

# DARE TO FLY HIGHER



with **Glenn Taylor**

LEADERSHIP | CAREERS | TEAMS



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## Episode 007: Leading Well and the Wellbeing of Leaders with Jeffrey Frey

This episode features an interview with Jeff Frey, a technology innovation consultant, professor of entrepreneurship, startup advisor, and scholar of leadership. We talk about leading well, career transitions, technology and innovation, and the wellbeing of leaders. <https://goskybound.com/podcasts-videos/episode-007/>

Glenn Taylor: <https://goskybound.com/about/>

Jeff Frey: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jdfrey/> | <https://twitter.com/jeffdfrey>

Glenn Taylor: Hey, what's up everybody? This is Glenn Taylor from Skybound Coaching & Training, and you're listening to episode seven of the Dare to Fly Higher podcast, focused on helping you step up your leadership, career or team. In this episode, I'll be interviewing Jeffrey Frey, a technology innovation consultant, professor of entrepreneurship, a startup advisor and a scholar of leadership. We'll be discussing his views on leadership, career transitions, technology and the wellbeing of leaders, so stick around.

Hey there, and thanks for joining me for this seventh episode of the Dare to Fly podcast. I'm Glenn Taylor with Skybound Coaching & Training, and first of all, I just want to say, please forgive the nasal timbre of my voice this week. I've been fighting off a flu over the last few days. Anyway, I'm getting better. I'm pushing ahead and I'm glad that you're here with me on this episode of the podcast.

Before we jump into the interview with Jeff, I want to make sure that you know about an e-book that I've written. It's called Step Up Your Leadership: 5 Steps to Becoming a More Empowered Leader. I'd love for you to check it out. It's available at [goskybound.com](http://goskybound.com). In it, I take you through five steps, including how to get in a leadership stance first and foremost, then clarifying your core, so core values, strengths and qualities, aligning with purpose, owning your influence and playing big. Those are the five steps. Each section includes focus questions and action items, suggested concrete action items so you can really apply the insights in your day to day.

I'm also just really proud of the design. It's I think aesthetically beautiful and it's easy to read and navigate, so encourage you to check that out at [goskybound.com](http://goskybound.com). I would be honored for you to take a look.

Now getting into today's interview with Jeff Frey, I do want to mention that between when Jeff and I did this interview originally and today, Jeff has actually taken on an exciting role as the Director of the McNair Center for Entrepreneurship and Free Enterprise at HBU, which is Houston Baptist University. He'll also be teaching entrepreneurship in their College of Business. He'll continue his consulting practice called FurtherFaster, as is mentioned in the podcast, but this was an opportunity he just couldn't pass up, so congrats to him for sure.

Jeff is just a terrific guy. Really happy to know him, and he's not only brilliant and so driven and entrepreneurial, but has a good heart and devotes himself to bettering others, which I really appreciate. Enjoy this conversation with Jeff. All right, Jeff Frey, thanks so much for joining me on the Dare to Fly Higher podcast.

Jeff Frey: Hey thanks, I appreciate being here.

Glenn Taylor: In this episode, we're going to discuss a few things. Really excited to hit on all these topics. We're going to chat about your views on leadership, a bit about career transitions, discuss how leadership and technology intersect. You've been

involved in technology in a number of your jobs and positions. Also, we're going to look at a topic that I think is really relevant to people, maybe not often discussed, which is about the wellbeing of leaders. How leaders can ensure that their work and their health is sustainable, specifically maybe in the nonprofit sector. I know you've looked at that through some of your doctor at work, so we'll look at that.

Before we jump into that, so let's set the stage a bit with some background on you. I'll start and say that you and I met a while back when I was working in marketing at the Houston Symphony and you were working in technology for Rice University. Then if I've enjoyed the fact that we've supported each other's work for a number of years now as both of our careers have really morphed and grown in different directions. I'll let you tell us a little bit about yourself and your own career journey.

Jeff Frey: Well thanks again for having me here, and I very much appreciate the support in the career journey that we've shared. It's been fun to go back and forth on some of the things that we've had in our lives.

Glenn Taylor: Yeah.

Jeff Frey: As you know, and I'll tell the folks at home, I've got a master's degree in computer science a while back, and I came up through developer ranks fairly quickly. I remember the first time I was put in charge of four people. It was just quickly after I got the master's degree, "Here's four developers and do with them what you will."

Right out of college, I went into some innovative things, nuclear propulsion units, steam generators, fuel cells and a lot around energy. Found my way to Rice University where I manage the technology solutions group for them in the IT department. It was a cost recovery solution, so it was like having a small business on campus, which was unique.

While I was there, I got my executive MBA from there. I had more management books in my office than I had technology books. I was like, "Hey this tech thing is great, but I need the management side."

Glenn Taylor: You need the soft skills, the people stuff.

Jeff Frey: Right, right, exactly.

Glenn Taylor: When you were at Rice, you actually had an interesting experience. You were living, at least for a part of the time, you and your wife, were living on campus like in one of the dorms or colleges there right?

Jeff Frey: I did. We were more mom and dad to 420 students, so we did that for five years. I lived on campus, I worked on campus, I went to school on campus, I taught

some classes on campus. All the sporting events were on campus. It was a great place to be for those five years.

Glenn Taylor: It was your life.

Jeff Frey: I made a transition to MD Anderson where I was over there at Digital Experience, and then I helped them start an innovation center. Now I'm working-

Glenn Taylor: They're one of the major cancer hospitals. Sorry. For people that don't know, MD Anderson.

Jeff Frey: Yeah, yeah, MD Anderson, number one cancer hospital in the country, U.S. News World Report for the last ... I think they've been going for 24 years and it's 22 out of the last 24 years that they've been [inaudible 00:06:13].

Glenn Taylor: Wow.

Jeff Frey: It was a great place to work. As to now, I'm working on a PhD, healthcare innovation. The actual degree is sustainability, but I'm working through healthcare innovation things. I actually left MD Anderson and I started my own innovation consulting practice. I call it FurtherFaster, and I'm spending time on that, on my PhD, and then my wife has a wellness startup called Wellevations (<http://wellevations.com>) and I'm helping her spending more time on that as well. That's what I have going on right now.

