

CHAPTER 6 (41:20)

Jeff: The leaders of our organizations, be they companies or associations or unions or whatever they are, you know, you talk about pivoting the safety profession that is trained and ingrained and indoctrinated into a certain paradigm. But these business folks are different, a different thing altogether.

Sid: Yeah, they are, they are.

Jeff: You know, the simplicity of those metrics that have been sent up the org chart for, for so long. What would you say to that? What would you say to, you know, something convincing something meaningful to pivot organizational leaders?

Sid: The singular obsession with, that's actually a tautology, the obsession, the single mindedness with which particularly boards pursue basically two goals. One is whether it's profit or whatever outcome is important to the organization, maximizing that, and then minimizing risk. That's essentially, I mean, when you boil every discussion at senior management and board level down to, that's what you find. How do we maximize this and minimize that. I don't think we can make any progress, Jeff, without tapping into that vein. Right. And say you can actually do both at the same time. If you start thinking about safety differently, and you do that by saying you keep doing the same, you will keep getting the same. You keep getting the same, it means, yes, you're asymptotic, but you know what shows up at the end of the asymptote, dead bodies. Because that's what we're seeing. Construction, mining. There's not a single industry that hasn't had this streak and doesn't have dead bodies show up at the end of the asymptote because we stop learning, because we stop being honest with each other, because we get really good at manipulating and hiding stuff and having cultures of risk seekers

Jeff: Playing the game

Sid: and learning disabilities, right? Literally engineering learning disabilities into organizations to make these damn numbers look good. And so that's why you get fatalities because you stop learning. And so you stop your authentic contact with work and what makes it dangerous. And so that's what they need to understand that actually by reducing risk and exposure in this apparent way, you are massively exposing yourself and your organization and your house and your wife's car by doing what you're doing. Right. And so speaking like that, I think is, is it may be helpful.

Jeff: But we're but we're not safety heretics. We don't say safety is broken. We don't come out swinging in such an adversarial way anymore, do we Sidney Dekker?

Sid: I have turned...Things happen when you turn 50. Um, yeah, that was a long time ago.

Jeff: Well, no, no, no. I think we've come through an adversarial phase where... And I think we're at a point now at 2022 and, and this book and you can, you know, you can you can say that it's as simple as it is. But I think to make meaningful change on a broad, broad sense, it's really required.

Sid: Yes, I mean, we needed to colonize space originally. Right. And that colonization, as you well know, you're the product of it, only happens with brute force. Right. It's not asking nicely, can we live here? Well no, who do you think you are? Right. And so I think colonizing that space and claiming that space and filling it with meaningful ideas needed to needed to necessarily be

confrontational, even if we didn't set out to make it that way. So I'm sure that my personal style either helped or hurt. I don't know which one it would be, but it would have animated some of it.

Jeff: That's another meeting.

Sid: But this is my final question to you, in fact, my final my very final thought is, you mean you could argue, yes, perhaps we are less confrontational, but is that because the ideas are going mainstream?

Jeff: Mm. Oh, oh. There's a lot of this, there's a lot of this (thinking) going on in the room. You know what, Professor Dekker, your class. (points to audience)

Sid: You fill me with pride and joy. Thank you. Thank you for being you. Thank you for doing what you do. I wouldn't have the persistence and patience to do what you do every day. And I find it a complement not only to the ideas, but to the energy that I've spent on this, to see it get legs and to see you lean forward in this and make it happen in ways that are hugely diverse and creatively adaptive so that it works where you are. In that sense, Puritanism is passé. It is pragmatics. What works? Be inspired and stay the course. Thank you again.

Jeff: Thanks Sid.