

Corey Andrew Powell (00:02):

I am joined today by Robert Stevenson, one of the most widely sought after speakers in the world as well as a best selling author. Robert was recently ranked number 4 in the world by LinkedIn Thinkers 360 as a change management thought leader and top influencer. Rob, welcome to Motivational Mondays.

Corey Andrew Powell (00:20):

Yes. Yes. Well, it's my pleasure too, because you're an expert in building high performance cultures for organizations, but I began to realize, as I researched you, that so much of what you bring to corporations can be applied to everyday accountability in people's lives as well. So I thought it'd be a great conversation to have with you now. Your current book is called "Raise your line - Success is about a higher line mentality." So we'll get to that, but I wanna talk about your first book, or the previous book, which is, "How to soar like an eagle in a world full of turkeys." <Laugh> So if we can talk about that one first, can you share a little bit about what that book was about and why you wrote it?

Robert Stevenson (00:55):

Well, I'll take the second part of the question first. Uh, why I wrote it when I got into the speaking business, I got into it, that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to speak. I wanted to share, and, um, after every program, people would walk up to me and they'd say, well do you have a book? And I would go, well no" and they would go "Oh." And then someone else would say, do you have a book? — And "No." And, Oh, and No, and Oh, and No, and No and Oh. It just happened over and over again. All of a sudden I got tired of the "Oh's." It's like I didn't have credibility because I didn't have the book.

Robert Stevenson (01:04):

So I said to myself, I'm gonna write a book. And I decided to go to bed about an hour later and get up about an hour earlier for a year and just write, write, and write and write. And, and I wrote the book based on what I wish someone had taught me before I got into business. You know, how can you shorten your learning curve as far as I'm concerned? That's what this is all about. When you buy a book, and you're reading it, you're there to try and learn something. So, how can I shorten my learning curve? So I put together 47 chapters on an array of different topics from stress to sales, to management, to your, you know, your personal situations, uh, of how you can get better at what you do in business.

Robert Stevenson (01:59):

And some of the chapters are, you know, one page, some or several pages. I write the way I speak. So I made it really simple. And people loved the title, How to soar like an eagle in a world full of turkeys.". Everybody can relate to it. In fact, you'll get a kick outta this. When I originally wrote it, my first title was, you know, how to like an Eagle when you're, when you're surrounded by Turkeys. <laugh> yeah, yeah. Now I sent it to several of my friends, before, you know, we got published and I said, what are you thinking? They said, I can't buy the book. And I said, why? And they said, well, if I had it sitting on my desk and, you know, I went and bought it and people then walked up and looked at it, they would go, well, that's what you think of us. When you're surrounded by their immediate people. So I had to change the title. And so that's what I was trying to do is I was trying to shorten the learning curve and it worked. People love the book. It was a bestseller for me. They love the title and, and keep it simple. It's not a hard book to read. It's really easy.

Corey Andrew Powell (02:52):

And then would you say "Raise your line?" Is that a follow up, or does that approach a different thought process when it comes to leadership?

Robert Stevenson (02:59):

I actually approached it from a different thought process because, um, when I wrote, How to soar, I just got into the speaking business and what I do in my programs is I interview people. I don't do generic programs. I don't have a here's my motivational program, or here's my leadership program, or here's my sales program. I interview a lot of people thousand employees, managers, and senior executives at over, you know, at over 250 different industries. And what that helped me with is, you know, when you do it that way, you're talking to a lot of smart people and getting their information from you. So your, materials doesn't stay stale. It stays very fresh, cuz you're constantly asking questions of people and listening to what they had to say. So, when I was doing the follow up book to how to story, and it really wasn't a sequel cause I'm writing, I'm actually writing the sequel right now.

