

Alison Dean: (00:09)

TheoremOne is the leading innovation and engineering firm for the Fortune 1000. We design, build, and deliver enterprise-scale technology solutions and are very excited to present the Breakthrough Podcast, an ongoing series where we interview technology leaders to share their experiences and perspectives on what's next in tech.

Alison Dean: (00:38)

Welcome to the Breakthrough. I'm Alison Dean, VP of operations at TheoremOne. Today, we're talking with Tony Dottino, head of the Dottino Consulting Group and the founder of the USA Memory Championship. He has been a key influencer and thought leader in the strategic application of neuroscience to organizational growth through innovation. That's a mouthful. He also worked at IBM for nearly 30 years. He sent me his favorite quote from Leonardo da Vinci, "Everything is connected to everything else." So hello, Tony.

Tony Dottino: (01:11)

Hi, Alison. It is great to be a part of your podcast and I just love your interaction, your energy, enthusiasm. It's contagious and it's what we need in organizations today.

Alison Dean: (1:22)

I appreciate this, Tony. Thank you so much. I'd like to start off by talking about what that quote means to you.

Tony Dottino: (1:28)

I got that quote attending a neuroscience seminar believe it or not. Our brains are connected to our hearts and to our stomachs and to our movements, and it got me to realize that science and logic and emotions are all part of the human package. I think of this often, Alison. I go to a doctor who operates very often, they operate in silos, and organizations operate in departments or units or silos. Yet, when you think of a process or a system, it cuts across those silos and it has to interface for it to connect to one another.

So when I first heard that quote and I thought about, "Gee, it's an interesting thought to say, 'And everything connects to everything else.'" And it was my early stages at IBM where you had to do some work on process management and process innovation. Too often, people talked about their unit, department, or job, and very few realized that was the whole string of how they all connected. I've used that as a framework of thought in that everything does connect to everything else, and how do you get people to operate in that fashion?

So when I think of it going to my own doctors, my brain is connected to my heart, my heart's connected to my brain. We're learning all about the gut and how important your microbiome and your gut that connect

to your brain. We've got to break the silos down and it's not my job and therefore it inhibits us very often. So, I live by that quote so often and I see it operate all the time.

Alison Dean: (3:13)

I think we can do a whole episode on the microbiome, you and I. I want to talk about Dottino Consulting and at what point you knew you wanted to dedicate your life's work to optimizing organizations.

Tony Dottino: (03:15)

In IBM, I was picked as one of the people that were going to work with Phil Crosby and Ed Deming, and Joseph Duran. I was a new person in a finance department and Crosby was big on this thing called cost of quality. So I got anointed that by the CEO, CFO, to go out and do this worldwide study on what was the lack of quality costing the company. So as I began to see that and I began to look at it from a financial point of view, I felt like there was no way we could survive if we continue to operate in the fashion that we had come into our culture.

Tony Dottino: (03:50)

And what I was learning, especially from Deming, is what the Japanese were doing into the auto industries and steel and technologies and how their whole management system was so different than what we operated in. So, as I got to see that, my initial goal was, what can I do to help the IBM company? Because I thought I'd be 50 years at IBM. I never ever thought I'd leave big blue and go start somewhere else and what have you. But in doing that, I attended a seminar being given by an English neuroscientist. This was 1989, he was predicting by the end of the century, more than half of what we thought we knew about the human brain would be proven to be wrong.

Tony Dottino: (04:29)

And I was one of these people that never thought I was using all of my brain, and therefore, I came up with a very simple financial calculation, which is if half of my brain I'm using is wrong, let me find out what the wrong part is and see if I can fix it. That's when I started to read all about what science was learning about human intelligence and how we are creative and how we communicate and how we operate in collaboration with people. Tony Buzan, who was my initial instructor, said, "You've got a gift and you really need to think about leaving IBM."

Tony Dottino: (05:01)

And I first looked at him like, "You're out of your mind. This does not fit my lifetime goals of sitting here and getting the 50-year watch and gold plate career thing." Then my son was working for a consulting firm at the time and he said to me, "Dad, my partners cannot shine your shoes and they charge \$5,000 a day." Between Buzan and my son, Michael, they created a point that I could actually make a difference in

organizations." So what keeps me going is where I can make a difference and people can follow the guidance and the coaching I give, I'm all in.

In fact, so many organizations I've worked with said, "You're like part of the company." And the answer is, as long as I can make that difference and I can see that change the people and how it improves their life so they become the best version of themselves and the organization becomes bigger than it ever thought and better than it ever thought, then I'm all in. I can easily get mold in that, engaged, and committed to it.

Alison Dean: (05:59)

I love it. Okay. Now I want to go even further backward and I want to talk about how you got started at IBM.

