



Leading Learning Podcast Episode 252

Seth Kahan (00:00):

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Jeff Cobb (00:27):

I'm Jeff Cobb.

Celisa Steele (00:28):

I'm Celisa Steele, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast. Welcome to episode 252 of the Leading Learning Podcast, which features a conversation with Seth Kahan. This is the second episode in our seven-episode series on the learning business in disruptive times. Seth Kahan is the founder of the company Visionary Leadership, which provides strategic advice and consulting. Seth has worked with the leaders of large multinational organizations like the World Bank and the Peace Corps and, since 2002, has worked with over 100 association CEOs. Some of his most exciting work with those CEOs involves Grand Challenges—big, bold goals that organizations take on, partnering with others to make a difference with problems that society has thus far not been able to resolve. His work includes initiatives with the American Nurses Association, the CFP Board Center for Financial Planning, and the Thriving Earth Exchange powered by the American Geophysical Union. Jeff spoke with Seth in September 2020.

Jeff Cobb (01:45):

When you think about what we're living through and working through right now, what are some of the things that are top of mind for you?

Seth Kahan (01:54):

Well, learning is top of mind for me. We are in a time where our ability to adapt is making a difference in our survival. And for many, many people here in the United States as well as around the world, it's really gets down to food, money, basics, health. So those of us who are fortunate enough to have businesses that are keeping us afloat are really having to retool and to think about how we serve in this incredibly disrupted environment we're in. So learning is top of mind, and it's learning in real time. Sometimes things are changing so fast, and it requires so much more than just tuning into the news because, as we know, the news is fragmenting, it's going in a lot of different directions. So it means being in touch with customers, with clients, with our family, with our core values and figuring out how to land on our feet over and over and over again.

Jeff Cobb (02:55):

And now I know you as somebody who is a very serious, a very dedicated lifelong learner yourself. Have you changed anything in current times from what you were doing before all of this hit?

Seth Kahan (03:09):

Absolutely, I've changed a lot. For one thing, I had to get really close to my customers really fast. And in middle of March, when the shelter-in-place began in earnest, my incoming work dropped to zero, and it didn't pick up again for two and a half months. But I knew that that disruption could be shortened if I would be aggressive and understand what my customers were going through. And so I immediately started reaching out to association CEOs and holding Zoom conferences and dealing with the issues that they felt were most urgent and doing it all for free because it was important for me to educate myself; it was part of my learning process. I couldn't wait for an engagement to form for my learning to take place. I had to move faster than I knew I would be able to engage. When I say "engage" I mean like write a contract and all of that and get a formal agreement in place. So I just began doing stuff for free, just so that I could make instant contact. And that's professionally.

Seth Kahan (04:14):

Personally, it's also shifted. I find that my reading habits are really different than they were in my private time. So, for example, I'm deep into racial justice right now, and I've read about three or four books. I'm in a couple of Facebook groups where we get together weekly and discuss. I'm participating with Black CEOs in the association space. So that's a whole area that has long been an interest, but now I'm deep diving into that space and have been for weeks. Also, personally, I'm getting much more into meditation. I've found that as stress and crisis emerge around me, that I want to be as clear-sighted as I possibly can, and that requires practice. That's not something that I can just do because I feel like it. So I've been working to develop an internal sense of clarity and equanimity in the face of chaos so that I can find my way through it, basically.

Jeff Cobb (05:17):

I think you and I track in some of the same ways. I've definitely reinvigorated my own meditation practice, and I've found that to be just a comforting thing to do in these times. And you're talking about reading. I just recently finished...it wasn't exactly a biography; it was more of taking James Baldwin's perspectives and kind of applying them in the times that we have right now. And now I'm reading a great book called *Caste*, which is just really, really insightful, and I would recommend that to anybody. Now, I want to come back and talk more specifically about your 100 CEOs initiative, but there's probably going to be some overlap between that and what I'm going to ask right now, which is you're working primarily with trade and professional associations, big focus area for you. A huge part of what those organizations do is around providing continuing education, professional development, lifelong learning, whether they're doing that through seminars, whether they're doing that through conferences, which have been really disrupted in the current times. How are you seeing some of the organizations you've worked with or are working with respond in these circumstances?

