

Building Relationships and Empowering Others: Keys to Effective Leadership

Podcast was recorded on 3/2/24

Patrick Lageraaen:

Welcome to another episode of the UB School of Management's Manage-A-Bull Podcast. My name is Patrick Lageraaen and I'm your host along with Eric Raine. Today's guest is Professor Tim Maynes. He has his Bachelor's and Master's in Accounting, but then made the switch to Organizational Behavior earning his PhD. He's the previous faculty director for UB's full-time MBA program, and he teaches the first-year MBA class, Organizational Behavior, as well as other related courses in the school of management. We talk about organizational behavior, the value of an MBA or other graduate-level degree, and then some practical tips for up-and-coming managers and leaders. Professor Tim Maynes. Thanks for being here.

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, thanks for having me, inviting me. It's a pleasure.

Patrick Lageraaen:

Could you please tell us how you got to where you are now, your work history, because it's a little bit interesting how you went from accounting to OB. Could you just explain that?

Tim Maynes:

Yeah. It's not necessarily a traditional path for a lot of people, I think. I earned an undergraduate degree and a master's degree in accounting and spent about five years, a little less than five years working in a CPA firm auditing various financial services companies like banks and small insurance companies and things like that. And it was great work. It just wasn't necessarily for me. When I was trying to decide what to do, I was looking around trying to figure it out. I think all of us do and was having a difficult time figuring out what I wanted it to be. My older brother was a CPA, and so I thought, well just do what he did, and he's a great CPA. He still is one. But some parts of the work weren't necessarily my favorite thing.

And so started thinking about getting a PhD in Organizational Behavior mostly because when I was working in accounting, the part of my work that was most appealing to me had to do with more of the

human side of things, interacting with people and managing teams and mentoring people. And so those kinds of skills and opportunities were what appealed to me the most. And so kind of looking around what studies that. I had also made some observations about, my way of thinking about the world at that point in my life was that if you worked really hard and if you were technically really good at whatever it was that you were doing, engineer, accountant, finance analyst, or something, that if you were supremely good technically and you worked hard, you would get ahead. And what I found though in experience was that that wasn't the full equation.

That was part of the equation for getting ahead and being successful in your career. But I also found that the people skills side of things, we call them behavioral skills, soft skills were equally important and for a variety of reasons. I mean, the higher you go in an organization, the more your work is less about expertise and more it is that you're relying on experts and needing to manage people and work together effectively and so on. I had noticed that, and that also kind of drove my interest in organizational behavior. You can kind of think of organizational behavior, like organizational psychology really has a strong psychological underpinning. That's how I made the pivot over to organizational behavior. And then I got a PhD in Organizational Behavior at Indiana University.

Patrick Lageraen:

You were coming to these conclusions in real life. So looking at a lot of the students in the MBA program, they come from a wide variety of undergraduate degrees, but then you all come into this MBA program and it's sort of designed to bring everybody together. When you just have two degrees in accounting, how do you transition over to something totally different in a PhD program? What's that transition like? Are you learning from square one again?

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, there was a bit of an uphill battle. I would say more than half of people who get a PhD in Organizational Behavior have a Master's degree in something psychology related. A Master's of Industrial Organizational Psychology or a Master's in just straight Psychology or Cognitive Psychology or Sociology or something of that nature. I did have a bit of an uphill climb, many late nights, late nights, getting caught up on literature. The thing that was an advantage to me though was that having worked a little bit, so it was true on sort of the scientific side, I was a little bit behind. I had to do some catching up. Where I was an advantage was that a lot of people that I was working with didn't have experience in the real world. And in business we're interested in applied questions yeah research, but applied

questions. How do we design work so that people are more motivated and engaged and less likely to burn out?

And those kinds of questions, and you can approach them from a theoretical perspective, but if you have worked in the real world, then boy, it really makes it easier to identify research questions that are actually valuable. In that regard, that was an advantage to me to have had some real working experience. And I think it is now when I teach too, because I can talk about the concepts that are a part of the courses I teach in a way that apply to what that first job is going to look like out of the MBA program or whatever it is that comes next for a student.

Patrick Lageraen:

Are you sort of filtering what you're teaching through the lens of that first job?

Tim Maynes:

Oftentimes I am. It depends on the audience I'm talking to. I teach at a variety of different levels. I've taught executive MBA classes in the past and professional MBA classes, so it depends on the audience that I'm working with. But with the MBAs often it is that first what I think about is the first leadership job after the MBA program.

Patrick Lageraen:

Which could be right away. It could be two years after graduation, somewhere around there.

Tim Maynes:

It depends on our student, but it should be no later than five years I would think. Sometimes we have a variety of students in our MBA program. Some come to us with 10 years of work experience and will get a fairly high level position when they leave. And some are coming to us directly out of our undergraduate program. They're really bright intellectually, and the only reason they're not maybe getting that high level leadership position is just because of a lack of experience, and they'll gain that in the coming years. But so within five years at the latest, but most of our students within a couple of years, they're moving into leadership roles.

Patrick Lageraen:

Right.

Eric Raine:

And I know we're going to, as we go through the conversation here, we'll get a little bit more into the course and some of the things that we learned specifically about, but you talk about this timeline of depending on the background of the student and the program, but coming out of the MBA that might be a couple years out to a leadership role. A lot of the things from organizational behavior are very applicable to just team dynamic in general. Whether you're the leader of a team or you're in a position like that, still being part of a team and how to function within the team and make it high performing and then also rising to a leadership position from that is extremely beneficial as well. These are the skills we're learning from a course like what you teach, we're able to apply in our everyday lives and in the professional setting pretty much immediately, which will then obviously parlay into leadership potential and then obviously trying to form your own teams and have impact in that way as well.

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, I appreciate you saying that. I personally think that's true too. And one thing I think that that sets maybe Organizational Behavior apart from other courses that a student would take in an MBA program. Like for example, in finance, the capital asset pricing model is wonderful if you're a financial analyst, but if you're a dad or a mom or working in the community somewhere maybe is not all that valuable to you. But the things we learned in organizational behavior are more broadly applicable, at least in my own experience, they are.

Patrick Lageraen:

They're applicable to life. Yeah, I've applied your six hats things I can't count how many times in the past year.

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, I use it all the time too.

Patrick Lageraen:

Yeah. Okay. So you came from, or you finished the PhD program and then you got hired at UB right away?

Tim Maynes:

Yeah. Yeah. I started here in the summer, June of 2013. This coming summer will be the end of my 11th year, start of the 12th, and it was my first job as a professor.

Patrick Lageraen:

You used to be the MBA faculty director for the full-Time program. What was that like?

Tim Maynes:

It was probably, I was just talking to somebody the other day about this, one of the other faculty in that in the MBA program. It was probably of all the roles that I've had in my life, it was probably the most fulfilling in terms of professional roles and for several reasons. One is I do enjoy teaching because you see the impact of your work, meaning that if you're bringing good content to students, bright students are going to see the value of that and they start applying things and it helps them. That's really fulfilling from that perspective. What I found with being the MBA program director was that the decisions that we're making and we're making decisions about what courses to keep in the MBA program, are we going to add new courses? We made some changes while I was the program director, for example, we brought in an ethics course that is now part of the curriculum for this year as the first year of that ethics course being in place. Really excited about that.

We made another change where those who were wanting to go to work in a field that's STEM related science, technology, engineering, or math, that they could get their MBA degree designated as a STEM degree and really excited about that. Leading initiatives like that that have a direct impact on students and their career success, that was really fulfilling to me to be a part of those kinds of things. I also was involved on the other side of things with students of concern, so students who are maybe struggling with the program and finding ways to support them, to help them get through, or sometimes it's kind of career counseling, helping people recognize that maybe this isn't the career for them, but having the opportunity to mentor in that way was really meaningful as well. Lots of really fun things. And working with the faculty, we have incredible faculty. I mean, the MBA program faculty are among the best.