Tony Dottino: (06:05:)

My wife at that time got invited to a wedding with one of her AT&T Bell service operators. So we're sitting at a wedding reception and there's a gentleman there that's working for the IBM billing system. He's sitting there to me, he says, "Oh, you're a finance major. IBM's looking for good finance people right now." He said, "Why don't you consider coming to work for IBM?" Now, this is at a time where I'm working for JP Chase, they've got me on an executive accelerator program, and this guy is talking to me about leaving Chase to go interview with IBM. Well, the short story is, I took that interview.

At that time, they were offering a lot more money than I was making at JP Morgan Chase, and I'm like, "Could this really be happening?" I gave my resignation to Chase and off I went. What I loved about IBM is, even though I had almost a 30-year career, I worked in so many different divisions with so many different geographies, it gave me a worldwide perspective of business and economies, which really helped me when I got put onto an IBM project for common financial systems and accounting systems.

Alison Dean: (07:11)

Okay. So, while at IBM, you touched many projects, many processes. I want to talk about some of the memorable ones for you and why they left an impression on you.

Tony Dottino: (07:21)

The first project that really got me from common systems was when I was put on a 12-month task force. Our chairman at the time was saying, "I've just approved over the past few years over \$1 billion of investment. I'm looking for my return and it's not coming." I got put on this task force that was headed by a senior IT executive. So we had to go back to some of the major groups that had set in the requirements for the system. And it was coming out on the other end, which was, there was so much rework that the amount we were spending on rework was more than the amount we'd spent on development.

Tony Dottino: (07:56)

I got to travel through the IBM systems work all over the country. And the senior guy from IT one day, he said, "It's interesting watching you in all these meetings. But what I see is you're always looking for the bad people, like there's somebody bad that caused this to blow up and therefore it's cost us hundreds of millions of dollars. Let me tell you right now, you're looking for the wrong people. Tony, what you'll have to realize in IT and in the world of applications and systems, is it's very often good people trying to do good work that just doesn't have the right guidance and the right direction and so they unconsciously and unwillingly make a lot of mistakes that cause systems not to do what they're supposed to do.

Tony Dottino: (08:39)

And we can trace that back to the early stages of how requirements are laid out and how people have something in their head that they don't clearly spell out and you've got somebody sorting out what those requirements are and trying to fill in those blanks in the interpretation and then they start to build around that. They do their design and then they do their code and then they do their first test. Then as that starts to come out, you start fighting deadlines. And last but not least, everybody wants the sky. So, how people prioritize their IT investments is usually done in a very poor and inefficient manner."

Tony Dottino: (09:14)

There's always this war between finance and IT. So, I'm looking at this and listening to a well-respected IT executive who just taught me so much about systems and requirements saying, "We're looking for the good people." By the way, if you don't put your guns away, nobody's ever going to talk to you and tell you what's really going on. Those are some really valuable lessons, and now I understand neuroscience. If we could have plugged that in during those stages and used some of the tools I learned from the quality disciplines and gurus, what a world of difference it would have made.

Alison Dean: (09:48)

Okay. So, I want you to think back on one of the global efforts. So, you traveled to Hong Kong and to Costa Rica and to Argentina, is there a project that you recall implementing globally and perhaps some of the problems that arose during that time, or if I would have done anything differently perhaps?

Tony Dottino: (10:12)

I love your questions and boy, you're hitting two chords here, but I'm going to take the second chord. As I became more knowledgeable about quality principles and processes and stuff, I became the non-manufacturing expert of process management. Meaning, how do you take process improvement to Kaizen and those types of continuous improvement cycles and how do you apply those to non-manufacturing disciplines? So, once I developed the methodology, which eventually led me to being a part of a team that created Six Sigma, I had that methodology, and the manufacturing quality control people would look at me and say, "Hey, you understand their lingo better than we do."

Tony Dottino: (10:52)

So again, got to go back to Hong Kong and teach this stuff in Hong Kong. I got to go to Japan and teach those in Japan. But what really hit me was when I go to South America. I remember being time in Mexico and working through this quality focus on the business process, meaning how can you streamline processes in a way that would then demand IT support? So, it was like, "Let's not go get IT and then change the process, let's define the process and let IT enable it." That changed my whole thinking. The model we were using at the time is to get IT, get them to change the process, and then we'll get people to like it.

Tony Dottino: (11:32)

We flipped that model. To get people to tell you what their issues are, let them redefine the process in a way that makes sense to your IT folks, and then let them use IT to enable the efficiencies and the effectiveness of what we're trying to create. Getting people to understand that was far easier in foreign countries than it was in the United States. So I became the subject matter expert in non-manufacturing on how to bring these poly-disciplines of Duran and Deming, and Crosby into the white-collar areas and IT became one of my favorite projects because we were spending so much money on investing in systems and we were going to do that with our customers, we were going to do that with our vendors.

