in care or lived far away, having colleagues who worked in the service industry whose jobs were disappearing, and what I saw in those conversations was they weren't complaining. They were simply saying, This is what I need to manage. And the insight I had was that if it was me, I would want to be trusted, and if you trust me, I am going to give you more than if you mandate or you set rules. And so it was that connection to colleagues I've been talking to, plus



really thinking about what would be important to me, that allowed us to take that approach. And it wasn't just me, it was the team we had around us. The most scary thing is you give up control, because you essentially put in success in the hands of all colleagues. And I have to say, Everybody played their part to come through the other side. And the thing that's intriguing to me is the pandemic was one thing, nothing changes after the pandemic. So as we manage our business now, we still have the same four values. We trust our colleagues, we make sure we want to get medicines to patients. We make sure that we're growing, developing and having the safety of our people, and then making sure that we are fiscally responsible.

Hylke Faber 29:39

We're going to take a break. In a moment after the break, I want to talk a little bit more about this idea of trusting, and how do you work with people who may not be trusting of themselves and others, especially because trust is such a high. Good. And you know, when I look around and even within myself, I think that's one of our number one disconnectors, that we don't trust ourselves and we don't trust each other. We instead try to judge, and, as you said, try to control. So we're going to come back after the break. I'm talking with Simon King, a 30 year Chief Officer, Chief People Officer now, not for 30 years, but chief leader in industry of biopharma and helping people to connect more deeply to their authentic selves. We've had a conversation. One thing that already struck me from this conversation is, what happens when you stay very, very grounded to your purpose. How that frees your mind up to actually be wise. See you after the break,

Presenter 30:52

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Hylke Faber 31:17

Welcome back to root and wavering. I'm speaking with Simon King, chief people officer, an industry veteran. And this, this idea of trust still is galloping through my mind, Simon because from my perspective, we live in times where trust between us is very low in society, and I see this in companies and teams and often that's that's the place to do the real work. So I think you sharing some wisdom and some insights about how you work and how to increase trust. How do you how do you do that will be very valuable. So, so tell us about maybe an experience you've had where you may not have trusted yourself, or you may not have trusted somebody else, and what did you learn from that?

Simon King 32:07

Yeah, that's a really good question. Hylke, give the example of one of my this organizations, where the CEO actually came to myself and a colleague and said, I really need to help. I really need you to help me ensure that we truly transform a particular part of the organization. And I can remember walking away from that conversation, which happened just after dinner one evening, going, I've just said yes to



something that I have no idea how to do, and I'm not sure that I trust myself to be able to go and move it forwards. What I found then that I relied upon was when I've been asked to do it. So clearly, somebody else has a perspective that this is something that I can do. So I don't know if I'm going to succeed. Maybe I fail miserably, but what I am going to do is do my best every single day, and we'll see where it goes and what I found with that perspective is you don't make it into a really big problem. You put it into a day by day approach, and then day by day, you learn more. You build different perspectives. You try things out. Some things do fail, if you are leading change and things don't fail, you're probably not pushing hard enough. And it was really through that day by day approach that I took myself into taking action, and at the end of the day, it was hugely successful. And as a result, value still being created today, particularly for patients,

Hylke Faber 34:01

very struck by after dinner conversation. Can I do this then staying in the moment day to day, and anchoring in this intention of, I'm going to do my best. I am going to do my best. So doing your best. Simon, what does that look like today? What does that look like today? How do you know or how do you gather yourself to do your best? How do you do your best?

Simon King 34:32

A leader that I respected said that early in his career, his manager said, I'm going to give you one piece of advice about working, show up to work every day. And the lead I was speaking to said That's the most ridiculous comment, like show up to work every day. Of course, I'm going to show up to work every day. And it said it took him probably about 10 years to realize what this very wise manager meant, which is, don't just. Go to work, but show up to work, be willing to try new things. Be willing to make mistakes. So for me, when I'm at my best, it doesn't necessarily mean that I have achieved the greatest outcome, or I've had the most inspirational thought, or I've managed to express something that nobody has been able to say. It's an internal feeling that I can say to myself, did I try my hardest and Did I push myself slightly beyond my boundaries? When I do that, I know that I'm operating my best

Hylke Faber 35:40

and then working with people around you, I'm still thinking about the experience of COVID and march 13, where you start this process of working remotely, practicing trusting people. How do you remind yourself to trust people? Because people don't always do what you wanted to

Simon King 36:10

do. That's true. I think it's the vast majority. And by vast majority I mean 90 plus percent of people, when given trust, will act with trust. And you can have very different beliefs. You can have very different views about the way that things get done. But when you have that trust given to you, the vast majority of people will respond positively. Then you do have individuals who maybe don't respect that trust, but then that's really important to have that open and very direct conversation and provide the feedback and what it means. So what I've found is that once you free yourself up to give trust, you're willing to



lose some control, you get back so much more and then, yes, you can have some very challenging situations, which you'll have to manage directly and with courage.