Eric Raine:

Totally agree. We're very fortunate as students and we've been having these types of conversations with other professors in the core of the MBA program. And I think that that's something that rings true in each of those conversations. And as Patrick and I reflect on our time in the program, it's very evident through the relationships that we build with you as faculty, and it makes for a better opportunity to

learn in the classroom. I think it translates the impact that you talk about is made possible through the way that those relationships are formed. And so we appreciate that.

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, I'm glad to hear that. It's fun to work with these people.

Patrick Lageraaen:

If you want to talk about impact, how about how many people do we know that are doing the STEM designated MBA-

Tim Maynes:

A lot.

Patrick Lageraaen:

... That changes the course of their lives.

Eric Raine:

Especially for international students too, that changes the post-grad.

Patrick Lageraaen:

Yeah, that's huge.

Tim Maynes:

Almost always. They can stay for three years in the U.S. after graduation as opposed to one of the STEM designation. And almost every single time when you go from one year to three years of being able to stay in the U.S., that means a company's willing to hire you because the average amount of time a person stays in a job is three years, so why not hire? And then usually that will lead to a legal path to citizenship a lot of the time. What a transformative thing to be able to come and be a part of the U.S. economy and contribute here. Yeah, I think it's pretty beneficial to them.

Patrick Lageraaen:

Yeah, that's great. Yeah. At UB, what classes do you teach?

Tim Maynes:

Let's see. I teach in the MBA program. I teach Organizational Behavior right now. That's part of the first semester of the core. I can't imagine that changing. Right off the bat, students are in that class and it's involved some of the topics in there, team skills, leading, leadership, motivation, conflict, how to resolve conflicts, so things like that. And then I have taught the same topic, Organizational Behavior at the Professional MBA level, the Executive MBA level. And I'm also teaching a course on leadership, so a bit more specific around leadership ideas at the Executive and PMBA level. And then I also teach in the doctoral program. What I've taught there for the past four or five years is a research methods course. How we go about doing the research that we do in organizational psychology, organizational behavior, which has been a lot of fun too.

Eric Raine:

And then there's also research component to some of the things that you're doing as well. Is that run sort of concurrently or around the times that you're teaching as well? How does that work for you?

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, the research, if I think about the amount of time that I would work in say a given year and have it in buckets of percentages, so 100% of my time and divide that up into sort of a breakdown right now, I would say that my breakdown is about 50 to 60% of my time is research-focused. Maybe 30% of my time is related to teaching. And then the rest of it is doing things for the school in various ways. When I was the Academic Director of the MBA program, that was a little bit different. I did a lot more work for the school and less research and a little bit less teaching, but that's kind of shifted now. Yeah, 50 to 60% of my time is spent on research, and that's just always going on in the background. There's 10 projects that I could be working on at any given moment.

And in fact, I was just yesterday working with a company, local company here that you would know, can't share the details of the company because of confidentiality-

Eric Raine:

Of course.

Tim Maynes:

... But large company, about 4,500 employees. And we are doing a study where we do a training for half of the leadership of the organization. And we did a survey beforehand, kind of a pre-survey. Half of the people will get the training-

Patrick Lageraen:

Two group, pre-post.

Tim Maynes:

Yes, that's exactly right, two group pre-post, half get the training half, and then we'll do the post and see if we drove any differences and leadership skill and ability. And then after we're done with the post survey, we'll actually for fairness reasons, everybody else in the organization will get the training.

Patrick Lageraen:

Interesting.

Tim Maynes:

Ultimately, everybody will get the training, but it'll just be after the survey's done.

Patrick Lageraen:

Yeah. How do you measure that leadership skills after the training?

Tim Maynes:

It'll be that post survey-

Patrick Lageraen:

A survey.

Tim Maynes:

The pre, the post are both surveys.

Patrick Lageraen:

Okay.

Tim Maynes:

And so we ask both the leader, how do you feel about your leadership skill? Has that changed? How do you feel about your leadership identity, like that you see yourself as a leader. And possessing... We're looking at very specific skills that we're trying to train for, but we also ask members of their teams, how are they doing?

Eric Raine:

You're getting a comprehensive look. How does that survey, how is that formulated? I would imagine it has to be in depth enough that you're getting enough differentiation to be able to actually get quantitative analysis out of it while also not having a fatigue or burden put on them or where they're sort of biased towards certain ways of answering and things like that. What does that structure look like and what would it look like for someone taking a survey like that?

Tim Maynes:

Sort of some rules of thumb that I use when doing these kinds of studies. You don't want people taking a survey for a longer than 10 to 12 minutes. And 10 to 12 minutes doesn't seem like it's a long time, but taking a survey, it feels like an eternity. It's like, oh, survey fatigue is a real thing. I shoot for say, 10 to 12 minute survey. That usually means about 75 questions total. And we ask a variety of things in those surveys. And for scientific studies, what would I call it, the standard of excellence for high quality data is really, really, really high. And so the survey questions that we use have to have gone through previous validation work-

Eric Raine:

I see.

Tim Maynes:

... That has been published. All the survey questions that we use have been validated through scientific studies. We plug in a bunch of those depending on what we're trying to measure and assess. And usually it's a collaborative thing. We'll go to work with a company and we'll say, "Okay, well we have an idea of what we'd like to learn, but what would you like to learn about your employees?"

Eric Raine:

And then tailoring it that way.

Tim Maynes:

What's in heads of your employees and what would you like to know that's in their heads that you don't know or potentially don't know? What are some areas where you could see potential improvement? And let's actually see if there's a need there or not. Maybe there's not. Are there areas where there are strengths that you know about but you just can't quantify? Let's help you do that. Let's help you quantify those strengths and celebrate them. We'll ask them questions like that, and then we try to collaborate so that we get something that's valuable to us from a scientific perspective, but then also the companies get something that's valuable to them. In this particular case, the study I've been describing with the organization with 4,500 people in it, and we're training the leaders, we're not charging for any of that. We're going to put about 350 leaders through a training in addition to the two surveys. Overall that's probably about 50 to \$60,000 worth of consulting work that we're doing just so that we can contribute to science.

Eric Raine:

And then that has lasting impact too, as far as the return on investment. With something like that, when you come out of the tail end of it and the implementation phase is complete and you move on from that entity and now you have a lot of this information, what do you do with that? Does that lead to additional research based on subsections of the quantitative analysis that you have? And did this one come from a previous research publication that you worked on that led to this? Or I guess how does something like this come to be?

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, that's a good question. This is the first time that I've done research with this particular organization. They do have a strong connection to the School of Management, meaning that we've common for companies to come and ask us, "Hey, can you provide a training on X or Y or Z topic?" And if we've got expertise in that area, we'll say, "Sure, we'll do it for you." It's usually done for a fee though of some kind of consulting type of a fee. If it's possible to collaborate we prefer that in a research way as opposed to charging a fee.

In this particular instance, they came to us, they had just revised their core value statement and they said, "Look, here's our new core values. We've got four of them and we just have no idea how we're

doing on those. Can you help us?" Well, we said, "Okay, well there's four. That's a lot to try to assess with one survey. Is there one that you really want to focus on?" And they said, "Yeah, there's this one that we really want to focus on." And so we kind of dug into that and expanded it. When we're all done, we will with the project itself that, it's been going on, we started the trainings in February, the beginning of February, and it's been going on for about a month, but all the pre-work has been going on for about a year to get to the point of launching the study itself, and it won't wrap up for another six months ish.

