

**Ep #347: Dane Espegard - How to Thrive Post-Pandemic Through Team Dream Achieving**



**Full Episode Transcript**

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**Dr. David Phelps**

**[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps**

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Welcome to the Dentist Freedom Blueprint, a podcast about freedom, freedom from expectations of society and the traditional path to success that has been ingrained in us from our early years, I'm joined by Mavericks, renegades and non conformers to discuss an anti traditional path to financial freedom, freedom of time, relationships, health, and ultimately freedom of purpose. My name is Dr. David Phelps. Let's get started.

David Phelps: Good day, everyone. This is Dr. David Phelps of the Freedom Founders Mastermind Community and The Dentist Freedom Blueprint Podcast. Really have the pleasure to have a conversation today with a gentleman who was referred to me, which is often the way I get to meet people that I think are very influential thought leaders, really making a difference in the world, the business world, the community at large, and this gentleman is one of those. I'm very pleased to have Mr. Dane Espegard with us today. Dane, how are you doing, sir?

Dane Espegard: I'm doing great. Thanks for having me excited to talk.

David Phelps: Dane, we were referred by someone who is very influential in our space and helps a lot of people like us get our message out. I'll just say her name. She's just great Amber [inaudible 00:02:02]. And I know that you and Amber and number of people that she's also introduced me to came from Cutco. There was a lot of principles that you all have learned out of Cutco because I've met so many people that came from that group, from that origin. I'm going to give your bio in a minute, but could you just for our interest of our audience, talk little bit

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about the culture of Cutco and why it seems like people that come out of Cutco just seem like to take life by storm in a good way?

Dane Espegard: Yeah, I'm glad you asked. I could talk on that. I know that's not the purpose, I could talk on that forever. I really, I think the main thing is that Cutco has got this amazing culture that's centered around personal growth. And for a lot of, it also, I think, has to do with the age dynamic that they're working with. And so, I got started with Cutco right out of high school as an 18 year old. And at that point, I wasn't necessarily exposed to a lot of personal professional growth. And so, I was introduced to that concept at Cutco and there was never a shortage of resources of, Hey, this book or this audio. And then that later on turned into podcasts and people, a bunch of people in Cutco are attending these seminars and going to Tony Robbins.

And so, there's just environment matters so much. And in the Cutco world, there's so many leaders that are practicing personal development. And so for me, I was learning sales, business, marketing, entrepreneurship, and the mentors for myself and business were constantly talking about personal growth. How are you growing? So, I think that that combination in getting somebody at 18, 19, 20 years old, and then facilitating that growth, being the vehicle for it, I think that's kind of what that, the equation is to create a lot of these people that you're talking about.

David Phelps: So, that really sets us up for today, I believe because we're going to talk about your emphasis on culture and why that's so important. So, you came out of it, you've

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lived it, you've breathed it, you've seen what it has done for you and other people, the personal growth, having the resources, I think too often that business owners, we just want to hire someone to take a spot, fill a spot. And anyway, we'll get in that. I agree it's your background out. I get too excited about this stuff. This is really good. So, Dane Espegard, he's a culture consultant who teaches, assists and executes the implementation of a culture centered around dream achieving. We're going to get into that. What does that mean? The system is bottom up and puts the emphasis on the development and personal lives of the team member.

Dane works with companies in a very simple manner to get the culture started and leaves them with some very easy to implement step. You can connect with Dane at his website, [daneespegard.com](http://daneespegard.com). And I want to spell that for you. It's Dane, D-A-N-E last name Espegard, E-S-P-E-G-A-R-D.com. Dane's been public speaking and training individuals for over 15 years while implementing his system for Vector Marketing, where he is a division manager in operating the top performing team in the nation. Just a little bit of personal history. I know that you're very passionate about being a father and a husband first in your life. You're married and raising as you would call them two young people. I'll leave it there. You're from Wisconsin reside just out of the, outside the Twin Cities of Minnesota. And one thing that things that you and your family really love is to travel.

So, some freedom. Some time to see other parts of the country or the world. So, let's talk about this. I was thinking in terms of when we had our discussion week or so ago, is why this is so important to talk about personal

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growth development resources, helping our team members, our staff, the people that are so important. And unfortunately Dane, you know this, is a lot of businesses and the owners think about their team, their staff, their employees as cost. It's a cost, oh my gosh. We got to bring someone else in and what's that going to look like on our P&L, right? And oh my gosh, they've got to be able to produce X, Y, Z. And then we've also had this, I think this big epiphany in this last year with pandemic. That has really shaken, I think our culture and the way people are looking at their lives today.

