**RedZone Podcast Episode #71: Exploring CIO Superpowers, Skills, Tactics, and Strategies with Bill Granger, CTO, Walker & Dunlop**

Speaker 1: Okay Bill, welcome to the show today.

Bill: Thank you.

Speaker 1: All right.

Bill: Happy to be here.

Speaker 1: Good, good. Well, I know we've been planning this for a while so this is cool. I know we had a conversation probably six weeks ago now and we talked about a lot of cool things. Probably the coolest of course is Triathloning.

Bill: Of course.

Speaker 1: You are currently training? Not training? Waiting to heal up a little bit?

[00:00:30]
Bill:
Well, I'm training, running now. I started out as a runner and I got just sick of running all the time and I was like, "I got to find something else to do." One of my friends had mentioned triathlons, and I said, "I'll go try that." I got into that a little bit and got all the way up to doing Ironmans. I had a couple concussions and I said, "Okay, I got to take a break." Now I'm back to running.

Speaker 1: You've done two Ironmans?

Bill: Two Ironmans, yeah.

Speaker 1: Which ones did you do?

Bill: I did Louisville and Texas.

[00:01:00]
Speaker 1:
I did Louisville and Madison, in Wisconsin.

Bill: Oh yeah, that's a tough one there, Madison.

Speaker 1:

[00:01:30] Madison was super fun. There was one hill that was the funnest thing. It was so steep, and it was about 90 miles in, but they lined it with girls from University of Wisconsin. They had a cardboard box in front of them, and they were cheering, like, "Go up the hill!" But they looked like they were wearing nothing behind the box. They were doing that on purpose. All you could do was smile up the hill.

Bill: Laugh, yeah. We had the same thing at, I think it was in Texas, where we came around this corner and all these women were standing around. From a distance, it looked like they were nude. As you got closer you realized, no, those are big T-shirts that were on them that just looked like they were nude. It was kind of funny.

Speaker 1: You had an accident?

Bill:
[00:02:00] Yeah, I had two accidents. Woke up in a hospital, didn't know what happened. I had a bicycle accident in 2013. Then two years, almost to the day, I had another one. Same thing, I woke up after having a crash. I woke up a little bit during that one, but I ended up, they air evaced me to the hospital.

Speaker 1: Air evaced you? I didn't know that.

Bill:
[00:02:30] Yeah. My wife shows up, and I'm like, "How'd you get here?" Luckily, I had one of those knee bands on, so somebody saw that and called my wife, had her meet me there.

Speaker 1: That was during a training, right ?

Bill: Yeah, I was training. First day out, first spring day out. Trying to, I'd been training all winter on the bike and finally got out, and that's what happened.

Speaker 1:

[00:03:00] In 2011 I stopped, I went a deep dive into coaching, soccer coaching at that point. I thought that if I was going to keep doing training on the bike, I was going to go indoors. Like Andy Potts and these guys, they're doing all their training indoors. I thought, "That's good." They have those monitors where you can simulate terrain and stuff. I thought that was interesting. Did you ever do anything indoors?

Bill: Yeah, a lot of indoors stuff on a, I forget what they call it now, but basically it's a trainer, and it has a computer program hooked to it and it simulates, like you say, hills and power and all that. You can really control your workout. It's really effective. I did that all winter long. But you do still need some outdoor.

Speaker 1: You've got bike handling skills.

[00:03:30]
Bill:
Bike handling skills, exactly. That was why I was like, "I got to get out, I've been in all winter. It's the first nice day." That was the way it ended up, unfortunately.

Speaker 1: Good thing you're healthy, and you're back training, right?

Bill: Yeah, so now I'm just running and occasionally swimming.

Speaker 1: Good. The other day I was thinking that the healthiest I've ever felt is doing the triathlon training.

Bill: Absolutely.

Speaker 1:
[00:04:00] I felt like those 3 sports, whether or not it was Ironman or not, didn't matter, it was like the body just loved the variety. Do you find that same thing?