Eric Raine:

That time horizon's pretty, that's significant.

Tim Maynes:

Pretty long. And then the time horizon to write it up and publish it in a journal is probably another four years after that.

Eric Raine:

Wow.

Tim Maynes:

It is a long time horizon. To be a productive researcher, you have to have many studies going on at the same time, essentially.

Eric Raine:

Because they won't come to fruition. They kind of are scattered, right?

Tim Maynes:

Four to six years is the average sort of duration of project. Yeah. It's incredibly fulfilling to work on this stuff because it's like you get to work on stuff that's super interesting that you have a real strong interest in intrinsically and at the same time, it's a long time.

Patrick Lageraen:

It is a long time. Do you enjoy doing the research?

Tim Maynes:

I do, yes.

Patrick Lageraen:

Do you like doing a mix of research and teaching or is one your favorite?

Tim Maynes:

I do. I would say more than most of the research faculty that I know. Most research faculty are really heavily focused in research and they do the teaching as well, but it's maybe not quite as interesting to them. But for me, I find it hard to not be interested in the teaching as well. It's maybe a little harder for me to balance between the two because I do get pulled in and find it to be enjoyable on the teaching side of it.

Eric Raine:

Especially when you're doing things that are happening in real time in the environment, in the economy, proximal to even the university, but the larger impact that that can have. And students are taking your course and they're learning about things that you're teaching them on a foundational level, and then you're tying in your previous experience and you're also tying in real time research that's happening right now. And that mix I think is excellent from a consumer side, on the student side. And I think that that type of thing, when you're able to bring that to the classroom, enhances the things that we're learning about as we go.

Tim Maynes:

Yeah.

Patrick Lageraen:

One of the first year or one of the hallmarks of our first semester of the first year is Corporate Champions. Could you please tell us from your own perspective, what is the Corporate Champions competition?

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, so there's a little history, I don't know if you want the whole history or not, of the Corporate Champions. The current version of it is essentially kind of think of it like a case competition. And so every student that comes into the program will be assigned to a team, usually teams of five to seven

depending on how many students we have in the program. And every team is partnered with a company, an organization in Western New York, typically. Sometimes we have some from outside of Western New York if they have strong alumni connections or whatever but mostly from Western New York. I think it's fair to mention names of the companies. M&T Bank is a really common corporate champion. Rich Products is really common. Delaware North is really common. Moog has been one of our champions. Companies that most students in the area would know, people living in the area would know. Independent Health is another one.

Patrick Lageraen:

Columbus McKinnon.

Tim Maynes:

Columbus McKinnon. And so all students come in, they're put into teams of five to six to seven, and then they're partnered with a corporate, a sponsor, a corporate champion, and then it's like a case competition. They do some work mostly just becoming familiar with the corporate champion, the sponsor. They do some interviews, they do a side visit, hopefully they have a chance to talk to the CEO or some other high-level executives. And so that's kind of one piece of it.

But then the case competition is a case that we've written internally that draws on multiple areas of business and multiple classes from the first semester. In this particular case, it draws on organizational behavior concepts and ideas, it draws on statistics knowledge, and it draws on management communication. Those are three courses in the first semester. And we wrote the case to intentionally draw on things from all of those courses. It's a pretty big project. And so we try to help to chop it down into smaller bits and there's lots of small deliverables along the way. And it ultimately concludes with all of the teams making a presentation on their analysis and recommendations related to the case at the end, which nowadays happens in mid-October toward the end of October.

Eric Raine:

And I think something too to point out that I didn't necessarily know about Corporate Champions coming in as a full-time student, we learn about it and maybe people listening to this episode might be prospective students or people considering the program or on their way into starting, is that there is sort of a differentiation between the first part of Corporate Champions where we're working with our

sponsor and we're maybe doing that site visit or talking to leadership and then there's deliverables based on that. And there's a lot to learn in that experience with that relationship.

But then when you get into more of the hypothetical, the case in doing that competition, it's actually separated from the sponsor and that it's not tied directly to any specific company anymore. It's now a centralized project that everyone's competing on the same case with the same data. And I think that that's really interesting because it blends real-life experience going and talking to people that are in the community and doing things around us in Buffalo for the most part. But then it also ties back in as you're further into the semester where you're getting more out of those courses and now you're really putting, the rubbers meeting the road a little bit, and you're starting to apply those things that you're learning in those three courses that you mentioned, and you're putting it onto information and data that you're translating into an outcome and then presenting on it. It's a lot tied up into one sort of longitudinal project's-

Tim Maynes:

Its a big project.

Eric Raine:

Yeah, for sure.

Tim Maynes:

It's a big project. Maybe I'll give a little bit of the back story here too. I think that might be of interest, but-

Eric Raine:

I think so yeah.

Tim Maynes:

... It originated, gosh, I want to say 2008, 2009 maybe, is when it began. And the way it started was actually we would contact the corporate champions, the partners usually with some alumni in high level positions, CEO, CFO, those kinds of roles. And we would ask them for a project for our students to work on and have it be organizational behavior related. Thinking about leadership development or onboarding employees or these kinds of questions and how to do that more effectively. And part of the

requirement was that students be allowed to gather data through surveys on the questions that they were trying to get answers to. And so we did that for, gosh, I want to say probably the first four or five years that I was teaching in the MBA program. And so I would administer that and have conversations with all the companies and make arrangements for all the projects and just get approval to make sure that we had high quality projects. As you can imagine, sometimes you get projects that really didn't work out. I had to have-

Eric Raine:

It's a learning environment.

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, exactly. And that's something that sometimes the corporate partners, they just don't quite remember from when they were students is that there's a tight timeline for students. We've got three months to get this done, wrap it up, got to give a grade, and so we can't have delays of even a week on things because if you do, then boy, that really puts them in a type, especially with deliverables in other classes and so on. We would do our best job to vet projects. But what we ultimately found was that it was really challenging and not really fair across the students because some students would get really awesome projects even after the vetting and some student teams would not get great projects.

Eric Raine:

The standardization is just not there.

Tim Maynes:

It was just so hard. For example, one year there was a switcheroo that was played on us where we had approved one project and then the company decided they wanted do something else and they basically had the students function as call center employees in their sales department.

Eric Raine:

Oh, wow. This isn't necessarily what we're looking to get out.

Tim Maynes:

We really wanted our students to have more of a leadership type of experience like analyzing data, making decisions and recommendations, like a consulting type of an experience as opposed to they're just working in your call center making calls.

Eric Raine:

Free labor.

Tim Maynes:

That one just didn't work out. Ultimately we made this decision to make it fair for the students across projects that we needed something that was standardized. And we took a consulting project that I had done a live project, kind of like the research project I described, and we took that and took the data and then stripped it back and changed names and these kinds of things to make it anonymous, but it based the case on a real life case, a real case with real data. Getting the same experience that you might get from a high quality Corporate Champions project, but giving that same experience to all of the students as opposed to only a handful. That's kind of the reason we went the other direction. We've kind of gone back and forth over the years. We go back to a live project because that's really got some appealing elements to it like interacting with clients, that's a really important skill to learn, but we've kind of stayed where we are just because of that fairness issue. That's kind of where we've landed on it.

Eric Raine:

And then also not losing that as well because it's kind of two part and the fact that we have those site visits and we interact, I mean Patrick and I were on the same Corporate Champions team and we really enjoyed going and visiting the client or our sponsor and then meeting with leadership and for our personal experience, they tailored that to our interests. They sort of asked the team members, what areas are you interested in learning more about? And then they gave us interview, one-on-one opportunities to speak with high level leadership in those respective areas. And it made for an amazing experience. And then from there we were able to then turn and focus on the project and we were able to tie things in that we learned from the company specific experience into how do we apply it to this case. And so having both, I think it's a great blend of the two. And it also, like you mentioned, provides that standardized approach, so it's a little bit more, it's easier to administer and there's less variability.