Certainly if you're a business owner, well, you can talk about how you had to get through COVID and all the things you had to go through and maybe changing your thinking, but you know what, your team, your staff, your employees are still commuting to this job that maybe it pays X, Y, Z, and that's been pretty good pay for me, but I spend a lot of time commuting, maybe that's one of the issues that they have, or maybe it's an environment where there is no personal growth.

It's just basically come in, take your spot, do your work, you get paid and whatever other benefits. And that's not a place where people thrive. I mean, everybody has to have that dream, that vision of why they matter. People want to be appreciated. So anyway, I'm going to stop there and let you pick up from there because I know you've got a lot to say about this.

Dane Espegard: Yeah. If anything, I think that the pandemic, it changed obviously everything, right? One of the things that I think it changed from an employer's perspective is that we're no longer competing for talent with just the other neighboring

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businesses, right? In pre-pandemic, it was really unique to find a job that somebody's going to work remote or have that flexibility. And so, we really were competing with the other employers in the area. And now that the entire world shifted, there's a lot of businesses that are still a 100% remote and many that are going to stay a certain portion of their work being remote. And so, what that changes for the average worker is they're no longer limited by the logistics of can I get to work? And the idea of me taking a job with a company that's rooted states away, I don't have to upend my family.

And so, I would say it's a more competitive market than it's ever been to be able to attract, but then also retain our top talent. And so, then that poses the question of, "Well, if I have somebody who's great on my team now and the work dynamic just shifted, the workplace market, what's that thing? What's that X factor that's keeping somebody here at this business?" And if your answer is, "Well, I pay him a good amount," and that's no longer a cut that for most people.

David Phelps: No, people are looking more at quality of life, the time that they spend. Anybody who is in a business or goes to work in a business, I guess, you spend the majority of your time with those people, not with your family, not with your spouse, right? So, if that's the case, then don't you want to be in a place where you feel like you are appreciated, an environment where there's not a lot of gossip and back biting, which is so common in so many environments and people are just not going to put up with that today. People have learned that they have choices and options that we didn't have before because of the remote aspect of many jobs today, the flexibility being able to spend time with

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your kids or go to your kids' soccer games or their school play, things that in the past, many hardworking and hard driven business entrepreneurs will just say, "Well, that's just life.

That's what I got to do." And it's like, "Well, COVID just kind of shifted that around, so now do I have to still go by the same paradigms that in the past, and it's been reshuffled completely." So, I would submit Dane, that going forward, I mean, right now, going forward and we still have a labor shortage big time. But I think going forward that the shifts that we have experienced and are talking about here right now today, that particularly employers in this case, the business owner has really got to a grasp on these terms that are loosely played out in the marketplace forever, leadership and culture. Well, those get banded about all time. Okay. Well, I think I'm a good guy.

I do good work. I don't cheat. I'm integrity. Sorry, that's not enough. It's going back to, how are you sowing into the lives and dreams of aspirations of the people who have shown up or a part of your team or who you want to show up to maybe improve your business or where you have needs? I mean, there's still, there's two aspects, there's the attract and retention, right? Retention is a big deal because turnover, especially of highly valued people, for whatever reason, there's a huge cost to that. I mean, a huge cost. You want to talk a little bit about that because I know that it's something that you help your clients look at when they're evaluating how they're fulfilling out their labor force?



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Dane Espegard: Yeah. I think that with what the culture that we try and set up that centered around dreams, the difference with that is that it's recognizing that our employees are team members. They don't have, it no longer exists that there's these two separate worlds, I have a work life and I have a home life, right? And the line used to maybe be blurry. It's like, there is no line anymore especially with people working from home more, it's they are both. And how we are at work influences how we feel at home vice versa. And so, when I think about this shift of what I've seen a lot of growth and wins in, is really looking at the individuals and individual first. And it's a different way of leadership.

Usually again, we're going to look at somebody what the role is in our organization or a business and say, well, that their job is this. And in reality, it's like, well, actually, there's way more to that person. That person's a mom, a dad, a husband, a wife, they've got a family and then work is really a vehicle for them to get to where they want to be. And I think that if the employee, that's the way an employee looks at it, right? They're not definitely loyal to that job. To them, they could be somewhere else in a couple of years and they know that, but they're still going to be with their family. They're still going to be, so they're really looking out for what? Them, number one. And if I can align that and say, "I also care about you, number one.

And if that means that you're not here in the future, because you're off to a better opportunity, I'm okay with that. What I want is for while you're here, I want you to be engaged. I want you to be alive." And that come, the only way that happens is if I actually take genuine interest in them as a person and in the dreams that the concept of



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the dreams that just gives us a kind of like a playing field or a terminology for us to engage in that conversation about that person.