Bill:

[00:04:30] Absolutely. You just feel, you just had energy. I would go on 4 or 5 hour sleep almost all the time without a problem, and everybody would be like, "How do you have so much time for training?" I'm like, "Well, I'm awake most of the time because I'm just in such good shape and everything, and my body was just so wired and always ready to do something. When I slept, I slept really good. That was, I think, important as well.

Speaker 1: I'm doing some Spartan training now with a group, and completely different, but it's still multi mode, from lifting and climbing and hanging on things, and then running. It's like you're using every system. You don't get overuse in any one area, which I find is really helpful.

Bill: Yeah, I just signed up for a Spartan race, actually. One down in Virginia. I don't know which one you're doing.

Speaker 1: The one in Virginia as well.

Bill: Yeah, cool.

Speaker 1: Do you know which, what one you're doing? A sprint or a super?

Bill: It's a super.

Speaker 1: Oh wow.

[00:05:00]
Bill:
Yeah. It'll be fun.

Speaker 1: The guy the other day was like, "They're filling up the early heat ... " I guess he wants us in the early heats because it's less hot. The later you go in the day, the more the Virginia mountains and the heat sort of beat you up a little bit.

Bill: Yeah. I may have not picked the best time to do, I think I picked noon or something.

Speaker 1: Afterwards, send me the link to what one you did, I'll see if it's the same one.

Bill: Yeah, definitely.

[00:05:30]
Speaker 1:
Maybe for the audience perspective, why don't you just say, where are we now, what is your current job and role, and maybe we can just kind of, the general responsibilities that you have right now. Then we can talk about how you got there.

Bill:

[00:06:00] Yeah, that'd be great. I'm the CTO for Walker and Dunlop, and we're a multi-family finance company. We basically finance apartment buildings for people. We're a broker. We don't actually hold the debt, we basically find owners and lenders and match them up together and really help that process get done. That's basically what we focus on. We work a lot with Fanny, Freddy, HUD, and then also with insurance companies, so that's generally who our lenders are. Then we work with a broad spectrum of apartment owners and helped them get financed.

[00:06:30]
Speaker 1:
What are some of the big disruptors in your industry right now that you see on the landscape that you're paying attention to?

Bill:

[00:07:00]

[00:07:30] I think the biggest one that I am watching for is basically the financing piece. There's a lot of lending clubs. There are also bigger organizations that are lending money out for various things. Lending club is the most, is the biggest example I can think of, but there's actually companies who are focused on lending money in million dollar increments, which lending club is not. It's basically, if you just think about everyone for the last 8 years has made no money on their savings account. I see it very possible that hey, if I can put my money in this account, that'll get me say, 6%. That's very attractive. Yeah, there's a little bit more risk, but I see that as something to watch out for, because I think that that could definitely happen if the right group of people get together. There's a couple companies that are trying to do it. None of them have really taken off because of the, if you're unaccredited, there's different governmental rules around that, regulations around that. That's definitely an area to watch out for.

Speaker 1:
[00:08:00] As a part of your job role, do you have to ... are you paying attention to potential disruption in the industry, or is that someone else's job primarily?

Bill:

[00:08:30] I pay attention to it. There's a couple people who are always focused on either new business or new opportunities. We collaborate a lot on those things, just talk about different things that we're hearing or listening to. Whether it's a podcast that I've heard or something else that we've seen on the street or another business line that we've seen that we think could also ... We're focused on technology in that we understand, we want to make investments in technology where we think that technology would help our clients. We're looking at it from that perspective. We're also obviously trying to grow our own platform, grow the existing business as well.

[00:09:00]
Speaker 1:
Now, how did you get to where you are today? Did you always know that you wanted to be a CTO/CIO? Or did you evolve into that position?

Bill:

[00:09:30]

[00:10:00] No, I grew up thinking I wanted to be an accountant because my uncle was an accountant. I did. I didn't start off going to accounting, I joined the Air Force, served 6 years there. While I was in the Air Force I realized, "Yeah, this is not what I want to do for the rest of my life, so I need to start with plan B." Within a year being into the Air Force, I started going to school and I got my degree in accounting. Got out, passed the CPA exam, got a job working at a public accounting firm, local accounting firm here in Washington DC. Did that for 4 years. I worked on all these little projects. There was some spreadsheets that did calculations, like estimated tax and stuff like that. Probably early on, like 6 or 7 months into working at Beers and Cutler I said, "Wow, that looks really interesting," it was in Lotus, 1, 2, 3. I said, "I want to try to see if I can make that schedule better, because it was rough. It gave a rough estimate. I was like, "I want to recreate what the tax return does, so that when you put your numbers in, it's exactly what the tax return is going to be."