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, we've actually, I know the students you were mentioning this site visit and how enjoyable that was, we get that from a lot of students saying they really enjoy the side visits, especially when you have a company that does it well like you described, where they set you up with interviews with people that where maybe it's a role that you could see yourself in 10 to 15 years or something and or our high level executives, CEOs sometimes will be a part of the interview-

Patrick Lageraen:

Or maybe an industry that you didn't really know much about or you didn't know was out there.

Tim Maynes:

... You learned a lot and you learn a lot. There's some great things about it. We've actually been talking recently, nothing set in stone yet, but we've been talking about can we expand that site visit experience so you're not just visit one company, but maybe you get to visit multiple companies. Say we have 15 companies sign up to be champions. Well can we expand the side visits so that you get to attend three of them or something-

Eric Raine:

Interesting.

Tim Maynes:

... Just so there's more exposure that way because I think that exposure is really great and our students love it too. And then the corporate champions actually quite like it. They see themselves as, one reason they'll send CEOs and CFOs and things to meet with students is because they're trying to hire our students, and so they want to put their best foot forward. It's a win-win if we can make that happen.

Eric Raine:

It's a networking opportunity in and of itself just by way of executing on the deliverables and going through the project steps in and of itself provides these sort of-

Tim Maynes:

Touch points.

Eric Raine:

... Outside, touch points, outside benefits and things like that for both sides. I mean, we love the Corporate Champions project. We're glad to hear that. Obviously there's some changes happening and the way that the curriculum's set-up and like you mentioned the timeline on certain courses and things like that, but certain components of the program that remain and as much as they might adjust, you're still really getting that core experience out of it, which is great.

Tim Maynes:

And we're keeping the cup.

Eric Raine:

I love that. I don't know, some of the listeners might not know, but if you want to talk about that-

Tim Maynes:

I should elaborate on that a little bit.

Eric Raine:

Yeah, absolutely.

Tim Maynes:

Let's see. I'm trying to remember when we actually decided to do this. I think it was 2017 was the first year, but because we went to a standardized sort of a case, we felt like we could award a winner, an overall best performer. And so then we choose a winner of the cup every year, a team that does the best as a team presenting sort of their final result. And then we engrave the names on the base of the cup. Think of the Stanley Cup only not that big.

Eric Raine:

One day will be.

Tim Maynes:

If we have multiple layers to it. And like a gold cup and then on the base of it's a wood base. There are little name plates that are put on there, and we engrave the names of the members of the winning team on the sides of the base. That goes back to 2017. We want to keep that going.

Eric Raine:

I love that. You have that chance to really stamp your name into history and it's a legacy thing and it provides that extra layer of competition because the competition is what I think really makes it even better because there's so much to learn from a project like that. But when you know that you're side by side with your peers who are also high performers or are competitive in and of themselves, it makes for a different dynamic-

Patrick Lageraen:

Theory. What are they thinking?

Eric Raine:

Yeah, it's a lot of fun.

Patrick Lageraen:

It also motivates people to not share their answers with other teams. Yeah. It's such a cool case study. And I just want to clarify something about it because it's so unique. And so, I mean, correct me if I'm wrong, but the overall lens of the case study is what teaches the OB concepts and then the analysis of the data is what teaches the statistics skills, but then the deliverables is how you apply the communication skills, and that's how it ties in the three classes.

Tim Maynes:

Yep. Yeah, that's exactly how we sort of think about it. Yeah, I think it definitely does that.

Eric Raine:

Especially with the presentation in the end too, because you're giving a very professional, highly incorporated, and comprehensive pitch at the end to say, "Here's what we found in the data, here's why we think it matters. Here's some of the things you might not have known, but you can now shine light on, and here's how you fix those things too." Because that's the other part of it is what do you do with that information? And so doing all of that and then also needing to actually portray that in a fixed timeframe in a way that's really highly impactful. It's pretty challenging, especially because doing it all in the first portion of your first semester of MBA, so you're really kind of thrown into it, but what better way to implement it as far as the timeline goes?

Tim Maynes:

This year, the way that the program is designed right now, you have a one-week orientation at the beginning. We call it MBA Advantage, and on the last day you have a lunch with your corporate champion that you've been assigned to, and they usually have a representative or two people there during the lunch. When lunch was over and the corporate champions were saying goodbye, Professor Rogers and I stood up at the podium, put the microphone and said, "And by the way, we're here to give you your first assignment." And then we handed out the Corporate Champions case right there.

Patrick Lageraen:

Right there-

Eric Raine:

Haven't even really had your first day of class.

Patrick Lageraen:

Haven't even had class yet.

Eric Raine:

Wow. That can be a little intimidating. But at the same time, it's a great way to start really incorporating things from the classroom right into a project that you already have from day zero essentially.

Tim Maynes:

And the effort or the idea was to capitalize on that enthusiasm. When you're beginning the program, there's so much excitement for starting this new phase and a graduate degree. This is probably the last time I'm going to be in school. I want to take the most out of it that I can. I think most students come with that feeling and sometimes it takes us three or four weeks to get into some meaty stuff. They're kind of waiting for it. Now we don't wait anymore.

Patrick Lageraen:

Yeah, here you go. I like it. Just because a lot of our listeners may be prospective students, is Corporate Champions unique to UB? Do other MBA programs have something similar?

Tim Maynes:

I have not seen anything exactly like what we do here. I've seen some other types of things that are done in the first semester project-wise, but nothing quite like what we do here and not as cross-disciplinary. I think that cross-disciplinary part or element to it, meaning you draw on statistics and organizational behavior and your management communication course, all of those, you have to draw them together. In the working world that's how you do things, these aren't siloed and separate. These are things we work together, they all come together on the same projects. And so I've not seen such an integration approach to a project, especially in the first semester. I think that's really valuable and a differentiator for us.

Patrick Lageraen:

I think so too. Coming back to what students learn in the first semester or yeah, the first semester of organizational behavior, we touched on it a little bit, but why do you think what they learned is important? Why is it valuable for their future careers?

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, so I think all faculty probably do do this, but as I was preparing the course, I'm giving some thought to what are the skills that students are going to need to as rapidly as they can as soon as they get out of the program so they can step in and contribute, be members of teams, function at a high level, be spotted for promotions, and those kinds of things. And so that's kind of the lens I was thinking about when I was designing the course and looking at research data on what are the areas that MBA programs are deficient in, what are things that we're not providing that are really needed? What are companies saying they want in an MBA graduate, but but they're not getting? Thinking about those kinds of things and designing the course. Ultimately where I ended up was thinking about that first promotion that you would get after graduating from the MBA program. What does that look like and what do I need to share, knowledge, principles, and concepts that will help a person advance quickly into that first leadership role and be successful when they get there?

I share in class, and this has generally been true and been observed for a number of years now, that most people, more than half, 50%, over 50% of people when they're first promoted, they fail in their first leadership position.

Patrick Lageraen:

What do you mean fail?

Tim Maynes:

Yeah. By fail we mean that they leave the job because they know that they're not measuring up and they're like, this is beyond my capability. And so they quit and they go take something else, or they're asked to take a lateral move out by the company. They're like, you're not able to do this. We really need somebody in there that can do it. We're going to laterally move you out to a role that doesn't require you to lead others or they just get fired. One of those things.