Glenn Taylor: Yeah, just a few things, not much.

Jeff Frey: Just a few things, yeah, and I have a two year old and a five year old boy. They both started. One started preschool and one started kindergarten.

Glenn Taylor: Wow.

Jeff Frey: Two weeks to go, so yeah.

Glenn Taylor: That's a hands' full.

Jeff Frey: Yeah.

Glenn Taylor: You took us through a career path here and some of the changes you've made. I'm curious how you see that in terms of if there is a through line or what has guided your career path in terms of the transitions you've made? Maybe there have been some different sparks or different reasons that things happened, but I'm just interested in how you see that now looking back.

Jeff Frey: Well I'd love to say that everything was planned, but it wasn't. I'm a planner, so I have spreadsheets on top of spreadsheets and I have programs and notes about

what I could be doing or should be doing and what I want to do by when. I have all these options laid out, and I've always done that.

The title FurtherFaster actually came up in junior high for me, and folks were saying, "Well just do these math problems." I'm going, "That can't be all that gets me into a good school, so I can get a good job so I can get a good this," and that and the other thing. I come up with that, and fortunately my mom and dad supported that they actually made me hats and T-shirts that said FurtherFaster when I was in junior high.

Glenn Taylor: That's cool. You never told me that.

Jeff Frey: Yeah, yeah, no, no, they actually supported that, and I still remember that. I had my first FurtherFaster hat. I don't know how old I was, but it's all ratty and it's actually sitting in my closet right now. I've always had this thought of how can I get further at a faster pace? Not just for the sake of getting further, but I see all these options laid out in front of me, and I think, "Well which one's going to make it the best one? Which one is going to get me there the furthest, the fastest?" I'm a planner.

However, and also some of my transitions were really strategic, the MD Anderson move. I bounced from Pittsburgh to Cleveland to New Orleans, and those were strategic moves inside of a couple companies to go from a regional office to a corporate office. Those were strategic, but then whether you believe in a higher power or God, the universe, some of it was literally just closing my eyes and holding on. When I open my eyes, I'm in a totally different place. I love where I'm at. I would never have thought of getting here on my own, and there it. Some of the times I think of myself, I'm so glad I didn't end up where I wanted to end up because I'm in such a better place that I ended up where we didn't really wanted to end up.

Glenn Taylor: Yeah, yeah, the future you couldn't quite see, what ended up being better than what you thought.

Jeff Frey: I think both of those are important. It's totally, totally different things. It's like by happenstance or by not my control, and then completely my control. There's not too much gray area. I feel like I need to control it or I just throw my hands up and let it go and it's going to happen. Those two things are basically how I got to all of my different places. It was either planned or completely unplanned.

Glenn Taylor: That's good for people to hear because I think especially there's that idea that I've got to know the plan now and I've got to make the decision now based on that plan; otherwise, I'm screwed. My career, my future is not going to unfold 'correctly or successfully'. Like you're saying, I think it's a paradox, like so many things are I feel like where you've got to be proactive. You've got to be putting it out there. You've got to be open, you've got to be developing yourself, building your network. Then you also have to be on the ride with your hands up.

Jeff Frey: Right. For people not just building their career, but people who have made or were making career transition, that was not their choice. There's a lot of companies right now that are doing something different, closing doors or cutting funding. I meet people who are in a career transition not by their choosing, and they've been there for a month or two or five or half a year or something.

Those times can be some of the best times of figuring yourself out, exactly what do I want to do? I get a chance ... I wouldn't have had the chance. I've been through those. I wouldn't have had the chance to step back and figure out what I really wanted to do. I would still be in that other job and I would still be with my spreadsheet and my plan and know when I can get done. That transition gives me the opportunity to step back and go, "Okay, well, let's open this up again. Let's instead of trying to keep with that plan, that plan shot now, let's open it back up real wide. Maybe it narrows back down to the exact plan I had, but let's open it up real wide and give me the opportunity which I never would have done if I hadn't been put in that situation."

Glenn Taylor: It really actually forces you to do that in some ways because it's like, "Yeah, I'm so thrown off now. I have to regroup and look at my foundations." I like what you said about winding it up. It's like you have to then look at everything again to know where to head next, to be putting out the right intentions or energy so that something happens.

Since we started talking about career development and career transitions, I'm wondering so what tips or strategies, if you could maybe draw out one or two things, things that you've learned related to career transitions when you've been in that place.

Jeff Frey: I think you said it, putting yourselves in positions and things. There's a couple of folks who have said, "Oh that was lucky," or something, "That was lucky. Oh, wow, you lucked out on that one," something. I have a hard time with luck. What I tell people in almost every situation that someone has said, "Wow, that was lucky that that was open or you fell into that," or something. I have this philosophy around luck that it's half location and half preparation.

Glenn Taylor: Half location and half preparation.

Jeff Frey: Half location and half preparation; that's usually what I would tell people. I feel like the first part is putting yourself in a place to be able to get an opportunity. You need for location, you ... I'm not talking geographical. I'm saying in general, putting yourself out there. Even volunteering at a place that you want to volunteer at even rubbing shoulders with people that you wouldn't normally rub shoulders with, widening your network. There's a lot of different things.

Even some of this is geographical. Putting yourself in a city that has more opportunities to do other things that you want to do. Getting yourself into a

place where you could be looked at as the person that could do that. Some of the opportunity, some of the luck that I've had, I consider me doing a whole lot of work for that is getting myself speaking, getting myself out there, talking to folks that I might potentially wouldn't normally talk to. Just being seen as a person that ... Well that person might be somebody who can do this. I'm in that location first, and that's half of it.

Then the other one is preparation. I might look really good that, "Oh, it looks like that guy can do it." I'm fluffing it. I don't have the skills and I don't have the background. I wasn't prepared to take the opportunity." You have to be prepared to take the opportunity. To me, half of it is I put myself in a position where someone would look at me and go, "That guy might be good at this." Then the other half is me being able to say, "Yes, I accept that. I've got some background or I can get up to speed very quickly to be able to do that."