[00:10:30]

[00:11:00] I worked on that and a couple of other little projects. Recommended accounting systems for clients that were smaller and wanted to get some systems in place. Then one day I got a call from a head hunter, said, "Hey, we're looking for somebody that is going to be accounting part time and working on managing this system part time." I said, "Wow, that sounds very interesting. Let me move on that and see if that's a good, that would get me into technology." I kind of wanted to be in technology. I realized at that point that if I really wanted to make companies more efficient, which is really what I was focused on, that technology was going to be a much better way to do that versus being an accountant.

[00:11:30]

[00:12:00]

[00:12:30] I took that job and within 2 months, the person ... I was there 2 months and I really hated it. It was awful. I literally, I complained to everybody about it, I was too vocal, really, looking back on it. I'll tell you a funny story. Every day for a week I'd see this person in the bathroom, and I was like, "Hey, how are you?" I was from the South, I said hi to everybody, why wouldn't you say hi to everybody? Every day I would say hi to this person and he would just look at me like I was, like, "Who are you?" Friday comes around, and I said, "You know what?" It started bothering me. I said, "You know, if I see that person in the bathroom, I am not going to say hi to them." Sure enough, I go to the bathroom, and there they are. I went and did my business and left and got back to my cube. I got a phone call. This assistant that says, "Mr. Lerner would like to meet with you." I said, "Okay, what's a good time?" Set up a time and everything. Then I got off the phone and I said to my guy that was sitting next me, I said, "Who's Mr. Lerner?" He said, "He's the CFO." I said, "Oh, the CFO. I haven't met the CFO."

[00:13:00]

[00:13:30] I'd been there 2 months. I went and met Mr. Lerner and he said, "I really apologize, I was on vacation when you started, I'm sorry that we didn't get introduced sooner, but I'm really happy to meet you and all that." He knew that I wasn't happy. He said, "I understand that you're not really happy, but I think you ought to give it more time." I said, "Yeah, I understand, but there's just so much wrong with this company." I said, "We're on Quattro Pro, we have 150 spreadsheets that are all linked together and if somebody changes one line in one of them, it messes the whole thing up. This is just ridiculous." I said, we really need a system to put this data in so that we don't have this problem. We spend way too much time doing that and not analyzing the data." He said, "That's interesting." He said, "I'll think about that and I'll maybe touch base with you later."

[00:14:00] About a week later, he called me in and said, "I thought a lot about what you said, and I want you to go out and find out a budgeting system and I want you to implement it." I said, "Okay, great." That was my, I was supposedly managing J.D. Edwards part time, but it wasn't that big a deal. Then all the sudden I had this big responsibility to go out ...

Speaker 1: Was this guy in the bathroom? Who was the guy in the bathroom?

Bill: That was the CFO. That was Paul Lerner.

Speaker 1: Is that the same guy who owns the Washington Capitalist?

Bill: No.

Speaker 1: No, different Lerner.

[00:14:30]
Bill:

[00:15:00]

[00:15:30]
This person, this just goes to show you that you just never know who you're going to bump into and how they're going to change your lives, is, he changed my life in that way in that he got me really into a position to where I could really expand into IT. Eventually got rid of the Senior Accounting role, and I was totally 100% IT. He also mentored along the way, which was very helpful. Then eventually, 5 or, I guess it's probably 10 years later, after I left Smith Commercial Realty, because we got bought by [Bernado 00:15:09], I worked for Bernado for a little while. I was commuting back and forth to New York and it was just like, okay, my family is not moving, I can't continue to do this, so I've got to move back down to, I've got to find something local, basically. He helped me find another job at a later date when I just happened to call him and he happened to be on his way to meet with a CEO of another company, and that was how I got my job. He said, "Hey, this guy just wants to meet with you, go in, see what happens," and the next thing you know, I had a job with this guy. So the guy that I never was going to talk to again ended up being a great mentor and also helped me in so many ways.