Tony Dottino: (12:19)

John Akers had an incredible vision of how IT was going to work with our customers and we were going to do our systems with our vendors and customers and create streamlined processes and break down the silos. We were going to be a market-driven company. I became the go-to person for process improvement, which I then subsequently found through neuroscience we could up that from improvement to innovation. And that brought me to grassroots. How do you get grassroots people to do their own innovation so that it becomes spontaneous and the organizations working all the time with the clients, customers, and vendors, and suppliers?

Tony Dottino: (13:01)

That's what I took away from those experiences, how the world and how we could be different, and then as I left IBM, how could I bring those skills to other organizations so that they could make a difference? I now learned how to do that.

Alison Dean: (13:15)

What do you think the differences are in someone reading one of your books and actually experiencing one of your programs in person or firsthand?

Tony Dottino: (13:26)

I've heard this from a number of leaders and executives. They've said to me over and over again, "When we read your book, it seems so basic and pragmatic. Let me tell you, when I try to live this day by day, this stuff is probably some of the most difficult and complex and challenging stuff to get implemented day by day." So you mentioned about a workshop I do call leadership frameworks. I've developed that through years of coaching with executives, which are frameworks of thinking that I want you to maintain in your brain when you have to make day-to-day decisions.

Tony Dottino: (14:02)

So, what do we need to know about communicating with people so that the intention of a conversation is carried out through the implementation of action? In the book, I talk about the importance of brain to brain communication and you've got to have trust and confidence, but it wasn't until the experience I've shared with people and being in live confrontation or live conversation that I get to see, how do you study this and how do you move about it to get the results you want? For example, what we know today is that a person's resonance and emotions to a given assignment that they're asked to do is crucial to firing up their creativity and innovation.

Tony Dottino: (14:45)

Meaning, if you're not passionate about creating some outcome, then you'll do what it takes to do, but you're not going to go above and beyond. So, when I'm doing an executive workshop and I've got a senior executive in the organization chart sitting there, very few people are really going to tell the boss, "Hey, your fly is open and therefore what you're asking us to do is a little nuts," because they're protecting their flight or fight. This is exactly what happened at IBM. The lower and down you went in the organization, the more you knew about where the snakes and the problems were, but the higher up you went the organization, it got filtered.

I'll never forget one time I went into the president's office and I gave him a poke with a solution and his executive assistant came out and grabbed me and said, "Don't you ever come in here and upset him like that again?" I got boycotted from going back in there to see him again. I went back to this guy later in years and I said, "Do you think that John sitting in Wall Street getting his head hammered was a lot better than me walking into his conference room and upsetting him?" Because if you ask me, watching him on television at that news conference, he certainly did not look like he was a happy soul.

Tony Dottino: (15:58)

I felt then knowing what I learned about the brain, that with John's vision, the IBM company would have been on a whole different pathway. But I didn't know enough in those days on how to get around the bureaucracy and the politics of how people felt they needed to protect the boss.

Alison Dean: (16:16)

Interesting.

Tony Dottino: (16:17)

People say, "I want transparency," until you give it to them. Then they look at you and say, "Oh, so you're the enemy giving me this bad news that I need to poke you back for?" And where we lose the game is it's never personal, it's business. When I start working with a senior executive team, what I'm testing right away is, are they really talking and living transparency, or is it just the buzzword of the year, and therefore when transparency shows up it's, "Who do I kill?" There have been executives I've walked away from because I'm not hanging anybody. I'm looking for good people trying to do good things and then trying to take them, hug them, coach them.

And that's the expansion from the book, which is, how do I find people who will have enough trust that I mean them no harm but I want to teach them something. So, in this transparency conversation, chapter seven, if we do not have a clearly defined definition of the goal in our S, then we sub-optimize our brain and what it creates. And it will create that which it thinks it needs to survive. So, I will spend hours and hours with senior executives really nailing down what is their S? Meaning, what are they defining to themselves and to the organization on what a successful outcome looks like. The S has to have three components.

Tony Dottino: (17:42)

What is the logic behind it and is it rational and sensible? What is the emotional resonance that's got to itself so it stays and it's permanent? Then, in the background, always, always playing the history book. What am I bringing to the table from past experience that's going to cause my feelings or emotions to show themselves? Once you can get those three elements around an S, now whether it's real or it's fake. When I've run out in front of seminars, especially middle management, I often get a comment of, "Well, we know the boss has got the stuff that's really important in the left drawer and we know the stuff that he puts in the right drawer is this ticky marks in political correctness.