You want to continually work on your location and your preparation. If you want to be doing a certain job but you don't have the skills for it, go get those skills ahead of time and don't wait for someone to ask you because you're not going to be able to take it. If you want to a certain job, but you're not in any of the circles that people that have those jobs start getting into those circles before you have that job.

I think those two things to me are, one, strategy. Like I said, I lived at Rice University for a while, and I remember taking walks with students and getting this out there to them. They're looking at, "Oh I'd love to do that thing." I'd say, "Okay, well great, what are you doing to get there?" "I don't know. Nothing but I would really love to do that." It's like, "Okay, well if you'd love to do that, then what you need to do is first get yourself in a position to look like someone who could do that. Then two, get the skills and things to be able to do that and don't wait for some ... Someone is just not going to come and tap on your shoulder and say, 'Here it is.'" You've got to have the location and the preparation.

Glenn Taylor: Cool. Good, yeah. I think that breaks it down well in a simple way. One of the things you have to do that sometimes it's more art than science, but there's tangible ways here to prep yourself to be ready to have the tools in your toolbox for when the opportunities come up. That's good. Sometimes I think of it like an art, like dance or like music where you have to develop these skills. Then in the moment, they present themselves or you bring them out as they're needed. You have to have developed them along the way.

Cool. Let's shift a bit from career to leadership, and I ask a lot of my guests this question because I think everyone has a slightly different perspective. Just the basics here, how do you view leadership?

Jeff Frey: How do I view leadership?

Glenn Taylor: Yeah.

Jeff Frey: What's interesting that you didn't ask about good leadership or bad leadership, just leadership. Because it's hard to define good leadership, but we all know bad leadership when we see it. It's a little different. Personally, I've always been about innovation, I've always been about creating a vision about looking really far out and trying to stay maybe a North Star for people and then encouraging them to get there, and helping support them to get there.

Individually, I feel like everybody is on a different path. I feel like everybody, every person, if you're a leader every person, that's following has a different way that they need to be interacted with to get the most toward that vision as possible. I'm very [inaudible 00:18:28] about setting a vision and then coming alongside of people individually and trying to help them get there and encouraging them.

I feel like everyone's on an upward trajectory. Everyone's going towards; it's just some people maybe start at a different level, some people are closer and some people are further away, and then some people go slower than others. The people who are far away might go faster and they might go slower, and the people that are closer are same thing.

Basically, if the vision is there to inspire, to motivate, and then I personally can come alongside somebody to help them get there, I feel like that's leadership to me. I guess that's my own embodiment of leadership. There's definitions and there's great leaders, and I've seen them do other things personally. My leadership style is to set that vision and then come alongside people individually to help them get there. Does that make sense?

Glenn Taylor: Yeah, definitely. Right, it's like a combination of a visionary leader who is focused on setting that future to move towards. Then also it's very empowering. I mean that's how I would describe it. Empowering, meaning that you're outwardly focused on your team members and what they need to develop them and almost in a coaching way as well.

Jeff Frey: Right, right.

Glenn Taylor: Well you mentioned that we all know what bad leadership looks like. How would you describe that? I'm throwing this question at a bit of a curveball to you, but ...

Jeff Frey: No, I mean there's a lot of folks who really try to impose their ways. I guess maybe it's my version of bad leadership. I can't really take folks who just impose. A long time ago, I realized that I am a person who ... I try to push the envelope. I'm a little impatient, and so I might try to just move forward and try to impose some of the things that I've got on other folks. That to me, I can't take that. When I do that, I go, "Oh man, that's something I hate." I know that I can't stand that. I'm looking for that [inaudible 00:20:51] and some other things. To me, that's the worst leadership is just coming in dictating and expecting. Go off and

do what I just said without having a little bit of consensus, and then the encouragement to get there.

Glenn Taylor: More of an autocratic, authoritative giving orders ...

Jeff Frey: Yeah.

Glenn Taylor: Kind of style. Let's see. What leadership lessons, if any ... Some important things that stand out to you. You've done a number of things. You've been part of a handful of different organizations, if not more. You've seen a lot in terms of good leadership, bad leadership, maybe some mistakes you've made. What are some important leadership lessons you learned through your experience?

Jeff Frey: I'll go back to the bad leadership. When I was first put in charge of some folks, I was really about the outcomes of the business. I quickly learned that that wasn't really going to get me anywhere. I saw this further, faster thing in my brain, and I was trying to figure that out. I very quickly learned that really it wasn't about the job, it wasn't about the work product. I know that stuff is important, but if I focused on that, I wasn't going to get those things out that I needed. It was really about the people. If I'm encouraging people from coming alongside people, really if I take care of the people, I believe that the awesome work product will come out of that. I've seen that time and time and time again.

I was hiring somebody at Rice, and one of the ... "What's your leadership style?" I remember answering a question and thinking, "Is that really what I think?" Then I held on to it since then, and I told the person, I said, "Look, you know what? If I can help you make a great living for you and your family, doing things that you would like to do, that you want to do, that you find enjoyable, and a company gets something amazing out of it, then we're good."

It starts with you doing something that you wanted to do, you making a living. This is your career. If you are doing well in that, then I believe that this company is going to get the things out of you it needs to get out of, and the work product will get done and [inaudible 00:23:24]. We can't always do everything that we want to do in our jobs. You're told of those things.

For performance appraisals, I used to have them do a quarterly, something I called start, stop and continue, which we've all heard of that. I say, "Hey, so give me one to three things that you're not doing now that you'd like to start, one to three things that you're doing now that you'd like to stop and give me one to three things that it's your bread and butter. It's what you want to continue. If I did this the rest of the year, my life, I would be fine with it."

That's a really interesting conversation because if a staff of 50 or 80 or something come to me with those, there are some people who want to start things that other peoples want to stop. There's some people who want to stop things that other people want to start, and you can mix them up as a group and say, "Well

Sarah wants to do this. Tim did you know ... Why don't you guys ...” Yeah, and then this person's happier.

