



Ray Edwards Show, Episode 506 Creating Magic in Tough Times

Announcer ([00:04](#)):

The Ray Edwards Show. This is the podcast for prosperity, with purpose.

Kris Edwards ([00:11](#)):

Hello and welcome to episode 506 of the Ray Edwards Show. And this one features one of my favorite guests of all time, Lee Cockerell. Now, Lee is the retired executive vice president of Walt Disney World. He's held management positions for Hilton for eight years, Marriott for 17 years, he was with Disney for 16 years. An amazing manager who breaks things down into just simple, logic, awesome, dad-wisdom kind of stuff. Ray had a great conversation with Lee recently, and that is what you're going to hear on episode 506 right now.

Ray Edwards ([00:46](#)):

We're recording this in the second month of the new year, 2021. A lot of people are looking behind us is saying, I'm glad 2020 is over, but the effects of 2020 are still with us. What, as being who you are, Lee, and being the founder of the Cockerell Academy, I mean, you think about this stuff a lot. I know you think about people, you care about people. You think about business owners. What are you seeing as a fallout from the pandemic that we haven't even heard about yet? What's coming?

Lee Cockerell ([01:11](#)):

One thing that's coming, and it's already here, and a lot of people are aware of it, is just the amount of people who are suffering from anxiety. People being alone. It's taken its toll. You know, so many people, especially in Orlando, a lot of the people that live here are single. They came here to work. They came here to work at Disney. They, uh, so then Disney laid off 28,000 and, and every restaurant, every SeaWorld and univer, all of them. I mean, there's no place to go pick up that job. And it's not like one company closing. That's the biggest thing. I think, I think, you know, Orlando is going to recover eventually and I don't know how long it's going to take, but, uh, I think the long-term effects of really professional people that have been working 25, 30 years thought they were going to work another 10 or 15 in their company are unemployed, and it's a shock. That's the biggest thing. You just don't know how to help people. I mean, it's like, uh, we try to encourage Disney people to say, you know, you're in high demand, you can go work for a doctor's office- healthcare and they are, they're getting jobs because of the training they've had, and the selection we do at Disney is pretty high. So

they know they're getting a pretty good responsible person, but I probably get one or two a day that people are asking me to for advice or what should I do or how do I do it? Certainly a lot of people trying to fire up their own businesses, which some are being successful. You know, I don't know about how children are being reacted. You know, there's a lot of news that said it's really hurting kids to be home, always and all the women had to drop out of the workforce because they had to stay home with their children because the schools are not open. So I think it's just one thing after another, probably a bunch of stuff we don't even know about that is going on out there.

Ray Edwards (02:47):

Well, I think that's all very, very keen insight into what's happening. And I feel like, I wonder if you agree with this, do you think that this exposed a lot of weaknesses in how people are handling their businesses and their finances?

Lee Cockerell (02:59):

Oh, absolutely. You know, I think almost every person you talk to was in businesses that were running on getting cash for a month. I mean, there, they needed all the business to pay the rent at the end of the month. And no question, I mean, uh, capital has been a big issue. You know, you see, every time you get an email or somebody gets all these companies calling you and trying to loan you money and, uh, of course interest rates are so low. They'd love to get you hooked on some more loans. But yeah, it's absolutely the average American that I don't know if they can make it two weeks out there without a paycheck. And you're going to see that with this stimulus. I mean, it's a, you'll see a big boost to people's spending and I don't know if they're going to spend it the right way, but it it's, it's, it's a real issue. And uh, I'm glad I'm in a business where there is no capital. It's just, I talk if nobody likes it, they don't listen. I don't have to buy anything. My only capital expenditure is a computer. And if Jody doesn't find business for us, it's his problem. I just keep on being retired.

Ray Edwards (04:03):

Well, I mean, you make a good point. There's opportunity now for people to start their own businesses without a big capital outlay. And I think that's, we're seeing a lot of that already. It was happening already. I feel like it just got accelerated because people suddenly didn't have a choice. They had to do something to generate some income. And Warren Buffet said famously, when the tide goes out, you get to see who's been skinny dipping. And I think that's happened, but it's not only that because Disney is not a financially irresponsible company, they had to lay off say 28,000 people.