Seth Kahan (06:34):

Well, it's a very wide continuum. Fortunately, there are people who are leading and getting good results. So one of the best services I've been able to provide to my clients is just sharing knowledge, what's working, because everybody's scrambling and trying to figure it out. As you said, meetings have been disrupted with short notice, sometimes less than 30 days. And some of those meetings, for at least one of my clients, represented over 90 percent of her income for the

year. Just canceled, boom. And so people are trying to figure out how to retool their meetings for a virtual environment, some of them with many thousands of people. There've been some huge successes as people have been forced into this virtual space. One of the things that's happening is that we're discovering things that work better than they do in a live situation.

Seth Kahan (07:26):

Now, it's still painful because nobody had a choice about it, and people were caught off guard. Some organizations were very good at virtual working and holding meetings; they've been doing it for years and really had built competencies around it. I know at least one of my clients gave their staff less than a week's notice to begin working from home, and there was no disruption in the continuity at all because they'd all figured it out a year ago, and they were regular practitioners. And then you've got the other end of the spectrum, where people were scrambling, disconnected, having challenges with leadership in a virtual environment. That's a big one, by the way. There's a couple of things that have really risen up internally in organizations. One is mental health, and the other is how do you lead in a virtual environment?

Seth Kahan (08:15):

But on the learning in meetings and education front, there's been some big successes. I did a session where we brought together about 30 association leaders to really do some creative work around virtual meetings. And we had a leader at Experient, which works with organizations like Disney—I mean, mega organizations—and he was very involved in our work together. And so we pooled all of this kind of creativity around how do you create a virtual meeting that will serve your members? And some of it came back to basics, like questions, like always start with who's your target audience, and what's the value you're trying to create. But the thing was is that people were starting over, people who had 30 years' experience. Some of them running meetings were suddenly in a completely different environment asking that question.

Seth Kahan (09:09):

And those who really took the time to do an honest reset landed on their feet, primarily. Of course, members are forgiving in the early days because we're all in shock. And so, if the organization's taking a month or two to get its feet under itself, everybody understands that and gives them the benefit of a doubt. But associations are being forced to say well, "Hey, meetings is not the value proposition. What happens at the meetings? How do we replace it?" And the question around learning is just at the top of the list to address.

Jeff Cobb (09:51):

What do you see as the real threats right now that if you don't address this it could be, I guess *fatal* is the word to use, relative to an organization's existence or at least their effectiveness as an organization?

Seth Kahan (10:08):

Well, one is strategy. So one-, two-, and three-year strategies are not working; people need to have rolling strategies, three to six months. They're underestimating the impact of the different disruptions that are taking place. For example, I was talking with Susan Robertson, who's the CEO of ASAE, the American Society of Association Executives, several months ago. We were in the pandemic, but it was still a couple months ago, at least. And she said she is not sure that the meetings world—which includes the hospitality industry, it includes the meetings themselves, the meetings planners, and includes transportation—that whole world is not going to be able to recover until following 2021.

Seth Kahan (10:57):

And so any association that thinks, “Well, we’ll have our meetings back up to normal by April” could really be underestimating a significant force that could harm them in the long run. The reason she gave made so much sense to me, and this was months ago. Again, the United States has had a couple of months to try and get its act together around the pandemic, and it’s failed. So she was saying this when there was still hope that we might as a nation come together to get a consistent response to the pandemic. What you have is all of these organizations—think Marriott, think Southwest Airlines, all of these players that are in this space. First of all, meetings is not just an association thing; it’s how the world does business, so everybody’s dependent on this.

Seth Kahan (11:44):

People fly all over the planet all the time. Now it’s a norm—or it was six months ago. And so we’re having disruption on that level, not just in the association world. And these organizations have let go of staff, and these are professionally trained staff. So they’re going to have to figure out how to bring them back on board in a way that.... A lot of the staff are angry because they’ve been furloughed or let go after years and years; they may not want to come on board, and maybe they found another job. And at the same time, we’re heaping our meetings and our transportation needs on top of an already full schedule. So if you moved your November meeting to next April, well, there was somebody who already had April, and that’s happening in mass.