David Phelps: I'm going to just jump in right now. And so, people know that with the consulting you've done, obviously you've done this for many, many years, and you actually have a new book coming out on this very concept. It's called The Dream Machine, and it's actually available at the end of this month, September 28th. So, we'll put a link in our show notes because I think it would be a great resource to take from our conversation today. So, let's go back and give me some specific examples, if you would Dane, about a person's staff member and employee who you learn more about what their aspirations are and what kind of resources, opportunities training that would allow them to have that personal growth, what sort of things are available? Well, just give us some examples that might help our listeners today. Sure.

Dane Espegard: Sure. So, the concept of this, I think there's more to this that there's just a leadership conversation in general, right? If we're talking and we're centered around this dreams concept, the idea with what we do is we help facilitate the creation of a dreams list for an individual, right? So, team members within that team that create their dreams list, which when I was new to this, the list was typically like a 100 to 150 per employee. More recently as I've done this, I did this with Amber's team. The average person at her company came up with over 300, right? And so, what this is, it's a list of there's nine different categories that we take them through, but it's travel, adventure, material, vocational, creative, spiritual,

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it basically covers everything. And so, the idea is, "Hey, let's daydream a little bit, and let's have some fun."

And what are some things that would light you up and get you excited in the world?" And if given the opportunity, I try and get access to that, I'll ask them, I'd say, "Hey, David, invitation, not obligation. I'd love to see your list if possible, no judgment from it. But you work here and on our team we like to do little thank yous, little contests here, or there, that type of thing, instead of just giving you a generic gift card to the local restaurant or something, I'd love to be able to pick something out on your dreams list." But what it does is it gives us this insight into the person that is such a full picture. It's not how they show up today to work, but I get to see what are their health goals?

And a lot of the things that are on the list, they haven't even shared with friends and family. And so, it's a really cool connection. But then an example that comes to mind is somebody who was on my team for, she worked with us for about six years, her name's Marie, and we help Marie make a list. On her list, we go through the category of vocation, right? Which is kind of scary as an employer. I'm saying, what are your vocational goals? And oftentimes it's probably not stay at this job forever, right? If we're thinking [inaudible 00:15:24]. And so, for her, she had a few work goals of our business, but then on there, she also had own administrative assistant business. And then there were other things on there, but I was able to look at that.

I knew she wasn't necessarily a lifer with us. And so, I was then able to start giving her different duties and working with her differently to line up skills and tasks that

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she was going to do that would be in line with that owning of an administrative assistant business. And she ended up ultimately leaving, starting her own business. But what happened during the time that she was there, she was so much more engaged. She wasn't asleep at the wheel. It was, we were helping her quote unquote, live the life of her dreams. And that relationship is strong even on exit. And I think that there's just, it's operating differently and not the fear of losing someone, right? I have a fear of somebody being totally past some sleep while they're working, is what I have a fear of. I'd rather have them here less amount of time, but really engaged in driving.

David Phelps: That's such a counter attitude that most people have, as you said, that the fear of, if I empower this person and it could be any level staff or in our industry and in dentistry, oftentimes business owners will look for an associate doctor to come in and help provide care and take some the load off and maybe let them expand the clinic if they want to do that. But there's a fear that if I help this doctor, this younger doctor, typically to become better, not just in maybe clinical procedures, but maybe in leadership or communication skills, I mean, all the soft skills that are so important today that, that person's going to leave and go on their own to your point.

Look, we can't put a glass ceiling on people because again, then you're going to have that passive person who doesn't feel like they're going to grow. There's nowhere for them to go. What are they going to be doing in your business or your practice to make any significant difference? Well, they're going to be burned out and they're going to look for something else. So, why not engage your people as long as they're going to be with you and

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some will be lifers for sure, because they don't have aspirations to go bigger. But those that do you know what, let them spread their wings and while they're with you, to your point, they're going to be very engaged, have a lot of energy, a lot of inspiration for everybody else. And gosh, that's what we want. That's the culture we really want in our businesses

Dane Espegard: And what I also find with that too, is like, so we operate, I've chosen to operate from this core belief of everybody is temporary. And I've been at an organization for 19 years. I'm still temporary. At some point I'm going to leave. And I look at my relationship with my wife that way, right? And so, in the reason it's not out of a fear base, but it's out of a, "Well, I want to make sure I'm constantly courting my wife."

David Phelps: Yes.

Dane Espegard: Right? Because that's going to lead to a better relationship anyways. I want to constantly be recruiting not new people, I want to be recruiting the people who are currently on my team because that is going to lead to them being here longer. And I've seen that even the top achievers that you know are headed in different direction, they will stay longer because they recognize that I've got somebody here as a leader who cares about me, who's got my best interests in the main focus and are really, this is a unique thing.