Some of the stop things, I tell them, “Look, I can't make any promises. We all want to do stuff. We don't want to do in our jobs, but maybe I can sprinkle more start stuff in, and get you to start more things even though you have to do these things that you want to stop, instead of you just doing all things you want to stop.”

Then of course you get a couple of people who just write everything down, and I don't even know why they're there. It's like why are you here then? You should be doing-

Glenn Taylor: You mean if they want to stop everything that they're-

Jeff Frey: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You should be doing something you want to do. This is not the place for you to have a job. This is one of those times where you can make your career transition. I love that. I love that start, stop and continue, and I love having those conversations with employees because they really open up to ... “These are things that I still don't want to do anymore. Why are you making me do these things?” Then here's some things that if I could do these things, it'd be great.

It's good to have those conversations to be able to ... If a person's out there and they don't have a manager that asks them those questions, I would say that ... I don't know too many managers who wouldn't want to know those things. Maybe you'd want maybe, but they just may not be asking it. If you came up with your start, stop, continue list and maybe you didn't call it that, but then your next conversation with whether it was performance appraisal or self-appraisal, just have, “Hey, can I talk to you for a minute?” If you walked in the door with those and said, “Here's some things that I have one. I love this about it. I can continue doing this forever, but here's some things I'd like to stop, here's some things that I'd like to start. What do you think?”

Glenn Taylor: Yeah, I love how simple that framework is, but yeah, it really opens up some good, meaty discussion.

Jeff Frey: Huge conversations, yeah.

Glenn Taylor: Yeah, and it's good for the supervisor because then you know clearly, helps clarify what are the things that this person is really motivated? What are they motivated to do? What are they connecting to about the job? Then one of the things that they're not connecting to that they are not motivated to do, and so is that about understanding or creating a better understanding about those things and how those are important? What the impact is? Or is it about is it like a misalignment discussion? Like, “Okay, these things are important, but ...”

Jeff Frey: I think that goes to what I was talking about with personal, being very personal with each person. I always kept those files, and I would always slip a piece of paper or ... I'm kind of digital, so I'd take a picture and I'd throw it ... If they were writing it to me, I'd throw it up as [inaudible 00:27:02] or something. I would literally go through and review them every once in a while and go, "Well can I cross that one off? How can I do this? What can we do?"

Some people, it's very practical, and some of it is still very high picture. Well, I'd really like to get some management experience, and things. I'd say, "Well, I'll let you help with the budget." That's manage ... Like, "No, I don't want to do that." No, that's part of being the management, right?

Glenn Taylor: Yeah.

Jeff Frey: I'll let you help with budget, and then other people would say, "Heads down coder guy, hey, I just don't want to go to so many meetings. I've got meeting after meeting." He needed a handler. He needed a little buffer, and "Hey, okay, one of the developers, you're going to rotate. All four of you don't have to be there. One of you can go to each meeting." Because all of them said they didn't want to go to the meetings. They just want to sit in our office and code all day. That's fine. I didn't know that. I'm inviting you all because I thought you might want to be there and you might want to hear what's go on and you don't want secondhand information. Nobody told me that.

I feel like everybody individually, if I knew what they really wanted to do and didn't want to do, I can try to fashion the organization around those things.

Glenn Taylor: That's cool. Yeah, it brings in that employee development or personal growth discussion as well. Yeah, where do you want to head in the future? What skills do you need? Just bringing that back to how you started that was that people focus versus bottom line or work product focus.

I'm going to play devil's advocate there. How realistic do you think that is with some ... Some organizations maybe feel like they can't ever get there, or maybe they're just blind. They have a blind spot, or they're stuck in old ways of thinking. Because ultimately it's profitability that runs businesses, right?

Jeff Frey: Right.

Glenn Taylor: Is it pie in the sky or is it possible?

Jeff Frey: I think there's simple ways to do that. I'm running a board retreat this week for an organization, and I went into the organization and I interviewed just a few people ahead of time just to understand what the state of the organization was. Because one of my presentations, I don't want them to get up and present. I want to present and then I want to have them correct me. I was moving on to say, "Here's what I understand the state of the organization to be."

What I learned is that the staff have a completely different view of the organization than the board of directors, than the management team. As I was looking through it, literally it's just completely separate. A very simple way to 'focus on the people' if you don't know how to do it day to day, what I'm doing with them is I'm actually having staff members attend the board retreats, which they haven't done before. I'm saying, "Look, let's bring your staff in."

Then I'm going to do is I'm going to do an exercise at the beginning to say, "Hey everybody, here's some Post-it notes. I want you to write down three things that you think is going great about this organization. These are the most amazing things that are happening in the organization." As you're bringing in sticky notes, "Here you go. Just sharp [inaudible 00:30:00]. Then here's your red sticky notes. Here's your red Post-it notes. I want you to write down three ... One Post-it note for each one. Three, just three ... things that you don't think are going well."

I know it's going to happen instantaneously. Instantaneously, the board is going to say, "We think these are the good things and these are the bad things." Then the staff is going to say, "These are ..." They're going to align, and I'm going to gather all of the Post-it notes without really saying who they came from or anything, and we're going to start categorizing.

Those things are going to pop up, and then we're going to look down, and we're going to have a frank conversation about what we think is going well and what we don't think is going well. I know there's going to be some people in there that are going to be surprised on both sides.

I think that we'll get to. Just slightly start to get to thinking about the people in that organization and what they're dealing with instead of looking at accounting reports and looking at a board book, and saying, "Well here's the decision we need to make. We need to increase our volume numbers," which is what they want to do. The staff is saying, "Yeah, but we can't do our jobs. If you put more on us, we're not going to ..." There's a decreasing rate of return for them. There are some things that you can do even in meetings just to start to approximate the fact that you're thinking about the people instead of the profit.