Seth Kahan (12:23):

So she sees this kind of overlapping impact, not a direct, like a secondary impact as we try and get back up to speed. And that’s disrupting us—for again, she projected to the end of 2021 at that time. So that’s an example of this. But I mean, they’re in every level. There’s the economic disruption, the job loss, I mean; we’re equating it with the Great Depression. This could take decades to iron out. Supply chain disruption, all of these things. So, anyways, underestimating, thinking we’ll get back to where we were, that’s not going to happen. We’re going to find our way forward. I’m not all doom and gloom. I don’t think this is the end of civilization or the end of business as we know it, but those organizations that are learning again, they’re adept, they’re doing everything they can to figure out what’s going on and how to adapt themselves to this new world that we’re in, those are the ones that we’re going to see succeeding.

Jeff Cobb (13:25):

And now, we’ve been focusing, as appropriate, for kind of the world you’re working in, the world I’m working in, on disruptions to that meetings industry, how education and learning are going to be delivered. But, of course, there’s a whole lot else going on right now. Underlying the whole meetings, coming together, travel issue, in the background is the whole issue of climate change, which that whole industry has an impact on. And that hasn’t gone away in all of this obviously; it’s still sitting back there as a big, hairy problem to wrestle with. And then, of course, we’ve also got so much social inequity going on right now, racial inequity, economic inequity. I mean, how are you and how are some of the organizations you’re interacting with thinking about those issues right now and potentially taking action relative to those sorts of issues?

Seth Kahan (14:23):

Well, I see a disparity between those two issues in particular, and I’ll just say what I’m hearing as I’m talking to CEOs. First of all, across the board everybody recognizes climate change. We have reached a threshold with climate change, at least among the leaders in business that I speak with regularly. Conservative and progressive alike recognize climate change is big. We

have not figured it out. It's going to impact the whole planet, and everybody wants to know what we're going to do about it and is ready to invest in it. That is not true with racial injustice. And, also, I want to say I think we read the same book, *Begin Again*, when you were talking about the James Baldwin work. Yeah, outstanding book. That really connected a lot of dots for me in terms of understanding where American society is in relationship to African Americans and their journey in this country.

Seth Kahan (15:27):

And there are two worlds here, so there's many more than that, but the African American experience is not the experience of growing up white in America. And we are still very much split in this country around that. There are a significant number of people who do not believe that the African American experience is.... They see a level playing field, and they feel like we just need to move forward, and it's a meritocracy. And then there are people who recognize the tremendous disadvantage and continuous oppression and even traumatic terrorization of the African American community and the impact it's having on this very significant segment of our population. And when I talk to CEOs, that's reflected. So I have CEOs who say, "Hey, that doesn't impact me. We're fine, business as usual." Literally, they're at that level.

Seth Kahan (16:28):

And then there's a big hump, and the big hump is kind of like, "We recognize that our diversity and inclusion efforts have not been successful, or as successful as we hoped they would be, and we don't know what to do about it. We're trying to figure that out." And many of those people are still thinking in terms of DEI taskforces and kind of longer projects. And then you have over at the other end, you have people who say, "This is a game changer. We must change, and we must change as fast as we possibly can. And we don't even understand what it means to grapple with structural racism. And that's our quest right now—how do we get in there and make a difference?" So unlike climate change, we still have this big spread in that space.

Jeff Cobb (17:16):

I think that's so interesting, the way you put it, the leaders who were on, sort of, the other end of the continuum, where they really get it, they recognize it, but there's still this question of understanding it and figuring out what is it we actually do to make the difference that needs to be made. And it's not an easy question. So it's heartening that you're at least encountering a significant group that are wrestling with that, and hopefully that group is going to grow much more over time. And I'm glad to hear that we've both read *Begin Again* on James Baldwin. I believe that's Eddie Glaude, if I'm pronouncing his last name correctly.

Seth Kahan (17:57):

That's correct. Yeah, Glaude.