Tony Dottino: (18:27)

So when you're asking us to clearly define this S from the boss's perspective, is it coming from his left drawer because we know that's the real deal or is it coming out of his right draw and we know we just got to be politically smart?" If there was a downfall I had in IBM, it was how to survive in the political bureaucracies. What I've learned in the consulting world is you've got to navigate the minefield called the bureaucracy of who's on your team and who's trying to help you and who do you threaten that's going to shoot you whenever they can.

Alison Dean: (18:56)

I also think though, it's the leaders that say they are transparent and they want transparency but they're not necessarily living it when you're being transparent with them.

Tony Dottino: (19:07)

That's correct. I'm sorry to say it's probably nine out of 10. The reason we do that is we don't know how to set up the S. So, what I've said to people trying to give feedback to the higher-ups, if you don't know their S and why it's logical and why they're passionate and what's playing in their history book, you have no grounds and no space to give them feedback. Because in the lack of any of those three elements, the brain will naturally view that as a personal affront to the person you're giving the feedback to, and their natural reaction will be to either avoid you or hit you back.

So take your choice, do you want to be avoided or do you want to be hit? So when I'm coaching people to the higher ups in the feedback systems, I'm coaching them to really test, is the boss really serious about what they're asking you to do, and how important is it to them? one of the problems I've seen in our society today, in business organizations especially, is we don't know how to prioritize what we really need to be doing that's most important. You can't have everything because it's going to delay deadlines and it's going to delay the cost of it. So, you need to learn, how do you prioritize?

If there's one thing I'd done in the hospital world, I've seen a couple of my clients put in new systems and they blow up and they don't do what they want, and then your frontline nurses and doctors, they're all screaming, "Hell, this didn't get me what I wanted. This didn't document my patient results. This isn't on the system." I see this and I say, "Wait a minute. In location A, you wanted this, but location B and C wanted something else, so you got nothing across A, B and C." Who referees that to say, "But here's what we really need that meets the core of what our doctors need and our frontline nurses need and making sure the clinical outcomes that we deliver in the health care to our patients are going to be optimal." Getting a room of people to figure that out is sometimes near impossible.

Alison Dean: (21:09)

Yes, Tony. Yes. I think to even piggyback further on that, once you've done something, it's the change management side of things that then has that secondary layer of needing to push something through. So maybe you get the buy-in from the relevant teams, but then if leadership isn't doing the right intentional messaging, really pushing it forth into the organization, then it also is a bust.

Tony Dottino: (21:35)

You find these two have been around the block a few times. How that messaging then gets communicated through middle management puts what I call the middle management folks in what I call the Oreo cookie. They're getting squeezed on the top and they want to keep their jobs, they're getting pushed from the bottom because of the morale and the engagement of the frontline to carry out the orders, and so middle



management is caught in the cookie. Unfortunately, what they'll do is say one thing going up and another thing going down, and it creates what I call a "we versus them".

Tony Dottino: (22:08)

When I'm talking to my frontline, it's us, we're in this we world, but my boss is pushing on me and they live in the world, we created the vision. How do I survive in the middle of this? It's not until you get all of the leadership to realize it's all of us together and there is no we, or them. When we go to the frontline, there isn't even a we/them with that, it's now your job to effectively communicate within your unit or department exactly what our priorities are and why these priorities are crucial and important. So, one of the things I've seen in the healthcare world is healthcare with Medicare governed by patient satisfaction.

Tony Dottino: (22:51)

So, somebody in Washington, D.C. back in 2012, 2013 time period realized we only want to focus on the clinical outcomes of what doctors and healthcare professionals deliver to patients, but we want their experience to be equally satisfactory. So, we realized in the world of neuroscience that when a patient feels that they can be trusting and confident in the health care they receive, their recovery period is shorter, and therefore, somebody in D.C. and CMS figured out, "Hey, we can save money if we get this patient satisfaction."

But when the guy at the top and the finance people realize that reimbursements are only given to the top 25%, and then you offend the bottom 75 you get penalized, the bottom line folks see that as, it's all about the finances on it, and they go off into this whole horror about these people up at the top, all they want are the numbers. So the conversion that you need to have is you need to get frontline people really telling the boss, "Here's what I need from you to be able to get this to work." We shifted a mindset from, let me tell you why not, to let me tell you how to. And now you're back to neuroscience. When we truly have an S that we are passionate about, it's our emotional brain that keeps the rational brain engaged to figure out the how-to.