[00:16:00]
Speaker 1:
Seems to be a theme, mentors. The past couple guys I've been talking to that have been really impacted by serendipity mentorship, both serendipitous mentors, but also proactive mentors that really have helped guide them.

Bill:

[00:16:30] Yeah. I think it's always good to have a mentor because it helps, it's somebody, hopefully safe, that you can talk to, that you can share your feelings with, share your concerns with, or you frustrations, and that a lot of times can see it better from the outside than you can and can help guide you back into, or maybe help you see a different perspective and I think that's very helpful. I've had various mentors, I've mentored various people. It's gratifying helping, see someone develop and grow. I think that that certainly makes my job satisfaction a lot better, when you help someone else.

[00:17:00]
Speaker 1:
It's neat to see how that's impacted you. It was an old martial arts saying, "The teacher and the taught create the teaching." It's funny, the mentor becomes the mentee at some point.

Bill: Yeah, absolutely. You want to help other people because you're appreciative that you got helped and what that did for your career and you as a person, even.

[00:17:30]
Speaker 1:
We were just talking about this before we got started. Not everybody has a complete Swiss Army Knife. Not all tools in a person's ... if a human being were a Swiss Army Knife, not all the tools are fully there or sharpened.

Bill: No, definitely.

Speaker 1: How do you sharpen them? Do you find a mentor? Do you dive in with continuous learning? What is the strategy of shoring up weaknesses as a leader?

[00:18:00]
Bill:

[00:18:30]
Yeah, I think especially in the IT, it's especially challenging. I read a lot. I read a lot of articles, I read a lot of books, I read a lot of self help stuff. That doesn't always get you where you need to be. For example, the example we were talking about earlier is, IT people are generally introverts, mostly. Sometimes that's a disadvantage because you don't develop the relationships that you need to within the leadership always to help you when you're having a tough time or something. Or you need to bounce ideas off of somebody, or you just need that help to get something done that you're trying to get accomplished. I think that's a skill I always am trying to work on. I think that IT people in general are always struggling with that. Some people are really good at it, but mostly you will find IT people are not. They're mostly introverts.

Speaker 1: Did you read the book Quiet?

[00:19:00]
Bill:
No, I didn't.

Speaker 1:

[00:19:30] She has the second most watched TED talk. Her name is Susan ... oh man. I've had this happen before, on podcasts, where I'm listening, and I know the answer, and the person's struggling. The book's called, Quiet. She was on Oprah club and all that. I've read it. It's basically the power of introversion. It talks about how, this woman Susan, who wrote it, talks about all the science around it and how to basically be ... How introverts are winning even though it seems like it's not a strength all the time. She talks about it from an attorney point of view. She looks at it and she ties it ... The TED talk is more talking about her book and such, but really amazing.

Bill: Yeah, I'll have to check that out.

Speaker 1: Yeah, it's interesting.

Bill: Definitely.

Speaker 1:
[00:20:00]

[00:20:30] One other piece, I think, we talked about super powers. One of them, obviously, not obviously, but is your finance background. I think this is really an important skill that I've seen for CIOs, how to make their mark. Talk about mentorship and such. Someone comes in with a strong finance background, some other guys come in and ladies from a different strength. We were talking about the differentiator between building a budget and saying, "Here's my budget, here are my top priorities, and here are my lesser priorities." Go ahead, if you need to ... Yeah, it's no problem. One of the pieces about financial literacy is taking it beyond just submitting a budget and arguing for your top projects. You had talked about this being one of your unique pieces, and maybe you can tell that story that we had talked about with some of your systems that you've had deployed.