Lee Cockerell (04:30):

Yeah.

Ray Edwards (04:30):

Just the reality of the marketplace.

Lee Cockerell (04:32):

No business and Disneyland, that your way, has been closed for a year.

Ray Edwards (04:36):

Wow. That's sad to think about.

Lee Cockerell (04:38):

Closed for a year. So all those people that lost their jobs, who knows where they are now. So when they fire it up again, they're going to have to do a lot of recruiting and finding people. I'm sure a lot of people moved out of there and moved back with her parents moved home, who knows where they went.

Ray Edwards (04:51):

So I'm curious, as a guy who advises people, let's talk about a little bit about Cockerell Academy. What are you doing in the Academy that you think is going to be helpful to people in a time like this?

Lee Cockerell (05:00):

You know, that wasn't the real reason we started it, but it's become this um, you know, I keep telling people, you got to take responsibility for educating yourself and keeping up with what's going on in the world and technology and customer service. And, uh, you can't rely on your company, as you find out. You thought your company loved you until they laid you off. And I think there are skills that I learned at Hilton and Marriott and Disney are things you don't learn in college. You don't learn in school. And I think those courses that we put together on time management, how do you organize yourself better so you're so reliable and credible that everybody wants to hire you. Uh, and, uh, then we have one on world-class customer service. The kind of the things you can do that don't cost any money, but you can do them for your customer to set you apart. And that, that is thirty-nine 10-12 minutes sessions. So they're short and sweet. We kept it sweet and short because we've learned that people don't focus very well. And they, if it's an hour or two, they're probably not going to hang in there. But we've got one coming out on leadership. We did one on inclusiveness and diversity, which is a big subject in a world right now and around America, about, uh, you say the wrong thing, you tell the wrong joke, you're done. And, uh, the need for people to, uh, not believe everything they think. Uh, I told a story in that course about, uh, my own growing up. And I grew up, I was 20 years old, I'd never met a black person and I figured out, Hey man. When I went in the army and then moved to Washington, DC, I found out about half the stuff my parents told me wasn't true. Black people are not a problem. Gay people are not a problem. Uh, you know, I actually have friends call Mohammed now with the name Mohammed. I'd never heard of that name until I got out of there. But if you stay in your village, that's what we're trying to teach young people. I advise young people today, the minute you graduate from college, get out of your village, go to the big city for five years, don't hang around and hold up. You won't grow and trying to help people with this Cockerell Academy that you need education, you need exposure and you need experience. And you need to be thinking about how you're going to get all three of those, not just a college degree, especially in the world we live in today. And we see that's what's happening in the cities. I mean, everybody's moving to the cities and, uh, it's gonna be diverse there. And there's gonna be people from everywhere. You know, they always said, you can tell which war was on in the world by who's driving the taxis in New York. You know, Iran drives the taxis and then Istanbul, they ride. And then the Turks are driving the taxis. And then it's true, everybody over the decades have immigrated to the U S and there's a lot of diversity there and it'll make you a better person. You know and I lived in France for three years. That changed my whole life. Just what I learned about other people. Um, and so I remind people, half the stuff in your brain's not true and half the stuff your mother taught you is not true. So go out and learn for yourself. And that's what the Cockerell Academy gives a lot of- reality, straightforward, no soft punches. It's just, we tell it like it is about having hard conversations with people, if you're going to be a good leader. Making hard decisions, if you're going to be a good leader. And most people don't want to do those things. I spoke to the space-force yesterday, the new US-based force in Colorado. And I told them the same. I said, you know, the biggest problem in business, in the military, everywhere is the leaders are not clear about their expectations. Be clear, just like your mother was. She kicked your butt,

you know. She told you how it had to be and she had empathy and discipline and people got to learn to have hard conversations. I've been talking to a consultant recently who his specialty, is dealing with managers and leaders who have a problem of wanting to always be liked.