Tony Dottino: (24:15)

The biology tells us today, we have infinite thinking capacity to be able to figure out the how-to as long as the passion, excitement, enthusiasm feeds the thinking brain to be creative to figure out the how-to. Then the only other issue that comes into play is, what's the urgency for the how-to? I had a conversation with a healthcare CEO last week, and I looked at him, I said, "Chris, what's the urgency of what you're asking me to do." Then he basically said, "My head is not in a vise over the next six months, but by next year, it may be. So what I need you to do is figure out in the next six to nine months, what are you telling me I need to be doing with my executives and middle managers because I want to be around at the end of 2022."

And you have to build trust and confidence in being able to get people to talk to you so you can figure out how you go about doing these things. What I've learned is, every individual is diverse in their life experience, and therefore, how they approach their situations is going to be different for every individual.

Fortunately now, I've been at this for almost 30 years and one of my dear mentors at IBM was one of the top psychology instructional design people in the country and he taught me one simple lesson, watch for people's behaviors. When you see it in the pattern of threes, now you start to pay attention.

Tony Dottino: (25:42)

The neuroscience reveals that when our brain sees something for the first time, it checks that off as maybe and that just might've been circumstances. When it sees something for a second time, it says, "Gee, I think I've seen this before. Let me see if it happens again." And when I see it a third time, the brain says, "This is a pattern. I need to pay attention to the behaviors of what's driving this outcome or this action." That's what I learned so that when I'm looking at things, I look for the patterns of, is this happening three times? Did this boss tick you off three times or was this just a one-off?

Tony Dottino: (26:22)

It's a one-off, you know what? You and he just banged in, or you and she just banged into one another by accident that day, don't take it personally. But if somebody can say to me, "Well, this happened on this day and this happened on the second, this happened the third time," we have a systemic issue that we now have to dig into, and let's figure out how to bump the thought process to create a new chain of thinking and behaviors. In my IBM leadership classes, I was taught by Peter Drucker. Drucker taught us great leaders know how to ask great questions at the right moment they need to be asked. Now I go do the brain research, our brain craves completeness.

Tony Dottino: (27:05)

When given incomplete scenarios, it will work on building what the answers are to those scenarios. Drucker says, "Great questions," the brain says, "Fill in the blanks." What do questions do to a brain? It raises a blank. So, great leaders know how to ask great questions, but Drucker never taught us how to make that happen and how it connected to the creative process. So, one of the great things that I did as a leader, an executive at IBM, was I always used my primary role of asking people questions. My boss one time said, "You didn't get the promotion because all you do is ask questions."

He looked at me, I said, "But I get the results." He said, "Your results are impeccable, but we're looking for somebody who knows the technology not somebody who knows how to ask questions." If there's anything I would leave with our conversation is, in today's world, especially as we've gotten into service, it's not just the process outcomes we got to deliver, but it's the people that are interfacing with it have to come out liking it.

Alison Dean: (28:08)

So, the Dottino Group is currently strategically allied with MIT's McGovern Brain Institute in the joint development of neuroscience-based training and development programs for organizations. So, I'm curious what is being discovered as it relates to social media's impact on the brain. Because obviously, when you

started your career, the level of technology infused into daily life is nothing like it is today. We're being bombarded with so many different layers of electricity and energy. So, I'm curious, what's coming out of MIT, what's coming out of your group as it relates to all these different technologies impacting how our brains work?

Tony Dottino: (28:52)

Peter Drucker, the questions people ask generate the energy enthusiasm, and you ask great questions, so you generate my energy enthusiasm in a very natural way.

Alison Dean: (29:02)

Thank you.

Tony Dottino: (29:02)

It's very intimate in terms of our dialogue. So let's go to that. I got to meet this neuroscientist in the MIT Cambridge, Massachusetts institution as a result of the USA Memory Championship. I founded the USA Memory Championship in 1997 with the purpose of sharing with people there was so much more we could do with our brain than we ever thought possible. At that time, people were most worried about Alzheimer's, cognitive decline, dementia. Technology was revealing a whole new world of what happens to our brain and the diseases in it. So I founded the US Memory Championship to show people, if you're most worried about your memory, here are some things you could do to maintain your brain health.

I'm going to tie that into what I've learned in the last 20 years and how it fits to social media today. I do a Facebook live three days a week called Live with Tony under the USA Memory Championship. one of the things I've been saying for the last year is social interaction is hard-wired into the human brain that it demands that we have it, or otherwise we start to go off track. As much as social media allows us to communicate as we're doing today, it cannot be the only source for human intervention. We need to have some reality to it, some realness to where we actually get to see people, we actually get to go be with them.