Eric Raine:

Getting to those leadership positions, then some of the things that kind of work into why they got the promotion or how they earned it, but then the gap between achieving it but then being successful in it, what are those gaps? What ends up happening with people that don't have the necessary training or background or understanding of what it takes to excel in that type of role?

Tim Maynes:

Some of what we observe in research, the things that seem to be the most common, I might think about them like derailers, things that prevent us from really stepping in and performing well there, especially in that first one. There's different derailers depending on the level of leadership that you're moving into. Executive level leadership, there's some, there's a different set of contributing factors. But the first leadership role, one of the things right away is what got us promoted typically is technical skill. I'm a financial analyst, a supply chain analyst, or an accountant or something, and I have a set of responsibilities and duties that really don't touch other people's work. I contribute to it, but it's really my own work and I contribute by finishing it and handing it on. And doing that really well, being technically sound at whatever technical job that's being done, that's a different skill set than leadership. Leadership by its very nature implies some level of interpersonal or social skill, managing other people, helping people to feel engaged and a part of what's going on and that they're contributing to something important, that there's purpose in what they're doing. And so that's a different set of skills. There's a famous leadership coach by the name of Marshall Goldsmith, and he has this book that he wrote, and the title of it is really catchy, What Got You Here Won't Get You There. And he's talking about that transition into a leadership role and the technical skill, the thing that got you here, is not going to get you the rest of the way up the corporate ladder. That what's going to get you the rest of the way up there is learning a new set of skills, and it has to do with leadership and it has to do with managing other

people, motivating people, helping them feel engaged and these kinds of things. I forgot the thread of the question though, so my apologies.

Eric Raine:

Going off of that though. This is my personal opinion, but while we have you here, I've said this before and I'll continue to say this and stand by it, is that I think organizational behavior in and of itself is the most important and most impactful component of the MBA program for me personally. And the reason I say that is because a lot of the other courses teach you about technical skill and you can learn a lot about certain things that are very important and are very impactful to jobs that you might be taking after leaving the MBA program. But none of those courses will always be present in everything you're doing.

But with organizational behavior, it's always there. No matter what role you go into, what company you're working at, where you live, who you're around, the size of your team, all of those different variables, organizational behavior and the things that we learn about how to manage people for performance, how to handle conflict, how to be introspective and understand, self-regulate on certain things and be able to take feedback, give feedback, those things will be what carries you into promotions and success beyond promotions into higher level roles. And so I don't want to understate that to people who are listening to this because we do cover a lot of different topics on the podcast and we talk about different types of technical skills. But I think when it comes down to organizational behavior, it is the foundation, it's the cornerstone of what everything else is built around because it's ever-present.

Patrick Lageraen:

Totally agree.

Tim Maynes:

And just so everybody's clear, I did not pay him to say that. I mean, I would've, just to be clear, I would've. maybe I should have have you come to class-

Eric Raine:

It's true, it's true though.

Tim Maynes:

... On the first day too and share that testimonial. No, I appreciate that. I share that perspective too, and based on lots of evidence from what we see in practice, what will get people ahead is the concepts in organizational behavior, partly. In part, you've got to be good technically too. You can't be a slouch there, but you can't ignore the soft skill side of things, the leadership skill side of things. If you do, your upside potential is severely limited. And so yeah, just really valuable from my perspective.

Eric Raine:

Absolutely.

Patrick Lageraen:

It's almost like OB is the context through which all of the technical skills that we learned is applied.

Tim Maynes:

And it's what separates an MBA from other degrees. So in most business schools, you can get a variety of different master's degrees. We have a Master's Degree in Finance, we've got a Master's Degree in Information Systems, we've got a Master's Degree in Analytics. And what sets the MBA apart is that none of those programs have any soft skill training. By definition, they are technical degrees and they'll teach you about finance or computer coding and information systems or analytics. But at the end of the day... And so that's why I think also we see, and there's been kind of a decline in student demand for an MBA product and across the entire marketplace. I can't remember the exact numbers, but I would say that we're probably down 50% in MBA applications over a decade ago.

Eric Raine:

Wow.

Tim Maynes:

And so that's a lot of difference of change. And at the same time, we don't see the decline from employers. Employers still value the degree. I think partly it's because you're getting training in an MBA program in the soft skill side of things. In fact, the data that comes to us from industry, there's a survey that's done every couple of years where a group, a consortium of universities and colleges will survey lots of different companies. The report's called the NACE Report. And what they do is they list out 30 or 40 skills that organizations might want in their recent college graduates or MBA graduates, and they just

say, "Rank order them. What's the most important, what's the second most important? What's the third most important?"

And until about 2015 or 2016 for decades, the top thing was we need them to have technical ability. We need them to have whatever that was, analytical thinking or whatever, but some sort of technical ability. And in 2015 or 16 or so in that timeframe it shifted. And since that time, team skills, communication skills have always been at the top and technical skills have been secondary. That's really fascinating to me because when we're talking about hiring people for a job that's often technical, we're saying that that's not the first priority. Here's your job description. Can you do that? That's not first. First is can you get along with other people? Can you coordinate and work well? Do you know how to collaborate? Are you overly sensitive to feedback? Can you receive feedback and improve? And these kinds of things, that's become way more important. And I think part of that is just a decline generally in social skill in our world.

On one hand with artificial intelligence and some of the things that we see being talked about now and tremendous changes coming in our economy and the business world from those technologies. And I think there's a belief I think, among some that it's going to displace the need for humans at some point in the far distant future. And my thinking is actually a little bit different than that. I think it's going to increase the value of those that have interpersonal skill and decrease the value of technical skill.

Eric Raine:

Interesting.

Tim Maynes:

And the reason is because technical skill is something you can train a machine to do much more easily than you can train it to do social skills. And so at least in the lifetime of our careers, we're going to see an increasing value placed on the social skill, leadership skill.

Eric Raine:

It's interesting too that you mentioned this shift from technical to some of the soft skills and the things that are making a difference and impact and what companies are looking for in the marketplace, especially as MBA students who were trying to build these types of skills and learn how to apply them in the real world. But the timeline that you just mentioned, given the fact that there's this significant decrease in the applications to an MBA program like here at UB, also pairs up against that same timeline

where that shift happened. And so it's not necessarily that there's just less people applying to different types of graduate programs, let's say, even within the School of Management. It's just a matter of, I'm sure there's probably some type of increase in the applications that were going and being displaced-

Tim Maynes:

That's exactly what's happened.

Eric Raine:

... So really it's not that there's a net less number of applicants, it's that there's more people applying to technical roles. And I think that that's encouraging for us as MBA students, because right now we sit here and we think, okay, what are the things that are going to carry us to our first promotion after we graduate? What will carry us through building high performing teams and motivating people and being able to do the things that are needed and required of us in order to do that, but that maybe there's a growing and need for that while AI is being implemented. And so it's kind of like the value of this degree and the things that we're learning are actually becoming even more necessary-

Tim Maynes:

More valuable.

Eric Raine:

And that's where I think it ties back to, again, its personal opinion, but I think OB is the most impactful and most important component of the full-time MBA program because of those exact types of reasons. And that seems to be what's on the horizon.

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, I share that perspective. Yeah.

Patrick Lageraen:

I'm really excited to get your opinion on this. Imagine myself and other MBA students are graduating, maybe it's a couple months after graduation and we're looking at promotions to a leadership role, but we forgot every single thing that we learned in OB so far-

Eric Raine:

Hypothetically.

Patrick Lageraen:

... Of course we wouldn't. And you had to make a 90-minute presentation or a 90-minute lecture with everything we needed to know squeezed into 90 minutes. What would you put inside of it?