Ray Edwards (08:47):

Yeah. Yeah. They think being nice is the way to go.

Lee Cockerell (08:50):

Yeah. So actually, after I give my little speech about making hard decisions, it wakes up a lot of people because we all know what- we know what we're not doing well. We all know. We know the things we've been putting off for years as individuals. And we try to convince people in these courses that, hey, you can change, but you got to have discipline. You got to start changing or your career is not going to go where you want it to go. It's Christmas again, and your life will be over. So it's pretty real. I'd say reality. We just tell it like it is. We don't rehearse when we record it, we just let it flow.

Ray Edwards (09:24):

Well, I heard Dave Ramsey talking about this issue of talking to people, having difficult conversations. And he said, he used to think it was, he needed to just be nice, but the message wouldn't get through. And he said, I eventually learned it to be unclear is to be unkind.

Lee Cockerell (09:38):

When your mother was being nice to you, you weren't listening.

Ray Edwards (09:42):

Well, when she said my full name, Lonnie Ray Edwards, I knew I'd better pay attention because something important was coming down the pike.

Lee Cockerell (09:49):

Ya, because they love you, and if you respect your people, you have the conversations. You give them the empathy, tell them you love them, then you kick their butt if they need it, and then you tell them you love them again.

Ray Edwards (09:57):

So let me ask you a question on behalf of a lot of our listeners- people who are affluent or aspiring to affluent, they had a job. Everything was going great. They were able to pay their credit card bills and their mortgage and their car payments, their boat payment and their vacation payments. And then they lost the job. What would you say to those people now, as they wait for their stimulus check to show up?

Lee Cockerell (10:19):

I'd say debt is not your friend. And a lot of people live that life. You know, my wife and I've been- I grew up very insecure about money cause our family didn't have much. And so now I'm glad I did because first I drive an '06 Toyota, it's 15 years old.

Ray Edwards (10:37):

Wait a minute, wait, wait, wait, wait. Lee Cockerell Drives an '06 Toyota?

Lee Cockerell (10:41):

Yeah, and it'll be an '06 probably still 10 years now because I sleep better without debt. I don't sleep well with, uh, I'm very, uh, I need a fairly sizable bank account to sleep well. And uh, cause I've been through that. I saw my mother go through it. I saw my family go through it and it can tear you up. It leads people to drinking, to abuse. To all kinds of problems are created with financial problems. And um, and you make bad decisions and then you don't sleep, you know? And then you start procrastinating cause you know- there's no question. The number one reason people procrastinate and don't get anything done is they don't feel well, emotionally or physically. You didn't get enough sleep. You drank too much or got an illness you got. I mean, you know, I mean, we all do. Next thing you know, you get up and you wander around, the couch wins, and you just don't get through that day. And then it becomes habitual over and over and over and over again. So sleep, I think is one of the big ones. I think people who are not getting enough sleep, it, it really, so I guess take care of your health and uh, not spend all your money. You don't need three cars. Actually I a psychiatrist cause I went through depression and I talked- He said his biggest increase in customers are lawyers that lost their jobs. And they have three cars, two kids in college, a big house with a mortgage. And all of a sudden the cash stopped. And I mean, we all know these people, it happened in my neighborhood during the '08, '09, 2010, people lost their homes here and we thought they were in great shape and they, their houses were foreclosed on. I think we all live. A lot of people are living in a fake life. So, uh, yeah, it's a problem.

Ray Edwards (12:31):

So I'm going to dig a little, I'm going to dig a little deeper on this. I'm not gonna let you off the hook. For somebody who's in that situation and say they were an attorney or they had a business, they're- whatever the case was, and they found, they find the income's cut off and the payments are due and they got a family relying on them. Those people have got to do something it's too late for them to go back. They can't go back in time and fix it. So what do they do right now? What would be like Lee Cockerell's three best pieces of advice, things to do right now to get themselves straightened out and get things back on track?