Jeff Cobb (17:57):

Fantastic book, I definitely recommend that to anybody who really wants to get more into how these circumstances are.... I mean, they're rooted so long ago, and they've evolved over time, and it's disturbing in a way that what James Baldwin was experiencing during the height of the civil rights movement and there being so much hope, just that same frustration is still here. Again, it's just now going on in a somewhat different way.

Jeff Cobb (18:32):

I consider myself something of an optimist—I think you are as well—in knowing that in any sort of trying turbulent times like these, they're going to be silver linings—they're silver

learnings, that would be a good way to put it. They're going to be opportunities that come out of it. So I'm wondering, with everything that's going on, it feels like so much darkness right now. What excites you, where are you seeing light, where are you seeing hope, what's giving you energy and enthusiasm at this point?

Seth Kahan (19:09):

So I'll try and just tick off two or three of those things. One is the racial justice, being in it much more deeply than I've ever been in it before while it is traumatic to read and expose myself to some of the content. And it's hard, it's emotionally hard to go into it. I feel like the lights are coming on, and there's a significant segment of the population that holds the power in this country that is going through that journey right now. And so I feel like we're going to see some results, and I'm heartened by that—I really am. I think that there's a wave of a new level of depth and understanding of the African American experience and how it is a metaphor for all marginalized people. So people who are disabled, Native Americans, Hispanics, I mean, anyone who's marginalized in our society. If we can really make strong progress in this space, it's going to lift up many boats, and so I'm heartened by that.

Seth Kahan (20:10):

There are things that are happening because of the speed of the disruption, forcing us into these new spaces. And we're discovering things that can be done in virtual learning that are much better than what could be done in a face-to-face learning environment. Same thing is true with virtual working at home. Many associations that were pushed to the edge financially or felt pushed to the edge suddenly were able to kill sacred cows that have been around for a long time—they were able to get fast decisions through governance by calling emergency meetings with the executive committee and then the board and moving things through. And what you saw was this kind of jettisoning of that bureaucracy that associations are so known for, that makes things feel like they're going to take forever. Well, a lot of associations flipped the switch on multiple fronts, and now they know they can. And that, to me, says that associations can be more responsive to Americans' needs. And so that's an area too.

Jeff Cobb (21:13):

And you've just touched on this to a significant degree, but I'll go ahead and ask it anyway. You just referenced some changes that you feel like are happening or at least have the potential to happen. I mean, when you look out, get your crystal ball or whatever it is, and do the dangerous work of predicting the future, I mean, what changes do you think are going to come, and what are going to be the lasting changes that actually come out of all of this, whether they're good, bad, or indifferent?

Seth Kahan (21:44):

Well, any progress we make with racial justice right now, I feel like there'll be a line drawn in the sand, and it'll be really hard to slide back. I know there'll be pressure to slide back, but I think that people are so hungry and so determined and in some cases so angry that if we can really take new ground and change the way we think about who we are and move much closer to a multi-racial democracy, I think that those are going to be more permanent, that we're not just going to slide back into where we were before. I think the learning around what works well in a virtual environment is going to stay with us. I don't see us going back to so heavily weighted on face-to-face. I think that we're going to be in a hybrid environment going forward.

Seth Kahan (22:34):

And that includes working. So a lot of organizations are finding that even after maybe one or two months of kind of hiccuping and clumsiness that now they've got a groove going. And so

now the question is, do I really need to be in the same city as the office? Do I need an office? Do I need the same size office? I think we're going to see some permanent changes there. And I think that ability to kind of atomize by being virtual instead of being all clumped together like in a co-located space is actually going to bring some value with it. For example, if you have 30 people on your staff, and, instead of having them all in an office in Washington, D.C., now they're spread all over the country and maybe a couple of other countries, well, now you're going to be getting an input from a much wider web, geographic web, and you could use that to your advantage. So I think that some of the virtualization is here to stay. So those are some of the things that I see on a permanent level.

Jeff Cobb (23:34):

And then particularly for the people, the organizations that would be listening in on this, they're in the learning business, what words of advice, caution, courage might you have for them right now?