Robert Stevenson (03:49):

I figured based on, the original premise of the Eagle, but when I did "52" —well also another book, "52 Essential Habits for Success." But when I wrote "Raise your line," I wanted to, I have over 100, what I call line raisers. In fact, when you read the book, you kinda flip through it and every one of them's in a box, you know, cause everybody everybody's like, give it to me now, Rob. I mean, you look at Twitter, you look at, you know, Instagram, everything's quick, fast, you know, clips of what I need. And so I base it on, on four different premises. And when you start looking at it, as far as, how is it as a mindset, your personal mindset. You know, how do you need to approach life? How do you need to do it as a leader? Alright? How do you need to do it as a company?

Robert Stevenson (04:32):

And then more importantly, how do you need to do it personally? So it's divided into four sections. And then what I did is when I started talking about the line raisers. You can flip through the book and all you have to do is look at the liners and it'll give you the, the instant thing, do this. Cause a lot of people, that's all they want. They don't, they don't want the minutia in between. They don't need 20 pages of research to say, this is why. They, they just say, you know, you know, it's kinda like right. I interviewed, I put together what they had to say and I put it in there and said there it is. So make it simple. But I think what your people will get a kick out of, is how I came up with the title. Because I was having a real problem, you know, naming the book.

Robert Stevenson (05:15):

And so I called one of my agents and you know, I said, Lisa, I'm having trouble naming the book. I said, you know, you got any suggestions. And she said, Rob, you've done over 2,500 speaking engagements in 16 countries. She said, you talked to a lot of people about a lot of programs. She said, let me ask you this question. She said, if you could leave them with one thought that would make them better. The one most special thought, what's the thought? And I was like going, whoa, that's kinda profound. So I went back and looked at the other books that I had written and all the articles I had written and everything else. I kept coming back to this one article that I had written about my son. Tyler was getting ready to graduate from Florida state. And uh, I said, you know, you're getting ready to come in the business world, Tyler.

Robert Stevenson (06:00):

And he was sitting in my office. I said, how do you go about making decisions? He's my son. I'm a motivational business speaker. I've been speaking his entire life. He's been surrounded by me his entire life. So he's probably gotta come back with something that I've said and I'm gonna be so proud. He regurgitated something I taught him., He, that I taught him. Right. Right. And without any hesitation whatsoever, he looks at me and he says, it's all about raising your line, dad. And I was like, what? I had never said it in my life. And I was like, I said, what? The rules that mean Tyler? He said, life's a line. You're born. You die. It's a line. Now when he finished that one statement I'm going, this is not good. You know, it's a line. And he says, then he follows it up.

Robert Stevenson (06:47):

He says, if you do something good, your line goes up. If you do something bad, your line goes down. He says, why would I ever want my line to go down? And I'm sitting there thinking to myself, wow. A 20 year old, I mean, what a profound statement and what a simple, how to simplify what we're talking about. Say even when you're in business, when you're, when you're in a management meeting and you're getting ready to make a decision, is this gonna make a go up this gonna make, well, you start talking about profits or is this gonna make it go down? Or how's this going to affect it. So every time you're making a decision about yourself on a personal basis, it's gonna make my line move. Now sometimes you gotta steady your line to be flat and that's okay. But once you're finished, are you gonna take it up? Because that's what you need to, you constantly need to be taking it up every time. You constantly need to be learning. So that's why I wrote "Raise your line" and I got the title from my 20 year old.

Corey Andrew Powell (07:38):

Wow. That is profound. I mean, because it's just so simplified. Everything is about like, you know, it's really kind of sad, I guess, in a way, but it's, it's birth and death and it's what we fill in between those two points. Right? And that's a line <laugh>. And so I think that is pretty profound. And I love that you thought he was gonna give you some big philosophical Advice.

Robert Stevenson (08:01):

When you look at it, it was, it's so much similar.

Corey Andrew Powell (08:04):

Yeah. Simplified ideas are much easier to process for people. So, you know, I wanna ask you, well, as I mentioned, so many of your principles can be applied to people. So one of the things I've done in researching to talk to you is I've gone and I looked at some of your live seminars and they are early, uh, entertaining, educational and fun. The way you present your information. So one of the profound things you touched on in one of your seminars that I love was this assessment tool that helps brands understand how to view their competition. And it involves looking at your own company through the eyes of quote, unquote, eyes of your enemy.