Lee Cockerell (13:01):

Well, the first thing I would do is get any job. I don't care what it is. If it's \$10 an hour, get to work. Go to some company, get, get your foot in the door because then you can show them how great you are. And there's a lot of companies hiring. It's not like there's there's, a lot of companies are hiring and need smart people. And you may say, well, I'd have to take a \$50,000 reduction in salary. So take it and get in there. And, um, people are open-minded right now about, they understand you don't have a job because of this pandemic, not because of your performance. And you talk your way in and you get in and you be the best little, whatever they hired you for. And I guarantee, I'm seeing that right now. Disney managers that left, went to Public supermarket and got a job as a bagger and now three, four months later, they're already in management and they're some of the best employees they have. And so you can't just sit around and feel sorry for yourself. And I would say start reducing expenses. You know, I see these people got leases on cars. Get rid of those cars and I'd be lowering my, uh, uh, my expenses. I would be thinking about what else I need to do, uh, with, uh, get ahead of it and go talk to your creditors before you get there and see what you can work out in advance. And look at every penny. You know, for years I used to record every morning, I'd go through and check my every dime I spent and record it. So I knew how much I spent for everything. And, uh, by category, I had a little spreadsheet and just to remind me of stupidity, you know, uh, where I could back, where I could back off and wouldn't hurt a bit. You know, only thing you can do in a recession is reduce your expenses. And, uh, and you got your new job's, gotta be looking for a job. You've got to get up every morning and work it, work it, work it, because you're unemployed you get a little depressed and it's easy not to be working it all week. And don't be afraid to take any job. You know, I have to go back to work. Uh, I can find

something to do. I, you know, I was the best waiter Washington Hilton had, so I can always go do that again.

Ray Edwards (15:07):

Yeah. \$50,000 is a lot better than \$0.

Lee Cockerell (15:10):

Exactly it is. And uh, but a lot of people are in pretty deep. And so they may need to get their house on the market and start thinking about longer term of working their way out of this thing because, uh, and the housing market is good, good time, sell your house and get some cash. Get some equity in it. And the housing market is booming in Orlando. I don't know how it is out your way, same way,

Ray Edwards (15:33):

Same way here. So the worst, what I'm hearing you say is the worst thing you can do is nothing.

Lee Cockerell (15:38):

Oh, absolutely. And that's exactly what happens when people go into shock. And um, they just sit and next thing you know, anxiety sets in and depression, and then, uh, you're paralyzed. Maybe your wife's got to go to work. Maybe your kids got to get jobs. Uh, you know, I mean, you gotta be real. I mean, it's because, and frankly, right now nobody cares about you. Cause they've got 30 million people with the same problem.

Ray Edwards (16:02):

Or worse.

Lee Cockerell (16:04):

Yeah. You could call your parents. They may not answer. I mean, you got a family, hopefully will family and friends, usually you can count on to give you some support.

Ray Edwards (16:13):

Okay. Let's shift gears. Now let's say you're a business owner. You didn't have to, you didn't go bankrupt. You're still functioning, still operating. What are some thoughts you give to business owners who have, they don't have virtual online businesses like you and I do. They have a real store with expenses. Like I co-own a coffee shop with my son. So we've managed to stay- we actually had our most profitable year ever, during the pandemic. That's a, that's a longer story. But what would you say to business owners right now who are struggling? They're wondering if they can make the payroll next month? What things would you tell them to do to keep the doors open and actually take? There's an op- I think there's an opportunity here. Let's start with this. Do you agree there's an opportunity to grow right now that what's coming is the opportunity to grow a bigger, more successful, stronger business. Do you agree with that?

Lee Cockerell (16:57):