Tim Maynes:

It is to prepare you for your first leadership job, correct? I would probably, 90 minutes, I don't have a lot of time, do I? I would probably focus on two things. Two concepts. One is empowering people. How do you go about empowering people? Return to an earlier thread we were talking about what derails people in their first leadership role. One of the things that's probably the leading reasons for failure in that first leadership role is, call it micromanagement, call it kind of an autocratic style of leadership, but it's a I'm the leader, I tell you what to do, kind of an approach to leading others as opposed to one that's collaborative where yes, you have to give instructions for people to how to do their jobs, of course that's true. But giving those at a sort of a general enough level that people can have some latitude and decision-making authority in what they do as opposed to being told exactly everything they're supposed to do.

How do you empower, how do you delegate? How do you touch base and follow up in a way that doesn't signal that you feel that you're better than other people, that you just feel like... It helps people feel like they're a part of a team, they're contributing and that you value and appreciate them. That one would be really critical, is empowering others. There's that same Marshall Goldsmith guy that I mentioned earlier, and he has a saying about empowerment that I think is really, it's hard to validate whether it's true from an empirical perspective, but I think it's probably in the right ballpark. And he says that, "If you want to decrease motivation by 50%, tell people exactly what they're supposed to do." Because, and you know this from your own experience, when you have some choice in how you go about doing something that gets you really excited-

Patrick Lageraen:

You take ownership of it.

Tim Maynes:

... You take ownership, and then you feel motivated, you finish things. And so that process, how do you empower people would be one of the things I think would be something worth sharing. And then the second thing I would probably focus on is a very specific skill about giving feedback in a way that is received well, it's related to the empowering people. If you're going to empower people, that means that you're going to probably get some product back that doesn't meet your standards. How do you give the feedback in a way that helps to build people, builds their confidence, builds their sense of efficacy, builds their skill, doesn't offend, those kinds of things. Probably those two things.

Eric Raine:

They obviously seem incredibly important, and especially something that you can really take away even from a 90 minute lecture, let's say hypothetically. This is making me think of something that just popped into my mind is I'm taking, currently taking a course with Rich Gold on managing people for maximum performance. And one of the things that we talk about there is being able to get this, you're working with teams and you're the leader and you have a group of people who you need to, there's a certain baseline that's the bare minimum of what needs to get done. And then there's this almost unlimited threshold above that where you can get people to do more than what they're minimally required to do. And it's how do you go about actually taking these OB concepts and maybe putting some technical skill around that and being able to find ways to raise that bar where people have this discretionary ability to work autonomously through motivation and through how you're building the framework around how they do their job on a regular basis to be able to get more out of your people.

And it seems like one of the things that's most impactful is when you're providing feedback that's positive, it's immediate and it's certain. And so when you're giving feedback in a way that's providing people on a ratio where you're giving more of those sort of positive, immediate, and certain types of feedback where it's reinforcing behaviors come from the consequences that they can expect from performing that behavior. And so I think it seems, and I could be wrong here, but I was curious, your perspective is that sometimes people get into these first sort of promotional leadership roles and they are providing a little bit of that type of feedback, but along the way, because they need to be meeting certain standards of operation, they might provide negative and also immediate and also certain feedback that can be negative reinforcement or it can even be punishing or a penalty to someone. And so what they start doing is their behavior changes because of the types of consequence they can expect from the behaviors that are being portrayed through the way that you're giving them feedback.

It's really interesting to hear you mention that as far as if it was a quick crash course on here's what to keep in mind, stepping into your first promotional type of role is feedback and how you're giving it and what it looks like.

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, I think not for everybody, but for maybe close to the majority, say more than 50% of people when they're promoted to their first job for some reason, what we observe in the data, in research data, is that sort of the, what might I think about the way that people conceive of leadership. What's the job of a leader? And if you were to ask them that and to write it down, they would say something like, "They're supposed to be like a military general." They got to tell people what to do and they're very direct. That's the conception. It's very direct and it is a little bit more on the punishment side as opposed to the positive reinforcement side of things. It's really interesting, that's kind of the mix of qualities or characteristics that people think of as being the ideal leader when they're first promoted, and it's partly what contributes to their likelihood of failing as well.

What we know from research more generally about feedback specifically is that you need to have a balance between the positive reinforcement and sort of pointing out potential areas of improvement and the balance. When I say the word balance, I think that implies equal and it doesn't imply equal at all. In the case of feedback, actually you need about a four to one ratio. In other words, that positive reinforcement on things that are going well needs to be four times as much as the nudges toward, hey, could we improve this, could we improve that?

Eric Raine:

Or decreasing a specific behavior-

Tim Maynes:

... Or decreasing a specific behavior they say it's undesirable. Yeah, so-

Eric Raine:

Four to one is pretty significant compared to a 50/50 type of what you might think is normal. And then it's going about how do you get to that ratio in a way that's genuine and also impactful and not, you're just trying to disingenuously say, "Hey, good work on this," but being more specific in the way that you get feedback too.

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, that specific thing is really important too. Yeah, absolutely. If you're just like you say general or vague, it's not really that valuable, but if you're able to specifically point out the things that you appreciate or that is desirable to you, then you'll see that reinforced and have it done again and repeated. For some reason it's like human nature. I think when we're young and we're growing and maturing, we think of risks and challenges and flaws that plays a more prominent role in our mind than the positive feature. It's something we have to be very conscious of, most of us to train our brain to be on the lookout for things to celebrate about the people that work for us. Yeah.

Eric Raine:

It also seems too that another important component of the feedback would be that when you're looking at outcomes, if you're looking at results as a way of measuring is my leadership style and the things I'm doing, is it working? And I think sometimes it might be easy to lean towards looking at results as being a way of measuring, am I doing this right and am I successful? But the sort of paradox, I guess you could say, would be that you could be getting the right results the wrong way. And that the wrong way is something like a seed that's planted that's going to grow something you really don't want in the longer term.

To kind of get your perspective on this, is that something that happens when maybe someone is successful in that first leadership role and they do get a second promotion to a higher level and now they've sort of been thinking that they have this sort of confirmation bias of like, okay, I was getting the results we needed, the company saw that, I did a relatively good job from a leadership perspective, it seems, I'm getting promoted again. But then in the second phase of promotion, what are some of the derailers that happen maybe at a higher level? You mentioned there's a difference at even an executive level, but how does that change?

Tim Maynes:

As you move up the organizational hierarchy some things that become more important. When you're the first line leadership role, what you're really looking for is what are the things that are important to my immediate supervisor, my boss? What are the goals that have been given to him or her? And then identifying the specific tactics and actions that need to be taken by the members of the team to drive results for that boss. And as you move up the hierarchy, it becomes more and more important for you to have a vision of where the company more generally needs to be going. Maybe you're leading a division.

Well, we need to now be thinking about what's the vision, which direction should we be facing? What's our strategy? What should we be trying to accomplish? Because that sets then the direction of everybody underneath you. As you climb, that becomes significantly more important.

And some people developing that ability to have sort of a vision of where to go is a challenging thing. What we've seen in the research is that it's really quite heavily trait related, creativity related, you're kind of born with an ability to have vision, and I don't think we have a great understanding yet of how to train it as well. I think it can be developed, but it's a little bit harder to do. That's one thing that becomes significantly more important is just thinking about setting the direction of the vision, the strategy for a broad set of people.