Tony Dottino: (30:27)

Now we have a COVID-19, and so we got to do Zooms. But as I've been reading the science on that, there are predictions that Zoom is going to fall off the cliff to some level if people do not resume some form of social, personal interaction where they're in the same physical space. We are in one of the greatest social experiments that humans have ever been a part of that test the notion of social interaction. Now, to some level, I don't think it's ever going to go away. I think Zoom will be here forever. Social interactions, the Facebooks and Skypes, they're going to be around forever. I don't see them going away for a whole lot of reasons.

Tony Dottino: (31:07)

But if the humans in these transactions don't then supplement that in some other fashion, then there's going to be a problem. So, knowing this, I've maintained sitting on my front porch and watching neighbors drive up and down the street. I go to parks and I watch kids play in the park. I observe at a distance, but I'm engaged in the social interaction. I live here in the world of Magic Kingdom. I'm two miles away from the pixie dust that flies up at the fireworks, which they've stopped obviously for the last year. But what I've said, as soon as they open the gates, they will come. They've been locked down for a year, and now the social wiring of the brain, they're just going to bust out.

Tony Dottino: (31:50)

And social media, to the level that allows us to connect with people as we are today, it's terrific, but if we're not supplementing that somewhere else in our lives and making that connection with real people and real hugs... Studies were done with kids that showed that if kids didn't feel that somebody loved them and they got what we call the hug a day, then their brain development was significantly reduced.

Alison Dean: (32:16)

I believe it.

Tony Dottino: (32:17)

When kids don't get that hug, they begin to withdraw and their brain development is reduced significantly. And you know how they started that? Studying fish in a fish tank. I got to meet the scientist that was doing that thing one day and he said, "Let me tell you where that came from." He says, "We studied fish. We put a fish in a tank and we keep him isolated and we'd see what would happen to their life expectancy." So, what's happening today? If we feel isolated and we feel lonely and we feel disconnected from people, we begin to lose life expectancy and we begin to lose our brain cells.

Tony Dottino: (32:50)

I'm working now with Michael, it's called the Six Key Factors of Brain Health they've really hammered on social interaction and what the science is revealing. That does not mean we should stop Facebooking and we should stop doing all the social media aspects. But what we have to realize and be proactive about is, how do we complement those interactions in some capacity? In my life over the last month, I got my two vaccine shots, so at least I now go into the front of a grocery store and pick up the New York Post that gets delivered here every morning and I go for the Sunday edition.

I sometimes will sit in the car in the parking lot and just watch people walking in and out. What I learned from my psychology guy, just watch people and see what they're doing. So I am on with neuroscience at

McGovern Brain Institute on a regular basis, and through that connection, we got connected to Columbia and Princeton universities.

Alison Dean: (33:48)

Wow!

Tony Dottino: (33:49)

And I was on a call Monday of this week. We are launching a project next Monday, the 25th, where we're going to start teaching a pilot group of Columbia College students some of these brain principles and we're going to see in over a three-year period what physiological changes will take place in their brain.

Alison Dean: (34:08)

That's awesome. Then what do you think about the other stuff? So EMS and 4G and 5G and how that affects the brain. Has there been any work that you've explored on that front?

Tony Dottino: (34:19)

I've not seen any studies that came out on the neuroscience on 5G at this point. But your question is going to poke me enough that tomorrow night, 5:00, MIT, neuroscience, we've got a weekly call, I will ask, "Hey, so what do you know about 5G and what it does and where it goes?" So, if I learn anything, I'll let you know. Even if it's a blank, I'll say, "Nothing that I got for you." But I got to tell you, I'm connected to three of the top neuroscience institutions in the country and that's how we got this grant that was approved that we are going to do.

Now they've come back and said, "When we get to October of 2021, we want you to go for a five-year study because what you're doing is powerful." Michael is working on of course, how do you become a super learner? Because he's been coaching people one-on-one to pass the Agile exam. So he actually coached a stroke patient who's an IT guy and his wife finds me on the street one day and I said, "Where's James been?" She tells me he had a stroke and she's like, "Tony, I've been through every medical person, I've been on the web. I don't know anything I can do to help him with his brain function. They're helping with his skills and his speech, but nothing with his thinking."

And I said, "Do you know what I do?" And she said, "No, I really don't. I know you're a nice neighbor and we say hello." And I tell her, "I saw you offered up Michael to go teach him." Took him a year, he took the first part of Agile, passed it on his first go.

Alison Dean: (35:40)

That's amazing.

Tony Dottino: (35:41)

But his wife calls my son the miracle worker sent by God.

Alison Dean: (35:44)

Wow! That's a great story.

Tony Dottino: (35:46)

It's the fundamentals of, how does our brain work? What are the cells that are in it? How do you enliven these? And what are the factors that make a difference? I love your questions because it tells me you're engaged in the way you can make a difference in your audience and bring to them that one little factor that can make a world of difference in the outcomes that they get in their lives.