Absolutely. I tell you the best advice I give people. If I was in that situation and I- if your coffee shop has 20 employees or whatever it has, I would, uh, lock the door one day and sit down and talk to them. Tell them we can be great. We're already doing well. I want you to make every customer come in here, get depressed if they ever think about going anywhere else, because you're treating them so well. And you're on top of it. And if they want a bottle of ketchup poured on their head, you do whatever they want. Pour it on their head. I mean,

give people just, I was telling a group yesterday, excellence is a state of mind. Guy says, well, how do you create ingenuity? I said, you doubt you let it happen. You tell your people, I need you. I need you to be on top of this with me. I need every idea you have. And uh, this is, this is not like we used to be just going along being, we're good. We gotta be really, really, really good. We've got a new coffee shop I go to every morning, it's called, Coffee For The Soul. There was another store, the store there that went out of business three months ago. And the new one's opened, another coffee shop right in the place where it went bankrupt. This guy, booming. Booming. I mean service is great and they're on top of it, and they remember your name and the food is terrific. And it's growing, growing, growing and people find quality. People find quality and they find niceness. They find where they're being treated right. Everybody wants to fit. Everybody wants to matter. And then if you find a coffee shop where they, you know, they don't throw me out when I'm sitting there for an hour with my laptop and taking up a seat. And, uh, that's a place I really look forward to going to, actually. It helps me mentally get out of the house, go there, be treated well.

Ray Edwards (18:37):

Sounds like they're creating some magic

Lee Cockerell (18:39):

Well, they are. And you know, as we said, anybody can create magic. It's employees. The employees are who create the magic. And uh, a lot of people think, well, Disney can do that, but I can't do it. Yes, you can. You can do it like anybody else. Hire the right people, train them and be nice to them. I call that, hire them, right. Train them. Right. And treat them right. And they'll do a great job for you. And, uh, you know, you'll get less turnover. You'll make more money. People come back more often. You can charge a little more when it's a great place. I mean, And every person, the bathroom has gotta be spotless at all of the time. You've got to open on time or 10 minutes early every day. You know, you got to not be out of anything. If you're out of something, you go to the store and you get it, you don't say, well, it didn't come in. You gotta be really upset with anything that's not going well.

Ray Edwards (19:30):

I love that. So talk a little bit about Cockerell Academy and what it is and how the, how the Disney experience you have all the decades of working with that great organization, how that translates to the local business person or the small, medium sized business person.

Lee Cockerell (19:44):

I think it probably translates more than people think. Well, yeah, big old Disney and big old Hilton, big old Marriott. Nah, that's not what's in this course. The things I, the reason Disney and Marriott and Hilton are successful is because they do these little things very well. And, uh, that's what we put in there is making sure people understand it's the little things, the things you don't know, the things you didn't learn in business school and the kinds of things that you can do that costs nothing- uh, attitude, how you hire, how to hire people, how to, how to terminate people, how to have a better, stronger, uh, ability to have these hard conversations, starting to teach people the things that you're pro. It's not about the coffee in your place. It's about the people, you know, the coffee is going to behave just fine every day. I told Chick-fil-A, it's not about the chickens. It's about the people. Any problem you have in your life is people. You got to start thinking more about people and less about, uh, you know, who are you? What do you do? What do you give me? You make me feel good when I come in. Coffee's coffee, you know, that's what you got to think more about, what are the, what impact are your people having instead of what impact does your coffee have? And both are important, but the people swipe, your people are your brand. That's why people come into your store. They come back because if you were a bunch of jerks in there, they wouldn't

come back, and they do. And uh, some of them don't even like the coffee and, uh, they come back anyway.

Ray Edwards (21:12):

Because they like the people. They it's-

Lee Cockerell (21:15):

Too much cream in it. You know, they don't like it that much.

Ray Edwards (21:17):

It's Coffee For The Soul. I love the name of that place. Yeah. And it's funny, you you've mentioned that some people say, well, fine. Disney can do that. And they don't understand things that Disney has done and continues to do that make the difference are the things that everybody can do, but hardly anybody does.

Lee Cockerell (21:34):

They underestimate what they can do. And that's a big- underestimation is one of the big problems in the world. Underestimates you and your influence. Underestimating what you can achieve. Underestimated. I mean, how many people do that?

Ray Edwards (21:45):

Uh, I think pretty much everybody, most of the time.