Glenn Taylor:

Yeah, and I think this really speaks to an organizational culture thing. It's being about the people. It has to take hold in the culture. I think it has to be led by leadership and everyone has to understand that that's part of what we are. Really, there's so much work, and I think of consulting companies out there now who their focus area right now is to help companies be more purpose-driven to help them be more people-driven. That translates to bottom line. It's just sometimes it's a tough switch in perspective for companies that are very focused on productivity, you've got the pressure from the shareholders. It easily becomes about bottom line, it becomes more fear-based, more scarcity-based, and that's really got to shift I think for a lot of organizations.

All right, cool. We need to talk about some stuff there about teams and companies, which is great. Let's see. Did you have a mistake that either you've made yourself or you've seen made that you wanted to mention? Like something you learned from him?

Jeff Frey: I think I passed over a little while ago when we were talking, but that whole push ahead consensus thing, I feel like I know where I want something to go. I might sit by myself and I might plan it out, and then I might show up and say, "Here's where we're going." That doesn't typically work as much as if I get a few people in the room and we discuss it. Even if at the end of the day, it's the same exact thing that happened. I may feel because of my further faster nature, I may feel like that was a waste of time. That was definitely not a waste of time. Early in my career I would have said, "Why did we have to sit there and do that? We're just doing the same thing I said we were going to do two hours ago."

Having those people on board, especially for virtual teams, and again it worked with a lot of nonprofits, especially for volunteers, just telling them what you're up to. It's, "Okay, this is what we're doing and there we go." If there is any which way to get them involved ahead a time at all, and even if you have the same outcome, it really does make people feel like they're involved. You should want their involvement.

There are some things going on, like the thing you just said with focusing on the people that even if it's not in your nature to get other people involved and you think that you could come up with a better solution, and you need those people down the road, and it is good to get them involved.

Glenn Taylor: Yeah, the engagement's important. This is tricky for leaders because I've actually seen ... Well I just wonder, it's like if you do that engagement, you have to actually be open to the outcome being different or being impacted by the feedback. Can't just be a lip service piece, right?

Jeff Frey: Yeah. No, because they'll see through that right?

Glenn Taylor: Yeah, yeah.

Jeff Frey: They'll definitely see through that. Then I'll have the opposite effect. Well I was at a company. This is true story. I was at a company and they do an employee survey, all employees, and it's like, "How do you feel about what's going on here?" There was a very negative aspect on one ... One of the things was real low, I'll just say, and it was around leadership. It was around something of a leadership.

They said, "Okay, well we're going to do. This is so low, everybody is saying it. We're going to create little teams of people to come up with ideas on how to solve that." They spent the next six months coming with these ideas, meeting, and then everybody had to have a readout and all that. Then they took the ideas

and said, "Oh these are great. These are great ideas." Then they didn't do anything with them.

Glenn Taylor: That's the worst.

Jeff Frey: I got my employees saying to me, "That's worse than thinking in the first place." It was bad, but then to ask us what to do and have us in our time telling you, and then you not do anything about it, that's actually worse than the thing that was actually going on." In the next year's employ survey, it was nobody listens to us and or any of the ideas and they waste your time, which was lower than the original thing that they were trying to fix in the first place.

Yeah, they see through it if it's lip service, if you don't do anything with the ideas, that doesn't make any sense. Yeah, for sure.

Glenn Taylor: Let's talk a bit about technology. That's been a been a pretty significant part of your career background, your studies. How do you feel like leaders of today should be viewing technology, the role that it can play?

Jeff Frey: It really is an enabler for the mission of what you want to do in the first place. A lot of people are saying, "Oh, we've got to use Internet of Things and we need to do this or we've got to upgrade this or we need to spend more money."

Glenn Taylor: Like an end in itself?

Jeff Frey: Yeah, and it's technology for technology's sake. I need the new this and I would be more productive. Would you really? Yeah, it might automate something, it might help you out a little bit. I just see a lot of companies reaching for different types of technology solutions, and costs have come down on a lot of things like artificial intelligence and voice. Like I said, that IoT and sensors. That data, how is that data going to help your organization? What is the mission of the organization and how do we best do that? If you best do that by ... I'm going to the say paper here, but I mean ...

Glenn Taylor: What's paper?

Jeff Frey: If you best do that by paper for some reason, okay, then use the paper. I could think of a couple of scenarios. We had hospitals and things. We were handing out clipboards to people with pens and we were asking them what their birthdate was on every sheet of paper and we were asking them ... Their birthday pretty much hasn't changed since the last time we asked them that. Maybe we'll ask them their new address, but we can pretty much look that up too. There's lots of things.

Handing them an iPad that has things pre-filled in, that to me makes sense. That's a technology that is not just for technology's sake that it does help the patient experience.

Glenn Taylor: It adds value.

Jeff Frey: Yeah, it does. In other situations, doing something without the technology actually it might make more sense. I'm very big on technology being seen as not the start, but the finish. You've got something you want to do. What's the best way to get that done, and if that involves a new technology that you can utilize in some way, amazing.

Glenn Taylor: I got you. I got you. Yeah, there's got to be a strategy. There's got to be a reason. It's got to be part of a solution, not just a goal in itself. I don't know if this question is any different, but as a coach, as a consultant, and you as well working with organizations, a lot of change is always happening. Change is a constant, and how do you view innovation as it relates to change? Is innovation, is it the same thing as change? Is it different?

Jeff Frey: I think innovation is both an antecedent and a consequence of change. If you think about it, innovation, people are coming up with things. There are people that are just coming up with things for the sake of coming up with things. When they do that, that causes change. I also think that change happens in a world which makes people want to come up with new things, and so innovation becomes a consequence. I think it flows hand in hand with change. It causes it and it comes from it.

Some people think innovation is only a new thing that's done in a new way. It's a brand new thing nobody's seen before, and I think a lot of organization and a lot of people feel like they're not innovating, if that's not their definition, if that's not what they're doing. I've seen great innovation happen by taking the old things and using it new ways or taking new things and using it for old ways. You'd have an organization that has this thing that they're using, and they stay, "Wait, what if we took it and what if we used it over here?"