Seth Kahan (23:53):

I think this is, like as I was saying in the beginning, this is a time of great learning, and the people who are succeeding are eating it and digesting it as fast as they can. So anything that you can do to facilitate that learning, bringing people together, to think together, to collaborate, sharing best practices or practices worth replicating so that they can speedily move to where they're needed most, understanding the new modes that are taking place when it comes to learning. For example, I'm retooling. I have some videos that I sell as part of my business model. I'm going to be bringing them all down into 15-minute chunks and maybe even lower than that because I've been learning that way, right? It's like I've got 10 minutes, I whip out my phone, and I make progress.

Seth Kahan (24:38):

Well, those micro units have been around for, I don't know, 15 years, but now suddenly everybody's doing it. So this ability to lean into what people are actually doing that's working in the adult learning world, I think, is really important and not be afraid to try things that seem kind of wacko or are.... I mean, like, for example, mingling different topics in ways that they haven't been mingled before because it's required in order to understand how to build solutions to complex problems. So instead of taking a course in biology and another one in neurology, how about a neurobiology course? Things like that. And so people who are able to lean into this, what's actually taking place in our world that were needed, I think that's very exciting.

Jeff Cobb (25:35):

Now, we referenced earlier your 100 CEOs in 100 days initiative. And you talked a little bit about that in response to ground we've already covered here, but I did want to ask more about that. Can you tell us what's involved there—why you decided to undertake that initiative, and then what are some of your biggest learnings from it so far?

Seth Kahan (26:00):

Yeah, the idea was actually introduced to me by a close friend of ours, Robbie Baxter, and her husband did it when he went to work for, I think, an insurance company. The first assignment they gave him was said, "We want you to talk to 100 prospects in 100 days. We don't care if you sell anything, but just get out there and talk and learn." And I was like, "Wow, I'm going to do that." And so I started immediately reaching out to CEOs, and it was my learning process, and it fed me, and it was very good. And these are not sales calls.

Seth Kahan (26:31):

So I am there to learn, to ask questions, to find out what I can, and, because I'm not doing sales, it gives me the freedom to really probe deeply and ask questions without feeling like people are getting defensive. Because they're not pushing me away saying, "Oh, no, you just want a consulting engagement." It's like we're having a real conversation as peers. And I can ask them questions like, "What is this going to do to your budget?" Or, "How are you going to work with your executive committee." Or, "Is racial justice important to you right now?" And get that important information flowing so that I get a sense of what's in their world. What do they need to address? And as an independent businessperson, that's so important. I've got to understand where there's traction, what are people hungry for? What do they need? And then I can go out and hunt it down and develop it and give it back to them.

Seth Kahan (27:23):

Biggest things I've learned, two things that we already talked about, was the spread around racial justice and the common understanding that climate change still needs to be dealt with and the concern around that. I've been learning a lot about the polarization in the election in our country because different professions in different trades tend to cut in different directions. So some are much more red; some are much more blue; some are in the middle and all over the place. And, of course, the association has to have their arm around everybody and has to take that trade or that profession forward regardless of the political orientation of the members.

Seth Kahan (28:02):

And that can be really challenging if there's fragmentation and polarization, but it's like a minilab for our country. It's one of the things I love about associations is that they have their arms around this population that's diverse politically but united through a profession or a trade. And so I've been surprised. For example, I was recently working with the board of directors under a CEO, it's in the manufacturing space where all of their operations are in the Midwest. So this is red country, right? And we're talking to them about a Grand Challenge, and they all pinpointed social and racial justice, and they want people to know that people of all gender orientations, all colors of skin are welcome, not just in their organization on the manufacturing floor but in the leadership. And that kind of set me back—that's not what I was expecting. So, anyway, that came out of one of those calls with a CEO. So understanding the pressures that people are facing has been key.

Seth Kahan (29:09):

The financial pressures are also like the racial justice—they're spread across a continuum. So we have organizations in this city that have multiple years' worth of revenue in the bank. They are well-heeled; their members are still paying dues. And we have organizations that are on the brink of extinction. It's been wonderful to watch them help each other. One of the wonderful things about associations is that they, generally speaking, don't compete with each other. So the leaders are open kimono, like, "What can I share with you? What do you need to know? How...." And so some organizations that have built spreadsheets to help them navigate the ups and downs of the revenue streams in this environment are sharing them openly with smaller organizations that don't have the expertise to build that kind of modeling. So that's been very exciting to see that going on.