Alison Dean: (36:08)

Yeah. Are there future innovations that you're aware of related to brain technology or optimizing our brains? Is there anything that you've learned about recently?

Tony Dottino: (36:20)

The answer is yes. I'm reflecting on what I've seen at the institutions I've talked about that is public domain.

Alison Dean: (36:25)

Oh, you're like, "I cannot speak to any of this right now."

Tony Dottino: (36:32)

But the answer is yes. I went over to University of Central Florida, they've got an amazing neuroscience department there. And in that neuroscience department, I got to meet some of the fellows that are doing this stuff for the military that are really far out. So I'm in that meeting with them one day and I said to them, "Do you believe that we can transfer our thoughts without speaking, meaning we can just send them out in the universe?" Then one neuroscience looked at me like I just got off of a UFO and she said to me, "That's a great question and we're working on it. We just may not have found the technology that allows us to interrupt those signals. But stay with your thinking on this because there's more to come."

Alison Dean: (37:17)

Wow!

Tony Dottino: (37:18)

So now what does that mean? Let's go back to technology and everything you've been talking about, wifi and stuff. Somewhere in our universe, we can hold up a cell phone and something connects to that cell phone that's not a wire. Our brain is chemistry and electricity. So I meet with scientists that are biologists that study the chemistry and I've met with engineers that study the electrical pulses. When we put those two together, we're going to figure it out. I do this in a very small group of people so they don't think I'm totally crazy. But I'll ask people, "Have you ever picked up the phone and call someone who has said, 'I was just thinking of calling you?'"

Alison Dean: (38:00)

Oh yes, of course. Yes.

Tony Dottino: (38:01)

I happened to be in some place where I raised this point and they looked around the room and said, "Can we take him downstairs?"

Alison Dean: (38:10)

Oh!

Tony Dottino: (38:12)

And I got to go downstairs with this question and I got the option of sitting in a chair with no wires attached, and with whatever this technology was could read my mind and what I was thinking without attaching a thing.

Alison Dean: (38:30)

Was it successful? Did it actually read your mind?

Tony Dottino: (38:32)

So, the study that was now engaged, we had to send a mental athlete, who was a 50-year-old person, to Princeton to put him into something that could literally predict his answers before he gave them with 100% accuracy.

Alison Dean: (38:50)

Wow!

Tony Dottino: (38:51)

This is how we now got to this three-year study. I'm sharing more with you than I ever would have thought on this podcast, but I can tell there is technology that is doing that without the wires and we're now a part of a study that is teaching people stuff and they want to see what the changes are going to be to the physiology of the brain and can they predict answers given to questions that they're going to pose before the answer comes out of somebody's mouth?

Alison Dean: (39:19)

That is something all right. Sounds like we may have to do a 2.0 at some point when that study is over. I have two more questions for you, Tony.

Tony Dottino: (39:27)

Yeah, I'll take them.

Alison Dean: (39:29)

Drew Martin, he's the former CIO at Jack in the Box. He was on the podcast recently and he has this question for you. Should companies get involved in politics?

Tony Dottino: (39:42)

Oh my goodness! My first answer to that is no. Here's the problem I see with this now. Companies have stockholders that are on both sides of the spectrum. So now they choose their allegiance to one side versus the other, and now what do they tell their stockholders in terms of what side they've decided to go to? Now, should companies get involved with the moral fiber of our society and to the values that we espouse that we want in our society? My answer to that question is absolutely yes.

Alison Dean: (40:20)

I take it.

Tony Dottino: (40:21)

I don't think they should be involved in the political parties because you're going to isolate, because so many people today are not listening based on objectivity, but they're listening from emotion and therefore the value system is being destroyed. So, remember the exercise when you were part of the session I did for Ron, we talked about keywords? So, what does integrity mean to you and what does morality mean to you? When I get those definitions, then I get to choose what my values are and how I want to line up to that. Let me go to a brain study. When people have trust and truth, they will play.

Tony Dottino: (40:59)



When people have mistrust or been violated one time in their life, the history book will always play, "I need to be cautious." So, what I teach executives is don't mess with the trust of their employees even one time. Tell them what they need to know, tell them how it may impact them a lot, and tell them you got their back and they will do anything for you in the creative process of human intelligence. But mess with their trust one time and they will shoot at you from the corners of the room when you're not looking.

And when you leave the room, my God, the bullets will fly, but they're flying at your head. So my answer is, as soon as people hear the word politics, they choose sides. The sad part that I've learned in the world of politics is I ask people that I engage with, "Tell me what the top three issues are that would cause you to vote for a particular candidate?" Your companies get involved in this only if they build on the values and the moralities and the integrity of it.