[00:21:00]
Bill:

[00:21:30]
Early on, when I started here at Walker and Dunlop, we needed to change out a lot of systems. One of the systems that we were looking at was email. I came in after the budgeting cycle had already happened. Here I was, coming in, asking for a lot of money, to say, "Hey, we really need to replace this system." I met with the CEO and I said, "Look, I know this is a lot of money, but we really need to replace this system." He was really kind of harping on, "This is $150,000," or whatever it was. I said, "It's really not $150,000, it's really $50,000, because that's all that's going to impact your income statement this year." He looked at me and he goes, "That's right, you're an accountant." That made the whole conversation go smoothly. After that it was not about the money anymore, it was about, "Okay, how are we going to do this, and what's the timing?" And just moved the conversation along. It was very helpful.

[00:22:00] Also, because I'm responsible for all of the software and stuff that we buy, accounting relies on me heavily to make sure that we're accounting for the right things and that they're being allocated correctly. I've also seen benefit from that piece of it as well.

Speaker 1:
[00:22:30] Let me ask you a question about that. Let's say you had that same project today and you were looking at, obviously, this is a few years ago, that project, and now you have to look at it. How would you present it from Cloud solution for email? You look at operating versus capx, how would you handle that conversation differently?

Bill: It depends on if I was trying to sell it or not sell it.

Speaker 1: How about you're trying to sell it?

Bill:
[00:23:00] I'm trying to sell it? Okay, well it's only $15 a month times however many employees, and it's not that big a deal. A lot of times, when you look at these cloud solutions, when you look at them over a period of time, normally Microsoft wants you to look at it over 5 years. There's a reason they take 5 years, because if you look at year 6, the numbers go wacky. It's not appealing at all from a financial standpoint.

Speaker 1: That's a good point, though.

Bill: Yeah.

Speaker 1: I wouldn't have known that, personally, so that's an interesting point of view.

[00:23:30]
Bill:

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They purposely do 5 years for a reason. The reality is, is we're all going to the cloud, so we've just got to get onboard. You're just not going to be able to secure it as well as a company like Microsoft will, you're not going to be able to keep it as up to date. Obviously, we're going, and we have to get onboard with it. Even though, financially we look at it and we say, "This is a really bad deal. This is not good." The whole reason the cloud model came up was because Microsoft was getting killed in the market, the stock market is what I'm talking about. Basically, investors were saying, "You can't predict from one year to the next how much software you're going to sell." They got them to move to this model to where it's an income string. It's a smaller income string, but it's a consistent income string that grows, and it's dependable. That changes the whole model for them. Then what else happened is now they've got into the cloud business of providing these services like Amazon. You're going to see, Microsoft's going to take off from a financial standpoint, just the way Amazon has just because that's that dependable income string that's coming in.

Speaker 1:
[00:25:00] How do you deal with the fact that sometimes, I'm picking on Amazon a bit now, but on [inaudible 00:24:57] the variable usage money, when you can't predict the inflows, how do you communicate that to the business? All the sudden you have these spikes of usage?

Bill: That is the challenge, really. That is the challenge that most CIOs are having is that they can't predict or budget even what that number's going to be because they don't know what the use is going to be.

Speaker 1:
[00:25:30] Now we've got from one unpredictable outcome to another unpredictable, unless it's email or something very discreet. That's obviously something we can offset, but when you have an ecommerce site or a financial platform that gets hit, between the 25th and 30th, then all the sudden ... or the developers are trying to get a release out. I'm sure the industry will solve it as we go.

Bill: Yeah, and they're trying to. They're trying predictive model into stuff. You have to give it the numbers. You have to give it the estimates of how many users are going to come in and that kind of thing in order to do it. It will get better and better over time.

[00:26:00]
Speaker 1:
This is interesting because the sales VP, the senior VP of sales never says, "I'm going to guarantee you x revenue."

Bill: They budget.

Speaker 1: They budget, so why can't we budget?

Bill: We can, but we're just not always right.

Speaker 1: The sales guy's never right either.

Bill: That's true.

Speaker 1: It's plus or minus. It's like Bob, the senior VP of sales, he's going to lose his job if he's off too much, but hopefully he's north of the estimates, because everything's really depending on him to bring in the revenue.

[00:26:30]
Bill:
There's a lot of sand bagging that goes on. It's a balance, it's a dance. Everyone's trying to get as close as they can to what they think the number is so they don't get in trouble for not meeting it, but also do a little better than everyone thought they were going to.