Seth Kahan (30:05):

The set of issues that's hitting association leaders or, I should say, the association model is all over the place. This is like shotgun—this is not a single bullet here, that when you combine the pandemic, the economic disruption, supply chain disruptions, job loss, contentious election, racial justice, all of this, it ends up just covering, kind of, the organizations. And so even if they

might say racial justice is not an issue for us, then the other four or five are still there. And so people are really having to question their core, the mission, vision, values. What are we doing in this world? Are we able to serve our members? Members' needs are going through the roof. So those associations that see this as an opportunity are stepping into the breach and saying, "We may do things that we've never done before because our members need it, but we're going to be there for them." And that, of course, is a bonding experience and creates the kind of loyalty and trust that can get you through a crisis. So I'm getting exposed to all of that through these calls. It's really wonderful.

Jeff Cobb (31:19):

And you've assembled—and I assume this is partly in response to what you've been hearing out there—this whole collection of resources that I found on your Web site for leaders and organizations that are dealing with the pandemic. And we'll be sure to link to those two in the show notes because I want to make sure people are aware of them and can get to them. But can you tell us a little bit more about that, the resources you've put together and how you went about determining what they should be, what leaders really need the most right now?

Seth Kahan (31:49):

Sure. Some of it, just right off the bat, was clear, like, for example, a lot of associations were grappling with, "Should I cancel my meeting?" And this is going back to mid-March, their meeting might've been in September, this month, October, November, maybe even January of next year. So I was familiar with, when I worked at the World Bank, we created a triage system for deciding whether or not to cancel or postpone a meeting. And it included factors like, were there issues being discussed that were so urgent and critical that they could not be delayed? And how do you decide, how do you make that decision? So I created a meeting triage infographic that I was able to share broadly.

Seth Kahan (32:32):

Another was an emergency response checklist. Having been involved, I was in the front lines of 9/11 when it happened, and, as a result of that, at the World Bank I was put into working groups that dealt with emergency responses should they happen again in the future. And so I made a checklist of emergency responses for associations. So these were things that I was able to get out there fast because I already had experience, and I knew intuitively that they would be valued. Then I started interviewing association leaders on standing up a virtual work environment or on communication in these environments and then just publishing the videos, putting them on. And then, of course, doing some of my own videos, where I would teach some of this. Initially, there was kind of a lot that was easy to imagine that people needed. And then as I began doing the 100 phone calls and holding the Zoom conversations, then I started getting specifics from my client group.

Seth Kahan (33:25):

And then I could say, "Oh, they really need this." So, for example, a few weeks ago, I did a session on diversity inclusion with Billy Williams, who works at the American Geophysical Union and runs their diversity program, which just received a massive grant from the MIT Sloan Foundation and the National Science Foundation because he has developed a gender-bias workshop that they are able to study the results of, and they see that it's working, and they're now going to be making that workshop widely available. They're going to, of course, move into the diversity space too now with racial justice. And so I was able to hold a Zoom call, have Billy be a special speaker, bring in 32 CEOs who were all grappling with their DEI programs, and they could ask questions, they could share stories together, they could ask Billy questions. And

so I've been doing a lot of live events that are designed to serve the needs of the leaders as they grapple with these issues.

Jeff Cobb (34:32):

Is there anything else you'd like to say about any of those major disruptors or maybe how they're potentially working in concert at this particular time?

Seth Kahan (34:42):

Well, we know the pandemic is not under control in this country. I think we just crossed 200,000 deaths at the time of this recording. And we're starting to see some of the East Coast areas go back up. And so it's clear that we're not out of the woods yet, and that is a basic health issue. And so that kind of pushes a lot of the other stuff out of the way if you're dealing with it. If you have a loved one, if you are sick, then all the other stuff slides to the back burner, and it's just all about your own health and getting through it. And so we're not at the end of that, which means that we're going to need to continue to support people who are dealing with loss but also in remaining safe.