Now they've got this thing that they've always had around this procedure, this concept, this widget, this product, this whatever, and they apply it to something new. To me that's innovation. In another way, you could have all of these old ways you're doing things, and then all of a sudden, a new widget shows up. You've got this new thing to be able to do this old way. We've got it mapped into your organization.

I don't think it has to be new, new, and has to be something absolutely groundbreaking that no one's ever seen before. I think taking something and applying it to your organization in a new way is also innovation. Again, like you said, the change is constant. That could cause a change or that could be cause of the change to me.

Glenn Taylor: Yeah, I got you. That widens the view of innovation. I like that because sometimes I think it tends to be defined narrowly as doing something different

or new, evolving something. There are other ways it could be applied or could show up.

Jeff Frey: Right.

Glenn Taylor: All right. Let's go to the topic of wellbeing of leaders. First I want to ask you about a concept that is often talked about and I've heard people dispute that it even is valid or we need to redefine it. We need to think about it differently, and that's this idea of work like balance. When we look holistically, I imagine that's what when you say wellbeing of leaders, you're looking at them holistically. There's that concept of balance, but I'm wondering your opinion on that. Just to set this up, the reason we're talking about this, one of the reasons is not only because it's interesting, but because you're studying this quite a bit in your doctoral studies around sustainability, right?

Jeff Frey: Right, right. If I go back to it's all about the people, that thread and not FurtherFaster thread and a lot of things, it's all of that's culminated into this PhD study that I'm in right now. I have got several studies that I've done so far, and I've got one that's out right now. It's really about trying to connect the wellbeing health of a person and the outcome on the organization.

Specifically for me, I look at leaders because I think that leadership trickles down into the organization. If the leader is healthy, if they're well, if they feel good about their state of wellbeing, which could be mental, emotional, physical, financial, organizational, spiritual, there's all kinds of aspects of wellbeing. If they're doing well there, does that have a direct effect on the organization and then the constituents of that organization, both the employees, the clients and all that?

There's not too many studies that have been done to try to link those two things together. We know if a leader is healthy, they might have better engagement with their employees or if a leader ... There's things that are out there that I specifically really would love to know how has leadership wellbeing affects the organization, and specifically the other people, from the people to the people? If the highest person is doing really well and killing it, does that affect and does that go well for the organization and the people that are in that organization?

Specifically, I'm looking at non-profit organization leaders because they have a tendency to burn out faster more than the for profit leaders because they have a mission-based organization, and they are have a personal mission. Typically, in a non-profit organization, those two things align. A lot of these are founders. This applies to other things. I'm high on entrepreneurship, on parts of entrepreneur organizations, and I follow lots to start ups and I help mentor them.

Entrepreneurs, it's the same thing. It's their baby. "This is the organization I started. This is my thing." They have a tendency to stay up late and miss kid soccer games and they have ... Financially, they give of themselves pretty

significantly, both entrepreneurs and non-profit organization leaders. Then it translates into people who feel like they've got a stake in it. Doctors are in that as well and they have their patients with chronic illness. Then I found pastors and clergy have that as well because they feel like, "Well this calling was from God. This is what I should be doing. This is God's work?" They've really given themselves more than they would, so they have a tendency to burn out faster.

My PhD-

Glenn Taylor: Because of that extreme ownership and mission drive, they tend to maybe don't protect some boundaries?

Jeff Frey: Correct. What my studies are is trying to figure out what really is that? What is that thing that they've got and how do we convince them potentially that, "Hey, look, if you burn out, you're not doing good for anybody. Yeah, you want this organization to thrive. You want these people that are served by this organization to thrive, but if you're not thriving, you're going to burn out and then you're not going to be able to do anything for these people. It's actually in your best interest to back off just a little bit. I'm all about FurtherFaster. I'm the guy who wants to push forward. What I'm telling you is it actually helps you go further faster if you take time for yourself and you back off, like literally, and studies show that."

What I'm trying to do is quantify that and say, "What is that? What does back off look like? What do I have to do to stay healthy? What do I have to do for those things?"

Glenn Taylor: To take it from a fuzzy, nice idea to what does it actually mean practically?

Jeff Frey: Week to week, day to day. Do I have to walk out? Do I have to take a job every morning? Well how am I going to ... It's different for every person, back to the individual thing, but there are some lessons learned across the studies that I've had so far. There are definitely some lessons learned.

Glenn Taylor: You mentioned that this is important so that the individual leader can understand this and make some adjustments. I'm guessing that tie between wellbeing of leaders and organizational outcomes, organizational performance is also important from the organizational side. If this is quantified that organizations or other organizational leaders will say, "Wow, okay, so it's actually in our interest to not push our leaders to the extreme. What can we do to support them hopefully?" Because then maybe it's a jaded thing, but when they see that it does affect the bottom line that it does affect the performance, the outcomes, then that can incentivize some systematic changes or policy changes, right?

Jeff Frey: Yeah, so now maybe you're on my talking points because I know we've talked before. Maybe you got that from me, but hopefully people infer that. That's exactly where I want people to go.

Glenn Taylor: Yeah, yeah, no, I see that.

Jeff Frey: The whole outcome of this would be if for every grant, what I would love to see is a percentage of that go to employee health or board of directors ... Part of our budget, a line item is the wellbeing of our employees, the wellbeing of our leaders. It actually makes a difference. We're going to take some of our budget, which is not done today. We expect people to just do that on their own, take care of yourself.

The organizations, I feel it's their responsibility. They're asking folks to come here from a certain time or certain time every day, spend more time with them than you do your family, some other things. Let's take some budget items and let's focus it down towards the employees because it's in the organization's best interest that they stay healthy. If you think about a CEO, swapping out a CEO, just the cost of the change to maybe in down the road stock price, but just the cost of the change just with the employees and just with the search and just with other things, it's in your best interest that a good CEO that you have doesn't burn out that you don't burn them out.