Hylke Faber 37:10

So how do you practice trusting people while you give them tough feedback? How do you do that?

Simon King 37:19

For me, it's all about intent, which is, you have to check your intent before the conversation. So is my intent here to help this person become more trusting, and by giving this feedback, I'm able to do that, or is my intent just because I'm fed up, or I'm annoyed, and I'm going to share it. So for me, it is that mindset that you have before the conversation that you have to check your intent and make sure that you walk into that conversation or that Zoom meeting with the intent that you want to have. It's so easy these days. Just walk around, not checking your intent. You just show up with however you are. But the more that you can practice that, I think, the better you become

Hylke Faber 38:09

a team. Now you're a busy man, so you have multiple meetings, I presume, often back to back, knowing you a little bit and knowing how C level executives often operate. So how do you make sure you're staying your intent, going from meeting to meeting?

Simon King 38:32

And it is interesting, particularly when you work in the global world. So Daiichi Sankey that I'm with now is a Japanese company, so we have a 13 to 14 hour time difference, which means you have many early morning meetings and evening meetings. So you just have to adjust to say that you're going to be there for those key meetings and maybe you're take a break in the middle of the day. What I have learned, though is that it doesn't take much to set your intent. It's probably five to 10 seconds. So what I used to do early in my career is you'd flow from meeting to meeting. You would deal with the topic. What I really try and practice now is, before I go into any conversation, breathe, check by intent, show up and be fully present. And then at the end of that conversation, do the opposite. You stop, you do 10 seconds of reflection, and then you get ready for the next one. It doesn't take a lot of time, but the difference is that you can show up in the way that you want to show up for each meeting, even if you have 10 or 12 meetings in a day. Now, do I do that 100% of the time? No, do I do it the majority of the time? I've got much better at it. Okay, you're not perfect, but you're doing not yet particularly. Speak to my wife, she'll be able to definitely confirm that. Yeah. It. That's

Hylke Faber 40:00

brilliant. So this sense of I am choosing this I'm very struck by this practice of also breathing and being present at the very end, letting it go so I'm can be present for the next one. I love that practice. And what I'm curious about is, how does how? How would you talk to a person who you see is not trusting themselves and others? Like, how would you help them? Because I see this as a very common you



could say mindset like, yeah. Like, I can try to control people over trusting them. So how do you help people like that?

Simon King 40:46

So there's an interview I'm thinking about who is probably one of my biggest success stories, and they were somebody who I saw had excellent skills, much more than I thought they had, but they weren't confident to express or sometimes just try it out. So I saw that in the individual, and I really had a conversation about what's important to them and also what experiences have truly shaped their life and the way that they think. Now, when were they that? When were they at their happiest? When have they felt most fulfilled? And what were the conditions and then given where you are now. How does it feel that then gives you the chance to really connect deeply to what's important to someone, but also gives you a chance to understand what's in the current environment that may be taking them off their game. And I described this as if it was one conversation. It was over multiple months. I saw this person fly, and they took on projects that nobody else thought they could go and do. They did them in ways that people thought weren't possible, and achieved really good outcomes. Several years later, they said to me, we thought you were like that person on the antiques roadshow, where somebody brings in this old, battered object they found in the attic, not showing it had value, and then you show the value in it, and it's one of the most valuable things that have been around. That for me is probably the feedback that's meant the most to me in how I try and help individuals. And I do get my greatest energy when I see somebody astound themselves. Love that

Hylke Faber 42:50

helping people to astound themselves, so making sure that we as the listener really get how that happens you ask this person questions that were helping them to visualize, to imagine, what do I need to be my best, right? And how am I? How can I be at my best, and what do I do when I'm at my best? How did that then translate into that person showing up and starting to work differently. What was that process that they went through? And maybe, how did you help them with that?

Simon King 43:27

So it was that coaching and conversation combined with a key project, which was actually for the entire company. And this was a company of 40,000 people, so it wasn't small. And I said, I really believe in you, and I think you can lead this. So I think that was step number one is having had the insight in coaching you need to have something concrete, but then also saying you're not alone on this, because the end of the day, if it fails, it's on me. And so then it was talking through, what do you want to achieve? How will you do that? And going back to the conversation we had earlier, is taking it day by day, week by week, when there were huge successes. You make sure that that person is able to get the credit for it. When something fails, I take personal accountability for why things didn't work, so you build trust as well. The no matter what happens, you've always got their back. And then what I saw month by month was just the willingness to take bigger steps try something different, and this project lasted two or three years. By year two, they really didn't need help and support and were stepping out



themselves. I described it as one off events, but it. Really a journey over a period of time. It's the Insight backed up with concrete action and responsibilities.