Lee Cockerell (21:48):

Yeah. They give up, but you know, well, I was poor. I didn't have a good, I didn't have a college degree. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Um, and then you get, uh, insecure when you get insecure, then you,

Ray Edwards (21:58):

And you get afraid. And then you end up in that fighting match with the couch, the couch wins and you're doing nothing. And the light comes on and you realize, Oh, maybe the common denominator problem here is my attitude or my thinking or my,

Lee Cockerell (22:10):

Uh, mental illness. Let me tell you, this is serious stuff. And it's real. And it's, there's a little, there's lightweight mental illness and there is heavy weight.

Ray Edwards (22:19):

Let's talk about that a little bit, because you mentioned anxiety earlier and there's a huge rise in anxiety and depression and suicide, in this pandemic broke out, it just keeps getting worse. And you, you mentioned that you've dealt with some depression. How does somebody know the difference between, because my experience tells me that people who are deeply depressed often deny that they are. So what is, what do you do if somebody, you love somebody in your household, maybe your spouse or your child or somebody in your family, you can see they're going down that road. What are some suggestions you have about how people could step in and help?

Lee Cockerell (22:56):

Yeah, well, I thought, what I found out and my doctor told me, and I did a lot of work for the, I do a lot of work for the military and they have a lot of issues in this area of depression and

suicide. And the number one problem is men don't go for help. Women go much easier for help and will go or will go talk to somebody. Men don't. Men uh, you know, we're big deal. We're macho. We don't need to talk to anybody. We'll just handle it other ways. And, uh, you're lucky if you got somebody around you who pushes you. My wife really made me go see a psychiatrist. I mean, I was probably in that same category. Hey, I'll get over this. It'll go. You know? And then I started drinking wine and taking Xanax, all that stuff, and it goes from bad to worse. And uh, so I went, she forced me to it. And my family, you know. But the people that are getting in real, the people are living alone. The people that don't have, older people, single people that don't have anybody that is, uh, is, uh, there to counsel them and to push them and to be clear with them and people you trust. That's the people who you'll listen to. And, and so I'd say you got to just be- you just got to keep pushing on it. You can't let it go just because they say, well, I'm okay. No, no, no. You gotta keep pushing, pushing, pushing. And, uh, some will go and some won't and there will be issues. And, uh, you know, it's kinda like people not wearing masks now. They're, they're too macho to wear a mask. It's a, it's a, you know, we don't wear a mask. Well, we don't see psychiatrists. We don't... Well, that's what gets you in trouble in the first place. It's not, uh, not being open to, uh, other people helping you. And there's, but I think some people won't go and some people can be talked into it if they got the right people pushing them and, and you gotta pay attention. There's people around you right now suffering, you probably don't even know. Because it, we all cover it up. The biggest problem we have is, you know, they said depressed people are the happiest, smiling, now everything's great. And you see all these suicides of these famous people in the last few years, they were just happy and joking around and next thing you know, they kill themselves. And so you gotta really be- know your people well. You got to pay attention to what's going on. And when they become remote and they don't want to talk to you and they, uh, don't want to meet with you. And, uh, those kinds of- if there's, if somebody changes, something has changed, that's what you gotta look out for.

Ray Edwards (25:22):

Oh, that's, that's really good. I I'm just gonna pop in here and say, I went through my own cycle of depression. Some of the things you're just saying are big clues. If people start not showing up, not wanting to meet, not wanting to get together, not- if you ask them how they're doing and they give you the I'm fine. And they quickly move on. I mean, these are clues they're, they're hiding something. And if you care about them and you have the rapport and the relationship, there's a time where you need to poke and prod and say, well, wait a minute. What do you mean you're fine. It kind of feels to me like, you're not fine.

Lee Cockerell (25:55):

And it's hard to get through it, especially with teenagers, you know. They are, Oh yeah, everything's fine and not. And they're the hardest to discover cause they're like that anyway, before the depression sets in. So it's hard to get through to them to see what's going on there.

Ray Edwards (26:10):

And if you really want to help people, I think one of the greatest things you can do is if you're in business for yourself, you own your own business, or you're a manager in a business, or you're thinking of starting a business. I think those are good things for you to do, because you can give people something to do, give them a purpose, give them a reason to get up and show up every day and expecting something of them. And those are all things I know you teach in the Academy. What- Cockerell Academy that sounds like it might be a really expensive thing. So tell us a little bit about that. Is it, who's it for?