I could go on for a day about that, but you had ... You did say work life balance, and you did ask me about that, and I want to circle back around to that, and say, I don't talk about it in my life that there's this balanced working life. I talk about priorities. I talk about right now today between this hour and this hour, my priority is this, and this is what I am giving my priority to. Then if I need to this afternoon and tonight and some other things, I need to switch my priorities, I have over all priorities for my life, and I know what those are. I try to make sure that my thoughts and for the most part, my time align with those priorities. If my balance is off kilter for a period of time, then so be it at this point. Because I've chosen to prioritize this over this for this seat-

Glenn Taylor: Because it's an intentional decision.

Jeff Frey: Yeah, yeah, this season in my life. I don't know that I've ever had work life balance. I don't know that I've had priorities where I want them and I'm aligned with those priorities. They weren't balanced. I think this is how much these people need this, this is how much these people need this. That's great. Balancing, not really. I'm prioritizing it and I'm setting my sights towards these things because, again, if I'm in a career transition, I'm working heavily to find my new job, and I might leave some of that family stuff behind. If I'm feeling okay about that, then I'm over here. I have way too many hobbies. I do too much stuff, and I might prioritize for this month, I might prioritize one of my hobbies because I really want to focus on that. I know it'll be better later or something.

I don't know if I have much balance, but I do have my priorities the way I want to them, and I try to spend my time towards those priorities within those. I feel out of 'balance' when I potentially don't spend enough time on one of those priorities or the other one, and I feel like I'm neglecting it. That's when I either say, "Okay, I need to steal some time from this one or I need to pop one of my hobbies off. I need to spend more time on that thing."

Glenn Taylor: Yeah, it's more about misalignment sort of imbalance I guess, right, misalignment with the priorities?

Jeff Frey: Yeah. Right, right, exactly.

Glenn Taylor: I would think it's also really important, although difficult, to keep an open dialogue with whoever the relationships are in your life, about those priorities because you could be thinking about your priorities in one way and be shipping them around. Your wife's over here operating on some other priorities or things that your priorities are different. Then you get into these like, "Well, wait, what, you're spending all this time on this", and so then it gets confusing.

Jeff Frey: Totally agree. I will let you all in on another aspect of my existence. My wife is a marriage and a family therapist. I personally am married to a marriage counselor.

Glenn Taylor: What's that like?

Jeff Frey: She said she doesn't use it on ... How would I know? She's so good.

Glenn Taylor: She has to use the force.

Jeff Frey: Yeah, I don't know. It's just who she is. The communication thing, yeah, that's big. That happens a lot. Like I told you, I got my master's in computer science and then 10 years later, I went back for my executive MBA. She and I went through that, and then we also decided it would be good for me to get my PhD now. I'm two years through a four year program. That's again work life balance, work school life balance, no, totally not. Is it off kilter right now and more towards PhD work? Absolutely. Did Stephanie and I have that conversation and are we both okay with that? Most days. Most days we are.

Glenn Taylor: Maybe it depends on the day, yeah.

Jeff Frey: Most days we have the big picture in mind. We had the conversation. We know it's off kilter. There's no bounce there. We know it's for a season and it's for another two years, and we get through that and then we're back to a different prioritization level and a different time level on those priorities.

Glenn Taylor: All right, before we wrap up, I do want to ask a question. You mentioned that there are some common themes that you're finding through the different research you've done about wellbeing. Without giving it all away, and I know it's

a pretty in-depth set of strategies or ideas that maybe are even still forming, but I'm wondering if you had a few tips for leaders or professionals who are listening. What should they be thinking about in terms of their own wellbeing? One thing could be defining their priorities, as we were just saying, but what might be some other things?

Jeff Frey: One very simple is to take care of yourself. Everybody knows what that looks like. If you don't, find somebody who does.

Glenn Taylor: Like self-care do you mean?

Jeff Frey: Self-care, wellness coach. Just look at the aspects of your existence, physical, mental, spiritual. Do not be afraid to go see a marriage counselor. Don't be afraid to go see a financial adviser. Don't be afraid to go see a personal counselor, a wellness coach, a dietitian, a personal trainer. I know some people don't have money to go see all of those because you've got to pay all those people. I do feel that having a little tiny personal board of directors around you, I have them around me, and they're mostly friends.

You're one of those people that I call up when I have a question about certain things. I have these people around me. There's a pastor who's a friend, spiritual advisor guy. There's an older couple who we use as a mentor couple for marriage, and I think we know when we're not taking care of ourselves for the most part. Just very simply, the first thing you could be doing is making sure that those things are all taken care of.

Glenn Taylor: Reach out for help and not sort of just always trying to solve it yourself.

Jeff Frey: I don't know what I should and shouldn't eat. I thought that was okay, but it's not. Just every once in a while, a real quick, "Hey, what about this or that, and I'm feeling this way." Those kind of things are there. Real simply, very first thing is you could be taking care of yourself.

Then when it comes to an organization, I specifically look at leaders. I found a lot of leaders who want to be the visionary leader and their organization looks to them for that. They are getting bogged down in the day-to-day specifics of an operation. A non-profit leader who knows the mission of the organization is to do these certain types of things and knows in order to do those things, we've got to go out, we've got to fundraise. Instead of really focusing on the mission and evangelizing the mission and finding those people who can give to the mission. Knowing that, hey we're setting directions and say, "We're going to have an event here."

What the person was doing is saying, "Okay, look, I need to have this event. I really need it to go well. You know what? Let me find the speaker." "Oh, okay, good. You'll find the speaker. Well what place are you going to use?" "Oh, why don't I just call and I find that?"

It ends up being this person is not only setting the direction. Literally just doing all the day-to-day operations around running this event. Then when a person gets there, instead of being able to walk around and shake hands with the people that are doing it and all this stuff, they're running. They're a stage manager, they're going in the back, and if someone was late with showing up, and never got to eat. They didn't enjoy the whole thing, that person feels like they are fulfilling the mission of the organization. That person feels like, "Well that's what I needed to do to make sure that we had a good fundraiser. That was my role in that."

What came out after having the talks with the staff and after having talks with the person and having had talks with the donors is that this person really needs to be the leader of the organization. That means finding people to create these events, doing these things, floating over top of it, encouraging, making sure these things get done, and delegation.