Speaker 1:
[00:27:00] Let's shift gears a little bit and talk about some of these bigger projects that you've pulled. Can you talk about some of the ways you do team ... How are you able to work with teams? This is an interesting challenge, because when someone is an Ironman, they're very used to going out and individually accomplishing something. Very little dependency on anybody. You either do it or you don't. It's you and clock or you and the effort at hand. But when you're in a team, effort is completely different. Not everybody has got Ironman capabilities. How do you work with your team to have them achieve an outcome that is extraordinary?

[00:27:30]
Bill:

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[00:28:30]
I'll talk about a couple different things. One is, I think the biggest challenge for CIOs a lot of times is when they're working on a project and none of the people who they're dependent on report to them. You're trying to deploy a people soft or Oracle. An ERP system. The people you're mostly relying on, like the accountants and HR people, all report to someone else. They don't report to you. That becomes a challenge. Early on in my career, when I was a t Smith commercial realty, we upgraded to what was then JD Edwards One World. It since got bought by Oracle. I was young and here I had taken on this project to get this done, and it was challenging. I would go to the person that was supposed to do x, and I would say, "when are you going to get this done?" I'd do the normal project management type stuff. They would, "Oh, I'm working on this." They weren't really wanting, or enthusiastic about helping me.

Speaker 1: They weren't all in.

Bill:

[00:29:00]

[00:29:30] They weren't all in because is was just additional work. They still had to do their regular job, and on top of that I'm asking them to do this other thing. It was really challenging. I played around with this problem and I kept trying to figure out how to solve it. I started off with a project plan that I just developed in Excel. Very simple, I color coded each of the steps and how much time it was going to take on a grid so you could see when it was supposed to start, when it was supposed to end. Then I would change the colors as we got closer to the end. If it looked like it wasn't going to make it, I would turn it yellow, and if it didn't make it and they blew it, I would turn it red. I did that, I circulated it, and I got some movement on that. I wasn't getting enough movement. I still was going to miss my target date. Then I said, "You know what, we got this plotter, I'm going to take it, I'm going to print this out on the plotter paper, and I'm going to hang it all over the office."

Speaker 1: How big, dimensions of this thing?

Bill:

[00:30:00] It was 3 feet by 3 feet or something. It was pretty big. It was big enough that when you came out of the coffee room, if you were the CEO, you would see what was red, and it happened. I put it in front of this coffee area which was one of the areas. I kind of sit back and watched what happened. I would see the CFO go up and see something was red, because your eyes went right to that red, and he would go and talk to that person. Next thing you know, that stuff is getting done. That was what you have to do. You have to constantly ...

Speaker 1: It's visibility, transparency to the whole company.

Bill:
[00:30:30] Then on another project, I did that, and then I also got these big clocks, these count down clocks. I hung them up all over the office. It was very annoying. If you weren't in my boat, you'd think, "That's very annoying." It basically was a countdown of when this project had to be done by and how much time we had to get there. I just constantly tried to think of different ways to move it. Keep it in front of mind, keep people motivated, keep people understanding that they've got a lot to do.

[00:31:00]
Speaker 1:
It's less about you walking around saying, "Have you done this for me?" It's more of you making it aware and conscious publicly without actually going into someone ... ?

Bill: I would walk around as well.

Speaker 1: You think this made the bigger impact?

Bill:

[00:31:30] It made the bigger impact because there was an obvious deadline and there were things that had to get done in order for this project to be accomplished. We had our normal status meetings. I would have that chart with me and people would see that. A lot of times it's the manager who is either making it happen or not happen. You've got 10 accountants reporting a manager. The manager, if he's not motivated to make it happen, then it's not going to happen. You have to get him motivated and then he'll get his people motivated. That's how I worked with it.

Speaker 1:
[00:32:00] That's an interesting approach. I think I mentioned to you, I just left a meeting prior to coming here and he projects his help desk system up onto a huge screen, first of all to let people know that we don't just sit behind closed doors and do nothing here. It's visible to everybody that we're actively hustling through tickets. There's a part of IT that is blocking and tackling and making users happy. He said that's been really helpful.