Lee Cockerell (26:41):

I would say it's for anybody. It's 400 bucks a year now. And, uh, I guarantee I'll be shocked at anybody that says they didn't get value out of it because we're getting great feedback from companies and people who are using it. And I get notes from college kids who said, I have a college degree and I can't tell you how much I learned in this. It's amazing the things I didn't know. And I got promoted after I've been looking at this for three months and started behaving differently. So a lot of it's behavioral and, uh, and, uh, that's what it is. I mean, 400 bucks, nothing. If you really want, you know, if you want to be better, you got to get better. And if you want to do better, you got to get better. You gotta be- know more. You gotta, you gotta have those little small things that you do that nobody else does so people recognize that you're, you're, uh, in a different category because you understand people better and you deal with people better and you, you deal with your employees better. You know, half the leaders in the world and managers are their employees can't stand them. And, uh, it's like, uh, there's no upside to annoying your wife or your employees. You gotta treat people respectfully. Like your mother, you can be from, without being mean.

Ray Edwards (27:56):

Yeah. Yeah.

Lee Cockerell (27:58):

That's what life's about, being firm without being mean. Somebody told me once, be, uh, um, be flexible. Don't be hard. You know, hard things break easily. Flexible, like a saddle or a belt. They're flexible and they last forever, but there's too many hard people. They're just hard on, hard on people. And who has the right to do that. You got to ask yourself who has the right to go around it, intimidating people, making people feel scared and threatening their job? And God, that's a bad way to live.

Ray Edwards (28:27):

We call those people bullies.

Lee Cockerell (28:30):

Yes we do.

Ray Edwards (28:31):

So I just want to throw in here, we, we invested in the Cockerell Academy and I think it's a, it's a very small tuition, very small. And you, I mean, when I stop and think about it, how else can I go get advice and mentoring straight from the executive vice-president of one of the biggest companies in the world and with a track record like Walt Disney World has with all the things that, knowledge and wisdom that you've accumulated over the years for \$400 a year. Um, this and so much of this stuff is the things that are missing from the business and workplace education of just about everybody in America. So these are the things that you need to know to succeed. That's my belief.

Lee Cockerell (29:18):

Thank you for that comment. You know, I started mentoring a young man here in Orlando. He was not doing well in school. And I met him through a church and I gave him my books and he finally graduated. We held our breath to see if he was going to graduate. And I started meeting with him, talking to him and he started reading and he started getting enlightened. And I'd take him to a house of pancakes for pancakes, that's how I could keep him under control. And then I helped him get into college. And we got him a full ride at a community college. Nope, didn't cost him a penny because of the family, his family's income level. And

then we got him a job over at Orlando Icon where the big wheel is. And, uh, he's doing so well. It's amazing. They're putting him through marketing, finance, uh, I mean, and he got hired during the pandemic and he got hired because of his attitude and the guy is reliable. He shows up every day. And, uh, I just said, there's a guy that was living in a tough neighborhood in Orlando that could have been lost easily. And, uh, so people can learn. And he's a member of the Cockerell Academy. He got a free mentoring membership.

Ray Edwards (30:29):

It's his attitude that got him that, though.

Lee Cockerell (30:32):

Ya, he knows me, so I give him it complimentary.

Ray Edwards (30:33):

So just to remind folks, you were the senior operating executive for, for 10 years at Disney, Walt Disney world resort. You led a team of 40,000 cast members, 20 resort hotels, four theme parks, two water parks. Did you ever in your time there, did you ever go through a difficult economic time?

Lee Cockerell (30:54):

Uh, I, I didn't personally go through it.

Ray Edwards (30:56):

I mean, did, did, did, was the country going through any kind of economic difficulties or downturns and you led the team through that? That's what I was asking.