What they actually did is they think they're doing good, pat on the back. Oh, they thought they were going to get ... This is what I'm supposed to do, and look, I'm in it, and there's an immediate gratification into that because you see the event that you created in everything. There all this positive feedback that you get from doing, but totally burn yourself out. Like, "We're not going to do another one of these next year." "Well why not?" "Aw, there's too much work."

It's subtle, but what I've turned that into is truly focusing on the mission of the organization. What a lot of leaders do is they think they're fulfilling the mission, but what they're doing is they're looking down and instead of looking up at the mission and saying, "That's where we're headed," and telling people, "That's where we're headed," and getting people to follow them towards that, they look down and they're looking down at all of the things that have to be done. They're doing those and they lose sight of the mission. They really lose sight, or they think they're completing it, but they are not. Hopefully that makes sense in the nutshell that I've tried to communicate.

Glenn Taylor: First thing was be aware of your own wellbeing, your own self-care, where are the areas you need to reach out for help. I love that idea of the personal board of directors. Then this other piece that's a little bit more in the context of an organization is if you're a leader who's working towards a mission to be sure to stay connected to that higher vision. To bring other people along to share in the work and sort of become better at that versus I need to be better at accomplishing more to-do items, right?

Jeff Frey: Correct.

Glenn Taylor: Is that kind of what you're saying? Yeah.

Jeff Frey: Yeah, exactly.

Glenn Taylor: Cool. I think that's relevant for people at various levels within organizations. Anytime you get ownership over a project, it might be that temptation to conflate ownership with I've got to do everything.

Jeff Frey: Correct.

Glenn Taylor: That also has to be a discussion with your team, with your boss to figure out what am I being asked to do? What can I get help doing? Yeah, cool that's a great insight. Anything else you wanted to mention before we wrap up here?

Jeff Frey: I guess one of the things that came out in the study was relationships and mastering those relationships. You can't do anything we've talked about without having a relationship with ... If you're a CEO or a executive director or something without your board. You've got to have a really good relationship with the board, you've got to have a good relationship with staff in order to delegate to them and have them feel like they're going to want to do things [inaudible 01:00:52].

If you are a person up and coming with your job, having a good relationship with your peers and have a good relationship with your manager and managing those relationships. Again, it's another one of those things which is a good meeting. I think we know what bad means. You can probably feel that. "Can I trust this person? Do they trust me? If I ask them to do something, will I know if it's done?" That goes both up, down and sideways. If you've got your board that you trust and you've got your employees and you try to get your peers, and building those relationships. There's a lot of folks who have gotten where they've gotten today on their own.

Sometimes when those become leaders, they get into that more dictatorship that we talked about. Eventually, in order to really get where you need to go, where you want to go, you're going to have to get good at building some relationships and getting some friends around you that are both coworkers and peers and things and using those.

If that's a struggle area, it's another one of those things we're reaching out for help. There's lots of books out there, but there are also plenty of people who are really good at this and can talk through, "Here's an interesting relationship," thing. Once you get one or two, you learn through those and you start to apply that to others. If you've got a relationship and you're starting with right now, if you find somebody to help you with that, the learnings that you could have from that, you can apply to all the other relationships, and it's a snowball effect.

Glenn Taylor: Yeah, that's a good insight and the challenge is that that involves a whole combination of a bunch of soft skills. It's not one thing that's so easy to master. It takes time. It's a combination of communication, like trust building, becoming dependable at dealing with conflict, with people, being able to give and receive

feedback. It's like that takes some a lot of development. This isn't just about like, "Oh I need to become more extroverted."

Jeff Frey: No.

Glenn Taylor: I don't think it's about that. It's about whether you're introverted or extroverted, refining those relationship skills.

Jeff Frey: Yeah, yeah, all of those things you said, if you shy away from them, when you come up against one of them, if you don't tackle it right then, you don't master that. Then that's going to happen again with another person, and you're not going to have the skills to get through it again. If you can instead of shying away on the very first few times you get one of these, if you can tackle it, you can figure out how to do something. Whether it's help from a person or help from a book or help ... You figure it out on your own and you tackle it. That learning goes back into your ... back to your brain.

Then the next time you come up with, you go, "Well this worked the last time. Let me try that." The better you get at it, the better you get at it. Every day is going to be a new one. You're going, "How did this come from? I've never seen this one before." You tackle that, then when that comes up again, which it will, then you've got something that you can use to do that. I think that's just a continual process of learning how to deal with those relationships.

Glenn Taylor: Yeah, constant learning, constant experimentation, but having an active sort of approach to getting better.

Jeff Frey: Yeah, yeah.

Glenn Taylor: Cool. Thank you so much Jeff Frey. This was awesome. So many great insights. I really appreciate it. How can people find you?

Jeff Frey: I've got a couple of things going on. The easiest thing right now is probably [furtherfaster.com](http://furtherfaster.com). People usually remember that URL more than anything else, and it's just got a one pager on there that says what I'm up to right now in my study, a little bio on me, click the Twitter and LinkedIn and all that stuff. Those are out there too. You can find that and then connect with me any which way you can. I'm happy to have conversations with just about anybody. It goes back to that relationship thing. I love to have conversations with interesting people. That's when we talk for sure.

Glenn Taylor: Awesome. Yeah, so [furtherfaster.com](http://furtherfaster.com), Jeff Frey. Thanks again man. Hope to be in touch soon and I really appreciate it.

Jeff Frey: Thank you. All right, take care.

Glenn Taylor:

All right, so that'll do it for this 7th episode of the Dare to Fly Higher podcast. In the next episode, I'll be speaking with Daniel Cotlar, the former Chief Marketing Officer for Blinds.com, which is now owned by Home Depot. He's now a consultant, startup advisor and investor, and he's a real expert in leadership and team culture, having built an award winning team at Blinds.com, which was recognized as one of the best places to work in Houston. We'll be discussing team dynamics and culture, innovation, leadership, tips for career advancement or transition and networking.

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