Robert Stevenson (08:42):

I got that from Boeing, Boeing, um, built this absolutely fabulous 60 million dollar facility on leadership in St. Louis. Cause I mean, here's a company of multi multibillion dollar organization and um, 300,000 employees. They, they need leaders. And when McDonald Douglas and Boeing merged, they, the two CEOs got together and they said, we got a problem. We need leaders. So they made a huge commitment to build this leadership facility. And I had the opportunity to spend three days with them. And as I said, I'm always going to school on my on my clients, and so when I, I was interviewing Boeing and, and talking to a lot of their people, their future leaders, I learned this concept. What they actually did is they would take four or five or six people within Boeing to bleed Boeing blood. I mean, they're just raw, raw for Boeing. And they'd sit there and say, okay, you guys are spies for the next 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 months, whatever the time, your Spies.

Robert Stevenson (09:36):

And what you're gonna do is you're gonna, you have all the resources available to the organization available to you. What we want you to do is figure out how our competition would take us down. Where are our weak points? Right? So they would get together and they would think about all this stuff. And then they, and then they would come back six months later, then they would report back to 'em. They said, if we were to attack, if we were gonna beat you in the marketplace, this is how we would do it. The eyes of the enemy. So then what they would do is once they put that list together, then they would sit there and say, OK, well, how are we gonna fix this? How are we gonna approach this? What are we gonna do to make this not happen? And so to me, when I look at companies that are out there today and you sit there and talk about how you're gonna beat them, you look at your company through the eyes of the enemy, how do they want to beat you?

Robert Stevenson (10:21):

Uh, like I called the company today and I couldn't get anybody. You're talking about all the technology that we have out there. Well, what am I talking about? I'm talking to a stupid machine. I don't care who you are, a lot of companies today are getting rid of voicemail and they're putting a human on the phone, a novel idea, right? Not only is a human on the phone, a human who's smart because that's the first face that I have of your company. If they pick up the phone and I have someone absolutely brilliant on the phone, and I'm thinking if that person is that good, think of how the rest of the company is. By what happens today? Oh stick them into voicemail, huh? Make 'em type in their question and we'll get back to 'em in a week. So, and so you wonder why your companies fail. That's why they're doing it. So when you look at it from the, I thought, and even though Boeings had some problems, they'll rally back because the culture is right. But when you look at what they said, look at your company through the eyes and the enemy, we all need to.

Corey Andrew Powell (11:15):

That. Well, how I thought that applied to the everyday, which I thought was profound was if I were a young person, you know, our audience, they're the young college age for the most part. And we have a lot of postgraduate people too and alumni. But if I were a young person going out in the world for the first time and I was going after those big jobs and just kind of starting to try to establish myself, I thought I could apply that same principle. I could put myself in the eyes of all the adversity in the world. And what are the reasons why I might fail? What are the reasons why I might not get into that company or why they may not see me in the best light. Is my resume. What it should be are my interview skills, what they should be like, what would take me down in this process? And I thought, oh my gosh, that's such an amazing assessment for a company, but it's also an amazing assessment for people. If we were to apply that filter. So it was just something I thought of. I'm not sure what you think about that.

Robert Stevenson (12:07):

No, I think that's totally correct because when you look at it, when you go out into the marketplace, you do get the opportunity to talk to the people. If you get finally past the gatekeepers of all the HR resume people that are looking at us for certain things. In fact, I had a person ask me one time and had an HR meeting. They said, how do you go about hiring people? Cause I was a business person long before I was ever a speaker. I flabbergasted them. I said, I hire people based

on twinkle. And they're like, uh, what? <Laugh>? And I said, it's, it's in their eyes. If you can get someone that's fired up, I ain't teaching anything you need to know. I mean, Jeff Weiner, CEO of LinkedIn was asked, where, where are people failing? This is LinkedIn. This is looking for jobs. Okay?