Seth Kahan (35:21):

People are sick and tired of wearing masks; they're sick and tired of social distancing. I wish I could throw a switch, and it would just all go away, but it's not going to, and we still have a pretty strong slog in front of us. So the associations are going to play a major role in making sure that people stay healthy and safe. And some of that extends—I've touched on it before—into mental health. We know that there's a whole kind of invisible repercussion that's not in the news. We know things like domestic abuse is up, we know that people who are depressed are more depressed, and they're more overdoses happening. So anything that we can do to help each other get through this—and that's everything from calling people that you love and making sure that they have regular contact with you, writing note cards—I mean, those are simple little things, but anything that really conveys human warmth and helps people take the next step on this long journey is still really important.

Seth Kahan (36:18):

When we talk about the economy, there's at least three different dimensions to that. There's the economy itself so you see businesses rising and falling. You see some areas like delivery, Amazon, UPS, restaurant delivery going up, Zoom going up, and then other areas plummeting, like restaurant in-house service. And so there's the flow of markets that's changing, and it's challenging to go through. Then there's the job loss. And that's huge, as I mentioned before. It's just that the numbers are staggering, and we can expect that to be with us for a long time. And then you've got supply chain disruption. So I have clients who are running manufacturing firms, and, I mean, they're members in a trade association, and they have demand for what they create, but they don't have all the pieces because some of them come from China or this other place, and they can't get their hands on the parts.

Seth Kahan (37:17):

And so you have this kind of three-dimensional thing going on there that can be very personal, especially if you get into job loss in your own family or friends and people. So there's all of that to continue to figure out. Again, this is why learning is so important. It's like, you really want to understand the details, and it gets very specific to your profession or your trade. And it's like, "What's the news? Where can I get dependable information? What new skills do I need to build? What different ways of thinking about things?" Like, another good friend of ours, Lisa McLeod just released her second edition of *Selling with Noble Purpose*. And she today got an article published on HBR around what you need to know if you're selling in this environment.

Seth Kahan (38:06):

And her advice is spot on. I encourage people to go to HBR and look up Lisa McLeod, M-C-L-E-O-D. I'll give you a link so you can put it on the blog, but she's got very perceptive advice for people who are involved in...we're all involved in sales and influence one way or another, so this is pertinent to everyone. We talked, I think, extensively about the systemic racism and racial justice, and I think the contentious election. Wow, first, we have the next 60 days, then we have the fallout from whatever happens. And we're going to need every heart we can tap to get through that, I think. No matter how it cuts, it's going to be really, really challenging for this country. But it's also we're at an inflection point in this country. We're being watched by the rest of the world, but also, internally, we are all looking ahead to see what's going to happen.

Seth Kahan (38:58):

So I'm a big believer in nonviolence. I'm fine with protests, just not fine with violence. And I think anything we can do to learn the skills of how to help people ratchet down when they're getting ratcheted up so that we can keep the conversation one that everybody wants to engage in, is a really healthy skillset. And as an association leader, that's a skillset to teach your staff because they're going to need to do that with members. And I just want to throw one more thing in here, which is that this is a time for leadership development. This is it. And that is a learning opportunity because leadership and this environment is like no other leadership we've ever had. So training your staff in leadership, training your volunteers in leadership, training your members in leadership, the competencies that are in the leadership world are needed now just to make it through. So to me that's a real opportunity in the learning world also.

Celisa Steele (40:05):

Seth Kahan is founder of Visionary Leadership and the author of the books *Getting Change Right*, *Getting Innovation Right*, and *Visionary Leadership: Associations in the Age of Disruption*. Find him online at visionaryleadership.com and reach him at seth@visionaryleadership.com.

Jeff Cobb (40:25):

You can find show notes at leadinglearning.com/episode252, along with a transcript and a variety of resources related to my conversation with Seth.

Celisa Steele (40:36):

At leadinglearning.com/episode252, you'll also see options for subscribing to the podcast. To make sure you don't miss the remaining episodes in this series, we encourage you to subscribe. And subscribing also helps us get some data on the impact of the podcast.

Jeff Cobb (40:52):

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Celisa Steele (41:09):

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Jeff Cobb (41:21):

Thanks again, and see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.