Alison Dean: (42:04)

Right. It makes sense. So, the podcast is called the Breakthrough, so can you speak about a breakthrough that you had recently or a breakthrough that you may have just had?

Tony Dottino: (42:15)

I think the conversations that I'm having with my social circles, I'm open to listening to other people's experiences, they're like history books. My breakthrough is, as a senior, have I so locked into my values and to what I think the real world is like that I've lost some of the perspectives on what really goes on in the real world? So, as I'm watching this stuff on television and some of these different breakouts and I think about, "Gee, I've lived this life, people say, 'You've got incredible wisdom,' but can any of my wisdom be faulty?"

So I've opened up in the last month to conversations with people of diverse background, I've opened myself up to, have I missed the boat somewhere, and have I lived in a dome? So, in my conversation with my New York friend today, he said, "You've been living in that pixie dust a little too long." He said, "I think the answer to your question is you do live in a dome and you need to get back into the real world." I said to him, "Let me tell you what my real world has been. I've worked in hospitals for a number of years, I've worked in different organizations, I've talked to a number of people of different diversities at the frontline and have helped them to grow their lives and have helped them to move to places they never thought possible."

Tony Dottino: (43:36)

I have a Hispanic woman that's now a nurse. She used to clean the hospital rooms, now she's taking care of patients. 50 years old, I gave her the ability and the skill to do something she never thought she could do and she thought she was too old to do. I've taught these principles to people and I've got over 25 years of experience of where the results are proven. What drives me crazy is when I share with people

what these are and I go back to them and say, "Hey, how did that work out?" And people say to me, "Well, I didn't try it because I didn't think it was going to work."

Tony Dottino: (44:12)

How the hell do you ever find out if something's going to work if you don't try it? So when I'm coaching people through to try something that they feel is a risk or may haunt them, I'm keeping it very close to the trunk of the tree because I've got my arms around them. The breakthrough is, when you're trying to change behavior, you got to do it in little steps at a time, because if we're going to take where we are today in a holistic way and try to change it because somebody gets on TV and says, "Let's go make these changes," it's not going to stick.

So, how do we take this and filter it down through and bring it forward to, can we make these little changes and begin to move the patterns and the thinking into a different direction? I'm sorry to say I don't think we have many people in leadership today of any sort that really understand the psychology of bringing change into a culture unless you just slam dunk it and you stuff it down people's throats. I think Jack Welch did a major disservice to GE. Very few people wanted to talk about that and criticize him. But I worked with some presidents that worked for Jack Welch and he was a slam dunk on stuff it down your throat.

Tony Dottino: (45:26)

Look at what happened to Immelt picking that ball up. And as Good to Great author wrote, "It's not full 10 years after they left that you judge the effectiveness of leadership." If you look at what Jack Welch left behind, it's been a disaster, yet he slam dunks. When you try to stuff down people's throats, it may look like it's going to stick, but watch when they turn around and walk into the trees and go see what they've left behind and if they're fine. In my IBM experience, we had a few senior presidents that I had to interface with that were going to be, "I'm just going to tell them what they need to do and they damn well better listen." What I've learned today is if you want to change a culture, that is not the way to do it.

Alison Dean: (46:12)

Right. Okay. How do you want to punctuate this conversation, Tony?

Tony Dottino: (46:15)

I will punctuate this by saying, when any of your audience members are asking people questions, if the person you're asking the question says, "Very interesting, but I really don't give a rip about that answer," you've not generated any thinking. Last story. I watch a VP come into the two staff members and he fires a couple of questions at them about the numbers and it was about system maintenance. And his question

was, is it true that our maintenance costs for the installation of these systems is costing us more than the development of building them? Is it also true that we've got a three-year backlog in our tickets?"

And I happened to be standing there talking to him about one of our process projects. He walks out of the room and the two of them look at one another and said, "Boy, does Joe have some great questions? I don't know who he's going to get those answers from, but I'd be interested to find out what they are." I look at these two guys and I said, "Gentlemen, who do you think he was asking to get him the answers for those questions?" So, great question, but they weren't going to take ownership for it, and therefore, they weren't going to generate. The intelligence of the questions provokes the generation of a conversation that let's hope makes a difference to your audience and provokes them to come back to you with some more questions that you can bring into future podcasts.

Alison Dean: (47:41)

Tony, this has been very delightful and very engaging and I absolutely appreciate all of your incredible wisdom, so I thank you.

Tony Dottino: (47:49)

You're welcome. I have enjoyed this immensely.

Alison Dean: (47:52)

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