Hylke Faber 45:07

And I really hear the sense of you having their back, like, like letting them know I have your back, and not only in fair weather, also when things are not going so well, yeah, and so maybe you can talk a little bit about a situation, maybe in this particular person's situation or project, where things didn't go well, and what did you do to have their back? Because I see that as a very important and also, unfortunately, still quite rare quality, because when things go not so great many people tend to run for the hills and go for their self perceived self interest. So how did you How do you keep having a person's back also, when things go off the rails?

Simon King 45:59

I think my biggest reflection is you have to be comfortable with taking accountability for when things go wrong. And again, I think that's how I have grown as a leader. Is when something goes wrong, you just say, let me just be clear, this went wrong. This is the issue that happens. It's my accountability at the end of the day, and we could have done much better. And it could be a leadership meeting where maybe the wrong recommendation was felt to be made, or the way the conversation was held wasn't in the right way. And sometimes just things go wrong, you make a mistake, and you just have to live with it. It took me the longest time to get comfortable. I always wanted to say, well, actually, you know that person, if they've done their job better, I wouldn't be in this situation or if that person had done it. But what I found is it doesn't really help when you say that there's been a mistake, that you own it and you're willing to take the consequences, that's what people look for, and that's what I've found. And it's, it's, it's scary sometimes, because the consequences can be quite real, either in terms of feedback or prospects, but at the end of the day, once you do that, you know that you have lived to your values and you've done the right thing,

Hylke Faber 47:31

how do you make sure you don't overcompensate? Because you can say, Yes, it's my account about accountability, accountability, and at the same time, this person may have done something of their own accord, of their own choice, that was a major cause of things not working out. So how do you strike that balance of being very direct and clear about what's going on at the same time making sure you have their back and take responsibility yourself. How do you do that?

Simon King 48:02

Publicly? You take accountability privately in a one on one conversation. You give very direct feedback when you did this, this is what the consequence was. This is how you could think about it differently, or there's a different approach. So I find that again, it comes back to trust. If people know that you're going to take the accountability publicly, but you also know that you're going to have a very direct conversation about how you can grow and improve, I find to be often the most effective way. People are very willing to learn on a one on one. But if you then get either shamed or you get critiqued by a



large group when you and you don't have your leaders back, that is really uncomfortable, and you put that experience away and say, right, I'm never doing that again, and then you've just lost somebody with being willing to push the boundaries

Hylke Faber 48:59

so real sense of we're not just being nice here. This is about accountability. 360 so you're going to have accountability with me. I will have accountability with my peers and with my boss, and from there, we will grow but but not going into the trap of shaming or finger pointing or any of that kind of stuff, that derails

Simon King 49:28

it isn't it takes some time, because when you say you're going to do that, you won't always be believed. So my experience is probably a couple of years of doing that consistently, until you see people actually breathe a sigh of relief and then being willing to take risks and be themselves, and you can lose it. If you stop doing that, you'll lose people's trust, just like that.

Hylke Faber 49:55

Very clear. So there's a very strong sense of I have. Your back, also when things go wrong. I'm very struck by this conversation, Simon, that in the beginning, you said strength comes in part from being able to accept myself, faults and all. Now we're going towards the end of this conversation, I'm sensing that strength as a leader and trust as a leader comes from. I'm going to accept you false and all, and I'll be very direct with you. So deep sense of honesty is what I'm hearing.

Simon King 50:32

It is I have never yet met the perfect person. So help, and maybe if you meet them, I would love to be introduced to them, but I've met people with huge talents and faults. I think the worst thing is, when you're not aware of your faults, that's like walking around everybody else is pointing out, but you're not aware, then you can do nothing about it. So it is that deep understanding of what each person brings uniquely allow people to really play to their talents and then provide continuous coaching and feedback around where you can grow and develop. You don't expect people to be outstanding in each of those areas, but surrounding themselves with people that do that, knowing that that's their weakness and they ask for help you get the best out of people

Hylke Faber 51:26

beautiful? What would you say to somebody who is sitting today in their chair and they are having a moment a day or a week or a month, or maybe even a year of really having low trust in themselves. What would you say to