Bill:
[00:32:30] I do the same thing. I track help desk tickets, how many someone's created. It creates a little bit of competition internally, also. I use that to ... it's not direct because some tickets take longer than others, and that's understandable, they're harder problems. Somebody resetting a password takes a couple of seconds and somebody solving a real complicated problem may take days.

Speaker 1: Get my new surface to work with my iPhone.

Bill:
[00:33:00] Yeah. It's not a one for one, but it helps keep people aware. It's all about awareness. People, I think, always want to do the right thing, they just need to be given the right tools to help make them aware of what's going on and how they fit into that.

Speaker 1:

[00:33:30] I haven't prepped you for this question, so this might take you by surprise, or it might now. You said you were doing some personal development, like you do reading and things like that. I really am curious, what type of books have been, over a period of time, have been the most influential for you, both on the business side and on the non business side? Just personally from either personal development or personal leadership. Things of that nature. Have there been any that have stood out?

Bill: Some of the best books I've read have not been IT related at all. Like Rich Dad, Poor Dad, for example.

Speaker 1: Yeah, Kiyosaki.

Bill: That was one that really opened my eyes up.

Speaker 1:
[00:34:00] That's a great book. We were actually just talking about eBay. I forgot how we got into that conversation, but to the Kiyosaki is somewhat linked to this. It's sometimes we're so dependent on the income from our source of our jobs that we forget that we have all this crap at our houses that we could get on eBay and make $20,000. Just selling it, or teaching our kids how to do it.

Bill:
[00:34:30]

[00:35:00] And do you really need it? My wife, when I first met her, she said, "If you haven't used it in 6 months, you're not going to use it." I said, "Except for holiday." Holiday decorations and stuff, I think there needs to be an exclusion for that. She's like, "Yeah, that's right." We really took that to heart. We really went through our house and what you find is when you go through that process is that then you start thinking twice before you buy something, because you're like, "Well, do I really need that? No, I don't really need that." Or, "Yes, but maybe I can get it used, or maybe I don't need the new one," or something like that. It just helps you think about that in a much different way and what are your real needs?

[00:35:30]

[00:36:00] What I always loved about doing Ironman, for example, is it basically took you down to the very minimal of what you needed in life. It showed you actually can survive, you can persevere through these things that are really challenging in life. Something that when you talk about it you think, "Oh, there's no way I could ever do an Ironman." In fact, when I was training for my first full Ironman, I did a half Ironman. I went down to Columbus, my dad was there. I was out there, and it was kind of cool in the morning, and then it got hot. I was in this run, doing the run piece and I had 6 miles to go or something. I was like, "Oh my gosh, there's no way I'm going to be able to do an Ironman, there's just no way." Literally 6 months later, I did an Ironman. It just came down to training, preparation. Some of the other books I've read have all been about Ironmans. I think it's called Iron ... I forget the name of the book, about the two guys who competed in Ironman in Hawaii.

Speaker 1: Yeah, Mark Allen and ...

Bill: Yeah, I forget the name of that book, but it was like Iron Will or something like that.

Speaker 1: But it's about their battles and when in the late 80s, it was on Wild World of Sports. They started to have the first couple televised Ironmans. These guys were ...

Bill: Going at it.

[00:36:30]
Speaker 1:
Absolutely. They were going at it for 6 years in a row. Mark Allen and I forget the other guy's name.

Bill: Anyway, those are the kind of books that I've read that change my life, whether it's training for Ironman or business type books. Those have all been been helpful.

Speaker 1:
[00:37:00] Has there been any conference in particular that you can recommend to others that would be, you think, you repetitively go to or have been to every couple years that gets your brain working in a certain way that always adds value?

Bill:

[00:37:30] Yeah, recently I started going to Gartner symposium, and that really ... the first year you go to that, you're just overwhelmed. I literally sat in my room writing down ideas because it got all of my juices really flowing and thinking. It made me just start thinking about things in different ways that I hadn't thought about before. That was really helpful.