Because once again, that sets the direction, kind of like a budget. If you have a budget, say you're operating a division and you have a \$10 million budget or something that sets the parameters of what you do financially, and if you go over budget, you're going to get in trouble. You think very hard about investments, what you're going to do with that \$10 million. And you have people put in proposals of different departments. Well, the marketing department wants to do this well, does that make sense relative to all the other investment opportunities that we have? And strategies kind of like that in that it sets the direction of where we go with our time and having a vision, a direction that's compelling, interesting, that actually move us forward, that's right. You got to be right with strategy and vision.

You could say, can you imagine if what would've happened if there's the battle between Netflix and Blockbuster video? What would've happened if Blockbuster video had actually said, "Maybe Netflix is right, we should go online streaming, or we should deliver videos, DVDs in the mail." We might still have Blockbuster. They had the wrong strategy, they had the wrong vision of the future, or they were at least late in coming to that vision. And so that becomes very, very critical to have an ability to spot where we need to be going next. And in our environment, what we're seeing in the business world is that that is rapidly changing. The rate at which change happens in our business environment is way more rapid than it was 75 years ago.

You could develop a single make of a car, for example, automotive company, a car that would last a decade. You wouldn't have to change it much, top seller. Now you can't do that because you're going to be disrupted pretty soon. Within 18 months, you've got to have some new thing. And it depends on the industry, varies quite widely, but generally speaking. That's another characteristic of leadership that I think is going to increase in its value in the coming decades, is developing that ability to sort of spot

trends, understand the vision, where to take people and to communicate it in a way that gets people to buy in. Understanding the values of people and tying those into what you're trying to accomplish. Yeah.

Patrick Lageraen:

Something else I'd like to get your opinion on because it's something that... Stepping into a new leadership role with employees that were previously your co-workers and now all of a sudden they become your direct reports. That's something that stresses me out a little bit. Do you think it's easier to do that or to come into a position fresh with a new set of reports that you're just being introduced to?

Tim Maynes:

Boy, that's a good question. Yeah, there's like many things in life-

Patrick Lageraen:

It's a lot packed into that.

Tim Maynes:

... It's complicated. I think on the one hand in say that you're appointed to be the leader of a team that you were a member of before, so you're leading people who were your peers prior to that. One thing that will be an advantage potentially there depending on what your relationships were like, is that you do have pre-existing relationships and assuming that you had developed good relationships with those people, they're going to support you likely in that new position. And so that's kind of a positive thing there.

On the negative side, negative is a strong word, but on the other side of the ledger, you were a peer and for some people their perception of you is now the leader that that may take some time for them to sort of accept that idea, especially if say two or three other members of the team had applied for the team leader position and then you got it and they didn't, it can create some complication in that sense.

Being added to a new team that you maybe you don't know, maybe it's within the same company, and you do know the people kind of by reputation, but you don't know them personally, so you don't have yet that can be a positive too because now you're being hired in as this external person, now you're the leader. Everybody should buy into that idea. It could still have the same issue that others in the team were wanting to be the team lead and may have applied for the position, but you're coming from outside, so that can help. But then you don't have the pre-existing relationships. And so it's going to take

some time maybe to develop those. Depending on the nature of those relationships, the ability to make change and to drive things forward may take more or less time depending on how quickly you can get those relationships going. And if you were promoted with solid relationships in the team that you were a part of, maybe you can drive results more quickly.

But I'll just add one more thought here, which is that sometimes there's this phrase that sometimes the devils that you know are the better than the devils that you don't.

Patrick Lageraen:

Better to dance with the devil you know.

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, that's it. And so promoted into a new team, the team that you are already a part of where maybe some the challenges are-

Patrick Lageraen:

You know how they work, you know their motivations.

Tim Maynes:

... And so you can maybe think about and strategize about how to get the most out of those people, whereas on a new team, you're going to have to figure those things out. It may come as a shock or a surprise, I don't know. It's kind of a mixed complicated thing. But-

Patrick Lageraen:

In preparation for a situation like that, do you think it would be smart to anticipate being your co-workers supervisor one day and then building the relationship with that in mind? Not getting too friendly with them or too personal, keeping it more professional-

Eric Raine:

Kind of thinking ahead? That's interesting.

Tim Maynes:

I do think... I read an article the other day that was really interesting. I think it was in Fortune Online. Fortune.com may have been another one of those fast companies, something like that. But it was talking

about relationships at work and not disclosing too much information. I think it's related here. Sometimes we do share a lot of information with our co-workers because they become our friends, we spend more time with our co-workers than anybody else, maybe even more than our significant other if we have a romantic interest in our lives. Even that, we spend 8 to 10 hours a day with these people and there can be a temptation to maybe share too much information. And the woman who wrote the article was talking about how that can have an impact on your opportunities in the organization. For example, she had been passed over for a leadership opportunity because she'd had some car trouble and had shared that with her boss. And so when there came an opportunity for a promotion to an assistant, a person who would be an assistant to that boss-

Patrick Lageraen:

Worried about reliability or something-

Tim Maynes:

Worried about because there was going to be some travel involved-

Eric Raine:

Oh, no kidding.

Tim Maynes:

... And worried about the person, I didn't want to give you the job because I was worried you might, even though you were the best person. The boss-

Eric Raine:

I don't want to set you up for failure.

Tim Maynes:

... The boss explains this to her and she's like, "Well, if you would've told me I got a new car, it's okay. I would've made sacrifices and I did make sacrifices to make that not an issue." I think it is wise to be thinking about how we're forming our relationships at work. And I don't know that I would necessarily have in mind that someday I might be the leader of these people. I could see how that might color and influence in some not positive ways as well. I would just be thinking about how to form really high quality relationships where you're taking a personal interest in people. Of course, not crossing the

boundary between sharing too much, but taking a personal interest in people and caring about their wellbeing and their growth and trying to view them from a positive perspective.

When we're at work, we bring all of ourselves to work. Sometimes our not best self comes to work, and so viewing people with that charity and sort of forgiveness about, okay, maybe this just isn't their best day and trying to be positive about who they are. Building positive, uplifting relationships, I think will do all that you need it to do in terms of if you were promoted to be a leader of those people someday in the future.

Also, when you're at work, not that you need to hear this, but sometimes when we're at work, especially work parties, that's where maybe we get a little bit loose with what we're talking about because alcohol lubricates that a little bit. Having some rules around that can be helpful too. I only allow myself one drink at work parties or I only stay for the first hour because once it passes like midnight-

Patrick Lageraen:

Nothing good.

Tim Maynes:

... Nothing good's going to happen, and you don't want the non-good things to be out in front of a boss or other people. So giving some thought to those kinds of things, but if you're just generally approaching people from a positive perspective and building good relationships, that should be enough. Yeah.

Eric Raine:

Cool. Something I wanted to follow up on a previous point that you had made that I was wondering if you might be able to provide some advice or a recommendation in the setting of the question that Patrick had about how do you go about stepping into a leadership position in the context of a situation where you might know of people, but let's say you're working in a larger company and you do get promoted to a division or you're a director of an area that you do have expertise in, but you weren't working with those people. And you're now in a situation where you really do want to build those types of relationship dynamics and you want to be able to start off on the right foot and you can only make that first impression once. What are some things that we could keep in mind for that potential in the future and maybe the first thing to do or something to keep in mind for how do we go about starting that off on the right foot and giving the best potential for building those types of relationships in that sort of context?

Tim Maynes:

This is coming into a team that you weren't a part of before?

Eric Raine:

And now you're the leader of that team, yeah.

Tim Maynes:

I think one thing that is helpful is for some reason, some of us, when we come into the leadership roles, we have an idea in our head that we need to be the expert. We need to show strength, so we need to have all the answers. And that usually doesn't go very well, especially when we come into a new team because they're doing stuff already and they've got some expertise and if we come in and we start making changes and say, "No, we're going to do it differently." Although we might have some basis for our thinking, it usually is a little bit better to come in and take a bit more of a listening approach initially and meet with everybody individually and say, "Hey, tell me what's going on. Tell me what's good. Tell me what you'd like to see improved. Tell how can I contribute to some of those things. Are there resources you don't have that you need?"