Robert Stevenson (12:54):

He says, where are they failing? Soft skills. 15% of your success at a job is based on your hard skills, your technical skills. 85% is based on your soft skills. Can you communicate? Can you look eye to eye? Can you, can you come across with them? Can you listen? So many times people listen to speak and might just listen to speak next. Where you should listen to find out what did they just say before you get in there? So you're totally correct what you look for, your weak points. And in fact, get some of your friends, if I'm doing something wrong, I mean, you have people that won't make eye contact. You have people that—they're so good at tweeting, but they're not at writing.

Corey Andrew Powell (13:35):

Something that you've said as well, which is to go beyond what's expected to be successful. And this is interesting because you know, so many of us are taught, you know, just be good, be good at what you do. And you know, that'll get by. But you're saying there's an importance in going beyond what's expected to be really successful. So share a little bit about that thought, if you wouldn't mind.

Robert Stevenson (13:59):

Well, if I have somebody that's working for me that just, you say, do this and they just do that. Okay. I can get a lot of people. That'll do just that. Right. But who's a person that's gonna become the leader? Who's gonna stand out? Who's gonna be the person that gets there a little bit earlier? Who's gonna stay a little bit later and gonna do just a little bit more? Because what I'm looking for is, I'm looking for your best, not just to get by. Because if we're just a get by the culture of our company will flounder, will lose to our competition. So when I suggest to people, when you're talking to, you know, your students that are out there, when someone gives you a product or a project, do more than they expect. So they kind of go, wow. And then they remember who you are, because it's kinda like, oh, you just got by.

Robert Stevenson (14:44):

If you're just a get by-er, I don't need you. There's too many of them out there. But if you're a person that makes you go, wasn't that a nice touch? Wasn't that a neat thing to do? Wasn't that really special? And then, then the next thing you know, all of a sudden I want you. And people will be talking about you in the organization. So when you're a new student and all of a sudden you get into that new organization, volunteer, all right? Someone says, you gotta anybody who can do this? Sure. You know how to do it? Don't have a clue. <laugh> right? But if you'll teach me, I'm there. I'm your guy. Okay? And then all of a sudden, they go, wow. So, it's a step above. And the next thing you know, they're going, holy cow, I start to count on you. And that's what's gonna separate you from all the other people in the company, the ones who are looking at the clock at five o'clock and they're outta there.

Corey Andrew Powell (15:32):

Right? Yeah. You know, some of the most successful CEOs I've interviewed, they've all had that same story. Whereas someone gave them an opportunity and it was a big one. And they were like, I have no idea what I was doing, but I said, yes. I said, I'll figure it out when I get there, you know?

Robert Stevenson (15:47):

Absolutely. Yeah. You know, can you do that? Sure. And then, and then the next thing you do, you take it to the next level. And then someone says how are you gonna do it? You say, I dunno, but I'm gonna call somebody. I guarantee there's somebody out there, there's a YouTube video on it that's gonna teach me how to do this. <laugh> yeah. And then you deliver. That's the key. That's the person that I'm looking for. I'm looking for the person that wants to go above and beyond.

Corey Andrew Powell (16:09):

You were contacted by a company who had a problem with being a bit fragmented in their existence. They were like, I believe 97 employees. And the whole idea was, you know, they had to try to, to simplify or what their company vision was. Right. They had to have one company vision. So the idea for you was, well, listen, I need to have everyone be asked, what is their sole so vision of the company, right? So you'd kinda get back all their responses. So tell me a little bit about that and what happened with the responses you received when you did ask that question?

Robert Stevenson (16:41):

It was a multi million dollar company. CEO heard me speak before and he called me up and he said, Rob, we're doing a strategic planning session. I'm bringing in 97 of my senior vice presidents from all over the world. And he said, we're fragmented, said, we're all over the place. He said, but I can't prove it to them. He said, can you help me out? I said, absolutely. He said, all right. I said, I said, I need you to send an email. He said, an email is gonna solve this problem? I said, no, sir, an email's gonna identify this problem. He said, you gotta be kidding me. I said, no. And I said, in fact, it's only one sentence. And then he was like, okay, you really got my attention. What's the one sentence? And I said, send this to all 97: What's the most important thing that we need to do to be the most successful company in our industry?