Speaker 1: Are you guys tracking blockchain at all from a disruption point of view, from finance and lending? Are you looking at how that's [crosstalk 00:37:39]?

Bill: We've looked at it. It's not mature enough at this point, but it's something that we're definitely aware of and looking at. I listened to one of your podcasts, in fact, not that long ago, about that. It was very interesting. Actually, again, had me thinking about it in even more different ways than I have before. That was very interesting.

[00:38:00]
Speaker 1:

[00:38:30]
I had that, that was kind of a non [inaudible 00:38:03] question at the end, but when you go to these conferences, I know I find myself start to think about disruptive technologies that may be sneaky right now, but all the sudden, boom, they're here. It sounds like you guys have a nice way of looking out across your executive team of looking at the landscape and where are the individual players that may be disruptive are and how you can pivot and change. It's interesting to see how you, within the company, are doing that right now.

Bill:

[00:39:00] I assume that we don't know what's coming next, that we just have to always be agile and thinking. I often say I think we should just take a group of people into a room and say, "If you were going to recreate this business, how would you do it? Not knowing anything about ... take interns for example. Don't even give them one day in the office. Take them, tell them what the problem is, tell them what you're trying to achieve, and see what they come up with. I think that's a great exercise to go through that and see what they come up with. Maybe they will make you think about your business in a different way.

Speaker 1: I heard a similar thing too where they say, "take the newest millennial that just got hired and have them come and spend the day with you and tell you what's real for them and what they're concerned about from a different angle." Just give it a completely different lens on a problem.

Bill: Definitely.

[00:39:30]
Speaker 1:
I want to thank you for spending time, talking to myself and the audience, because I think these are huge lessons for people to remind them and look at different angles of thinking about solving problems. Is there anything in particular, as we wrap up, that you want to part with or tell anybody about as we wrap up?

Bill:
[00:40:00]

[00:40:30]

[00:41:00] I would tell you that as you developing your CIO role, that the most important thing that I learned was that when I was first starting out, I was always thinking about how was I going to do something that was going to impress people. I always, I was focused on my career and me. "I'm going to roll out this JD Edwards project, it's going to be successful." Or, "I'm going to roll out this new budgeting tool and it's going to be successful." What you find out as you move up in the ranks and get more mature is that at some point you have to pivot until it's not about me anymore. It's, "How can I put other people in positions to where they can be successful, and how do help them be successful?" Just by the fact of them being successful, it's going to help you. But it's no longer, you've already got to the position you want to get to. Now you've got figure out how you help other people to move up and get ht they want. There's a saying that, that was Zig Zigler, it says, "If you help enough people get what they want, you'll get what you want." That's one of my ...

Speaker 1: South Caroline, too, where you were raised?

Bill: Yeah, I think so. That was one of the persons that I listened to a lot when I was in college.

Speaker 1: He's great.

Bill: I would just listen to his podcast, well it wasn't podcasts then, it was just tapes, but I would just listen to him for hours and hours, over and over again. Every morning before I went to work, I'd listen to him.

Speaker 1: If you help enough people get what they want, then you will get ...

[00:41:30]
Bill:

[00:42:00]
Then you will automatically get what you want. There's a lot of things that I learned in his teachings that I still use today. Because I just listened to him so much, I didn't ever want to forget him. So I say them to my kids, and sometimes when they don't want to do something or they think they can't do something, I'll say, "Let me tell you story about these fleas. They were in a jar, and they kept jumping, and they never jumped out of the jar because there was a lid there. But then they took the lip off and the fleas never jumped out because they thought that was their limit; that's as high as they could ever jump. You don't want to be a flea, do you, that can't jump because you think that that's your limit. You should explore as much as you can and try as hard as you can to see how far you can get."

Speaker 1: They listen to dad a little bit more with a story than you just lecturing them.

Bill: Yeah, exactly. That's, parenting's a whole other story. We could have a whole podcast on parenting.

[00:42:30]
Speaker 1:
I really appreciate your time, Bill. This has been fantastic.

Bill: Thank you.

Speaker 1: Hopefully we can do this again.

Bill: Absolutely, yeah.

Speaker 1: Cool. Until next time.