Simon King 51:50

them? They it's okay to sit with that. What I would say, though, is, what is it ask people to reflect? What is it that's that's making you feel that way? And then think back to a time when you haven't felt that way



and you've been at your best, what's different? And if you can then pinpoint what's different, what is one action you can take to start to move in the right direction. You don't have to do a whole journey, but you can take the first step. The other thing is, sometimes you can think about it in your own way, and an outside perspective is so much better. So do you have a colleague, a friend, a family member, who is that person you know is there for you, 100% makes you laugh, but also tells you the truth. Just give him a call and say, I'm really not feeling it today. I just wanted to share

Hylke Faber 52:56

beautiful as we're coming to the end of this conversation, Simon, if you think about what your intentions are for your next decade, can you share to us about that, and maybe in what, in whatever field, what are your intentions?

Simon King 53:17

My intentions won't change. So can I help bring medicines to patients? And can I help people grow and develop? What changes around you is a context. So from working with my company now to bring new medicines to patients, it is how do we continually grow and develop and be able to do that. My kids are now 33, and 30, it's a very different set of conversations from when they're three and six. My son recently got married, and therefore the way in which you interact, the conversations you have are different, but still come from the same place. And so my intent is just to see my family, my friends, my work colleagues enjoy this stage of their life and really bring out from them their best try something different. Life is short. You have to enjoy the journey, not just look at the destination.

Hylke Faber 54:28

Beautiful. I have this experience just listening to you, Simon, that feeling uplifted and strengthened. I can feel that in what you're saying and how you're saying it. It's like, okay, this man is really serious about having your back and trusting no matter what. I think that is a very rare leadership quality, and one that's really important to bring out the best in people. So. So maybe as we get to the close of this conversation, what would you say to a leader? How would you help a leader to learn how to trust others? How would you do that? How would you help a leader to learn how to trust others? Because that's a big journey for most of us.

Simon King 55:19

It starts with trusting yourself. The interestingly, sometimes you do need an external event. The time I learned most about myself was we did an exercise called the lifeline, which is you take your earliest memory and you just put down all the experiences that you can remember until your current time of life, and maybe you'll have 3040, 50, 100 different experiences. It was then going through those and saying, what did they really mean for me that allowed me to land on the two experiences that I shared. So out of all the experiences I've had in my life, those were the ones that I realized had meant the most to me, connected my heart to my head, and made me feel good about who I was, what I wanted to achieve. So I think if there's a leader who doesn't trust themselves or their colleagues around them. It's worth



taking that reflection stop for a moment. Think about what you bring. Think about what's getting in the way, and what is one thing that you could do,

Hylke Faber 56:38

what is it that you want to bring, or what is it that you do bring what gets in the way of that, and what is one thing that you can do? So we've been talking about trust. When Simon trusts himself even more, what is a risk that he takes as a leader,

Simon King 57:06

I think you can get overconfident, and I shared earlier that I am an optimist, so that's something it's easy for me to go and do. When I get too wrapped up in my own thinking and abilities, you start to have a belief in yourself, and you don't think about the downsides. That's when I am likely to make mistakes. So recognizing that now and for me, sometimes it's just slowing down and doing that, thinking about what is the right thing to go and do here, what will it take?

Hylke Faber 57:41

Beautiful Thank you. Simon, summarizing this conversation so many core takeaways, to me, the headline is, trust, trust, trust, trust, trust yourself. Trust your intentions, trust what you are here to do, trust what you trust others, trust that you can find a way to imagine what good looks like, and trust that you can find a way to take the next step and being able to be okay with whatever is happening with you, and then rest back into into that and and all the way doing that in the midst of your busy schedule, breathing deeply, being present and taking those little moments in between meetings, maybe I'll take a breath. Simon, anything else you'd like to say by way of closing today,

Simon King 58:35

just a thank you to my colleagues that are working every single day to break the boundaries of science and medicine, to bring new and innovative approaches to patients. And then my colleagues at show up to work every single day to make a difference. And then, most of all, family and friends who inspire me every single day and give me energy.

Hylke Faber 59:05

Beautiful. Thank you so much, Simon for being such a trusting example of being so empowered and empowering of his community and by his community, it's been such an honor and pleasure to be with you. If you're listening, think about one thing you can take with you to maybe include increase your trust in yourself and your trust in others. What's that one thing? And how can you practice that today? You've been listening to Ruth and unwavering I've been speaking with Simon King, Chief People Officer. And if you like this podcast or this kind of thinking, can find us on Apple Spotify and wherever you get listening to your podcast and see you next time on root and wavering, where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. See you next time. I'm your host, Bucha. Fiber.

Presenter 1:00:06



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