Robert Stevenson (17:24):

What's the most important thing we need to do to be the most successful company in our industry? Send it to all 97. And I said, but my caveat is this. You don't get to answers. He said, what are they not gonna get the answers? I said, I get 'em. I said, I don't want anybody in your company to know what the answers were and how the responses are until we have the meeting. He said, fine with me Rob. And then I'll ask the audience, I'll say, you know, how many ones, how many different ones do you think we got? You'll get so many of em'. 97. And I said, pretty good. I said, but you know, I said, we got 55 different number ones. Now these are the top leaders of the company in a company that does one thing. We got 55 different number ones.

Robert Stevenson (18:05):

We had 42 that agree with some things, but the 55 different number ones was the problem. We're at that proof of fragmentation instantly. I said, we need to have one, not 55 —one. And so what we did the next days is we called it down to the top three. I always like to bring it down to the top three. And then we get everybody to work and come up with the number one. This is where we need to go. And what's interesting is when you start working on the number one, a lot of the other ones fall away. Because you fixed the number one, but when you ask the people, you know, what do we do in our company? So many people can't tell you that answer. They don't know what they do. And it's like students out there, they're sitting there, they're going, you know, what am I gonna do with my life?

Robert Stevenson (18:45):

Well, maybe you don't exactly know that right now. Right? I didn't know when I went to school, when I got out, I started finding things that I got more interested in and more interested in and more interested in. I got better at it, but I was, I was, going forward. All right. So when, when you look at it from that perspective and you know, they were fragmented and now of a sudden we unfragmented. This is where we need to be. And once you get —focus is everything, I mean, look at a magnifying glass and starting to fire. It's the greatest example out there. As far as you wanna get it done, you focus it to that fine pin. And all of a sudden it ignites. You know, I have a dear friend of mine. She is brilliant. And she calls me up to call out the, she shouldn't be doing, she gets too many pokers in the fire.

Robert Stevenson (19:31):

One thing that your students need to learn how to say is no. I'm sorry, I can't do that right now. Or if you wanna do that right now, then what are you gonna eliminate? Cause there's so many things that we need to put together. So we gotta be able to say, no, I can't do that right now. Alright? So she'll come to me and she's talking, I wanna do this. And I wanna do that. I wanna, and so I'll talk her through what's the most important ones to her. And then she goes, oh, just this one. And I said, there we go. If you put all your resources in 15 things, the 15 things won't end up that good.

Corey Andrew Powell (20:05):

Yep. It's so true because we have this society, I think where we all, well, many of us want to please people we wanna say yes to everyone. And I know I'm, I'm, I'm a victim of that too. And that's a, like a fault of myself where I wanna say yes to everyone. And I know I don't have the bandwidth. And I say, yes. And next thing you know, I'm the one who's like not delivering or <laugh> or, you know, it's an uncomfortable situation. So learning to say, no, it's difficult, but it is something that I think really peace of mind and allows you to do higher quality work because you have the time to actually finish a job more efficiently.

Robert Stevenson (20:39):

Well, it's probably my greatest fault as a speaker is I speak too fast. All right. I get so excited in the program. And I have so much that I want to share. It's like, I'm just coming at a rapid fire, but you know, what's interesting. You speak in about three to 400 words a minute but you can hear about 1200. So once they get into it, they don't have a problem following it. And also

I think the excitement keep some into it. But if I could maybe take one less subject out, I had somebody, I had a mentor one time tell me, he says, take one point out. Cause I talk in stories, vignettes. He says, you got seven stories and six. And every once in a while, breathe <laugh> but, but when you look at it, you're trying to figure out, I just wanna get it there. I wanna do that much more, but you gotta be careful on that. Especially when you're, when you're spreading your resources out on you. You just can't get it all done.

Corey Andrew Powell (21:35):

Thank you for listening to Motivational Mondays presented by the National Society of Leadership and Success and available wherever you listen to your favorite podcasts. I'm Corey Andrew Powell. And I'll see you again here next week.