Lee Cockerell (31:04):

Absolutely. I've been through the hurricanes through 911, when we lost 35% of our business in one day. They started canceling. We had to take \$400 million out of our cost base for a couple of months. I mean, we had to dig down deep, uh, and, and I could add to that, you know, and I don't have a college degree. So maybe the Cockerell Academy is the way to go. And I gave the commencement address at Oklahoma State where I dropped out of. So, uh, uh, I thought that was it. That was cool. I mean, that was my day, high. And, um, now I wish I had finished, but I didn't. And that's why I want people to realize don't underestimate. Pick yourself up when you're 20 years old and you got plenty of time to learn, get on the internet, take courses, read, find something you love. And, uh, when you're 35, you'll be done. Okay. And when you're 45, you're a bit better. And when you, I mean, it's progressive. And I knew nothing when I was 20. Nothing.

Ray Edwards (32:02):

Well, and my point in bringing all that up was to say, here's an opportunity to learn from somebody who's been through big economic downturns in the U S economy and the world, economy, big upheavals in terms of war, potential war, attacks, all, all the things you can imagine. A lot of people say these times are unprecedented. Well, not really. It's all happened before and it'll all happen again. And you've seen a big successful company through this. And I just appreciate the fact that, uh, when wisdom is available, we should take advantage of it. We should step in and learn from somebody who's been down this road before. And I think you're a great person for people to learn from. I appreciate you doing what you do.

Lee Cockerell (32:49):

Thank you. Appreciate it. Yeah.

Ray Edwards (32:52):

So if people want to know more about the Cockerell Academy or they want to know more about you or your books, or just benefit from some of your knowledge, where's the best place for them to go online, to find you?

Lee Cockerell (33:04):

Yeah, well, you can go to my website, Leecockerell.com and then the Cockerell, Academy's there. The podcast is there, the books I, since I'm getting old and forgetting things, I put everything in one place so I know where it is. Leecockerell.com and you'll find it all on there. Uh, free stuff, uh, stuff you can buy. Uh, and, uh, we are adding to it.

Ray Edwards (33:28):

Got a pretty good podcast too.

Lee Cockerell (33:31):

Yeah. Jody Mayberry, there. He got me hooked into that thing and we've done, I don't know, 330 sessions or something by now, six years, we've never missed one Tuesday morning.

Ray Edwards (33:41):

Jody's like a podcast pusher. He gets all these people hooked on podcasts- on doing them.

Lee Cockerell (33:46):

He said, he called me. He said, do you want to have your own podcast? I said, I don't even know what a podcast is, so let's start there. So we got started and we just do it. And he's in Seattle and I'm in Orlando. And, uh, we spend a lot of time on Zoom.

Ray Edwards (34:03):

Well, I think a lot of us could say that these days. So I feel like at least half of my conversations every day start with, um, you're on mute.

Lee Cockerell (34:11):

Yeah. Well, my wife wanted to know where I was. She thought I had a girlfriend and I told her, I was just on Zoom. I mean, I was just talking to Jody.

Ray Edwards (34:18):

I'm just zooming, baby.

Lee Cockerell (34:20):

Zooming today. So, uh, yeah, it's a lot of fun. And when you talk about expenses, I'll tell you when we lived in New York, we had nothing or in our, my early career, and I used to leave my wife, a \$5 bill and a \$1 bill every morning. We lived in Queens and that was for our day's food, 10 jars of baby food. My getting my shirts done, which were 35 cents then. Dave Ramsey has better ideas, but that's how we managed our expenses- cash. We got it, you take it out of the box. If you don't have it, you have more pasta tonight.

Ray Edwards (34:54):

I think that works. Lee, I want to thank you very much for taking time to chat with us and share some of the nuggets of wisdom that you've given us. We'll have links to your site and to the Cockerell Academy and the podcast. It'll be in the show notes for this episode of the show. You have, you have any thoughts you'd like to share before we wrap up.

Lee Cockerell ([35:13](#)):

It's never too late to get better. My last comment.

Ray Edwards ([35:19](#)):

It's a good one. I think I'm going to stick with that.

Kris Edwards ([35:22](#)):

That's it for this week, though show notes are at rayedwards.com/506. Back next week with another episode. See ya.

Announcer ([35:34](#)):

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