Asking questions like that, taking a lot of notes and just being a person who listens because once again, what we're trying to convey here when we're in a leadership role is not that we're the technical expert. That's the domain of the people who are working for us. What we're trying to convey is managerial competence that we know what we're doing as a manager. And what do managers do? Well, they have people skills. They listen to their people and they try to understand their roles and their jobs and they try to get them the resources they need to be successful, support them in ways that they need to be successful. Coming in with a bit more of an openness. And then if you do have particular ideas about how to improve things, running those past people and say, "What do you think of this?"

Eric Raine:

Get their opinions.

Tim Maynes:

What do you think of that? And invite them to criticize it. They're going to hesitate to criticize because you're the boss. And a lot of research tells us that people hesitate to criticize the boss. You have to do

some things to earn their trust in that way. Maybe you have say, point out some of the flaws that you see in it. What if we did this? I can see some downsides here, here, and here.

Eric Raine:

Open the door for that.

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, open the door. And then it becomes a dialogue-

Eric Raine:

Lead them into it.

Tim Maynes:

... Becomes a conversation. Having that kind of openness to a conversation with the people that you're leading and managing that you're approachable in that sense. Ultimately you'll make decisions of course, but you don't need to tell people that.

Eric Raine:

It's well-informed then too because... So you'd recommend if I was two or three years into the company, maybe I was in a supervisory role or I'm now getting put into a higher level, true, solid leadership role with a lot of impact on a larger team, that it would be best to go and meet one-on-one in person if you can do it and have one-on-one conversations, and that would be pretty much right away.

Tim Maynes:

Yeah.

Eric Raine:

Okay.

Tim Maynes:

And if the team is too big to do that really quickly, start with some key people and you can ask your boss and other people maybe around you who those key people would be. But yeah, I would do that right away. It shows respect, shows that you're interested, and I would even consider going to them, not

coming to my office, but I'm going to come to you. Having conversations and just getting around and walking around the building and talking to people can be helpful in that sense too. Just that you're there every day and you have conversations and you're human.

Patrick Lageraen:

Do you think there should be a key amount of time where you don't make any decisions? Like let's say for the first two weeks, I'm only going to listen something like that.

Tim Maynes:

As a general rule, I think that could be great. Of course there might be some exceptions to that depending on maybe you have been asked to go in and make some change. And even in those circumstances though, I would be inviting people to give feedback. Sometimes you have to be a little bit careful about how you do that. If you're not open to changing certain elements of a proposal, say you've got a direction that you're being given by corporate to do something and there are certain elements of that are non-negotiable well, then you help people know that. You say, "Where I'm really wanting feedback is on parts A, B, and C. Part D, E, and F, we're okay with those. That's kind of what corporate wants." But so letting signaling where I want the feedback just so they can feel comfortable and not, and then you're not getting feedback that you can't act on because another thing that wins trust is if people give you feedback and you change things. Oh, my boss is very responsive and listens and engages-

Eric Raine:

And you'll have that repeat opportunity to ask their opinion and maybe that second time around that door's a little wider open and they can step in and say, "You know what, actually I think is, I'm seeing this over here and maybe you want to..." And that Intel can make all the difference, right?

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

Patrick Lageraen:

I know we already talked a lot about the value of an MBA program, but I think a good way to wrap up would just be to give you the opportunity to talk to those people who might be considering an MBA program. What do you have to say to them? Is there any advice for someone who's considering UB or maybe a different program?

Tim Maynes:

Yeah, I mean, so I'll maybe return to some of the points we talked about earlier, but elaborate and expand on some of those ideas. But we are seeing in the marketplace that there's a continued pretty strong demand for students who are trained with an MBA. On the student side the demand for the MBA is going down a little bit, but lots of employers still want the MBA graduates. And students are going instead into the specialized master's programs that we talked about, Master's in Finance and Information Systems and these kinds of degrees. And those technical skills can be valuable, especially in the first job that you get out of college. You'll be technically trained and there's a job waiting for you. And that's really great.

And if that's kind of how you envision your career, that I really enjoy the technical side of things. I like computer programming or I like analyzing data and I don't really see myself evolving into leadership roles where I have to manage people. That feels messy. There's a lot going on there. People get emotional. It's hard for me to even think about that. Then a specialized degree is great. It's like the perfect thing, and you'll get into a position and because of that technical expertise, you'll get a reasonably good salary. And I would say do that if that's what appeals to you. But if your ambitions are a little bit larger than that and you would like to either found your own company or you would like to climb the corporate ladder, and being in leadership roles is something that kind of appeals to you because of the impact you can have more broadly and influencing lots of people.

I think of management as a very, and leadership as a very, what's the word I'm looking for? It's a noble profession because we lead organizations that provide economic value to a ton of people. And that's not an insignificant thing and we need people to do that work. And so if that's something that appeals to you is to impact a lot of people through new products and just leading these large companies, then the MBA probably is the right place to be because this is really the only program in the Business School at the master's level where we teach about leadership and working in teams and communicating effectively and all the skills that are going to be needed to make your way up that corporate hierarchy.

We like to think that you're going to remember all the lessons that you get in the MBA, and I know that that's not necessarily true. Hopefully some of them stick enough that... I kind of think of learning it's kind of like a sponge, and if a sponge is completely dry and you pour water on it doesn't retain much of it. It'll just roll off. If the sponge is completely soaked, you pour water in and the water just goes through and it just one side to the other, it doesn't retain it. But if it's been wet and then it's been squeeze out, so

we call it absorptive capacity. If it's wet but it's not drenched, then there's a lot of room for it to add more water.

And I think of that kind of being the same idea when it comes to learning leadership skills, social skills, these kinds of things, that if we have enough of a base that as we grow and we learn some more and gain experience, that we'll be able to add that knowledge to our toolkit more rapidly than someone who has, they're a dry sponge and they don't have much to build on. I don't know, that's my pitch. My pitch is that if you really want to contribute in management, which I think of, like I said, it's a noble profession. It's one where we mentor people, we care about people, we care about organizations, we care about peoples well-being and the economy and so on, their economic well-being. And if that side of the business world appeals to you, then MBA is probably the right place for you. Come and contribute and be a part of us. And UB is a great place. I think our MBA program is special. We've got some really neat, unique elements to it and including our students and our alums. Lots of good things all the way around.

Eric Raine:

Absolutely. I mean, we're very fortunate as students, I feel to be part of this program. And I know you said it's a little bit of a pitch, but I think one of the things to mention here at this point too, going off of everything that you said, which I completely agree with, is if you are looking for even more of that from the MBA program leader, LeaderCORE is a great thing to consider. And we have had conversations in other episodes about this, so obviously for listeners, there's more to be heard on that. But that's another area where if you're really interested in pushing the limits and performing at a higher level in the area of maybe expanding upon organizational behavior, but then leadership potential and that kind of looking at it as a technical skill and being able to learn how to become a more effective leader, that's something to also consider and tune into as well. But thank you very much for your time today coming in. We really appreciate it.

Tim Maynes:

It's been a pleasure.

Patrick Lageraen:

Thanks for coming in.

Tim Maynes:

Thanks for having me.

Patrick Lageraen:

Thank you. I hope you enjoyed this episode. Again, we were talking with Professor Tim Maynes, professor of the first year MBA course, Organizational Behavior, as well as others. My name is Patrick Lageraen. Thanks for listening.