David Phelps: Yes, no, yeah. No doubt about it. Let's talk about on the attract side. So, this is not someone who's currently in our culture, but we're looking to add somebody, some person. So, today again with the labor shortage and the fact that people do have more choices, oftentimes we think many

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times business owners think that, well, it's an auction system for sure out there. I'm going to have to, the word, have to pay more. Maybe they're signing bonuses today have to pay. Maybe I have to pay a recruiter. Oh my gosh. So, help us see the light through how it's still an investment, you're investing in people. So again, if you have that turn style doesn't matter, your cost has gone way up. So, recruiting attracting. So, how do we attract people with the idea of investing in them and their dreams and the dream list before they've actually onboarded with us? How can we use attraction for them to see and have some idea about what our culture is assuming we have a good one that they might be attracted to?

Dane Espegard: So, I think to get to the answer to that, I think part of it is making sure that your business culture, your culture, your current program is there so that you can then advertise it. And when we have a labor shortage, what does that mean is that the average employee has tons of options. And so, what's going to stand out is something that's unique and something that's different and yes, couple extra \$1,000 maybe nice, but is that going to be the thing that somebody's curious about? And so, I think being able to advertise that your culture is unique and here's why it's unique, I don't know anybody who has a negative feeling when they hear the word dream, right? And so, if somebody were to say, "Hey, and just so you know a little bit about the culture around our organization, we're centered a 100% about people living their life of their dreams.

I know that might sound a little out there, a little flu view, but to give you an idea over in the other room there, we've got an example of everybody who works here and

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they've got 10 things that they're trying to get done this year. They're on their dreams list. We give out dream bonuses twice a year, that people are able to earn some money towards accomplishing something on their dreams list. And people also have normal vacation time of X amount. But we also, here we give them extra bonus one week of dream vacation time, and that's meant for them to accomplish something that's on their dreams.

That kind of stuff, it's all it is that extra week of vacation, but when you say to dream vacation, it's them spending their own money on it, but it's just, it's getting people to think differently about what the purpose of work is. I believe, like I said, everybody's temporary. I also believe that they the true work of an organization should be to better the lives of the people that work there.

David Phelps: Yes.

Dane Espegard: Yeah, and this is a way to do that is to get somebody thinking anything's possible, what would get me a live this year, especially with this pandemic.

David Phelps: I think one of the keys that you've already brought up is the specificity of the dream list. Instead of just having a conventional, traditional profit share bonus plan that here's the money, oh, by the way, it'll come through your next payroll check and the government will take their deduction. I mean, that just, what does that do for you? I mean, really nothing. I mean, it's just extra money that's in the bank. And then who knows what happens to that. But when you've actually tied it to something that's on their list and they get to experience it, they actually went and experience what they wanted, the benefit is it just, is

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amazing, it's huge. So, that specificity is a key part of why they have the dream list.

Dane Espegard: And people just, we remember experiences and you're totally right. Extra \$1,000 that goes on, that feels nice in the moment, but we don't remember that, right? When somebody's thinking about their time spent at a certain company, they're not like, "Oh, this one time, or this other time, I got a little." But they do remember the vacations. They remember the, you know what, super weird, but I had on my list and this is one that I've done with people on our team. I love looking at people's dreams lists. I think it is such a unique thing if they allow you to do it and as I go through, I'll find, I usually look for some health ones. And let's say that you have a small team of individuals in your organization and you look and you see somebody who has a Tough Mudder that's on there.

Well, it's an easy Google search, Tough Mudder, Chicago, right? If that's where your business is at, and it's like, oh, we've got one coming here in August. "Hey, Sue. I was looking over your dreams list and I saw that you had on their Tough Mudder. Would you be open trying to, it's going to be here in September. I did a little bit of research. I would love to match, right? Like to split the entrance fee with you." Entrance fees under a 100 bucks. If I'm an employer, I spend \$50 on so much stuff that I never even recognized. But to be able to say I'll pay the whole thing, I like to say I'll match your investment. So, I'll split that with you if you want to sign up for it. Well, what happens is that person now is focused on their health for three months leading up to, that brings extra energy to work.



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They thank you as though you did all of this work and really all you did was find something on their list and spend 50 bucks on it. So, there's little things like that that could also end up being a couple people on the team that do it. Vacations, I've done where somebody says, "Hey, I'm going to [inaudible 00:23:52] with the family." And I'll look at their dreams list. And if there's something on there that is around that area, I'll see if there's something that I can easily spend a couple \$100 on, but has a massive impact for them.

David Phelps: That's so good. So, I know we don't have time to go into great detail today, but I know it in the book that you'll help business owners describe. So, you've talked about some smaller, easy to do pay half the entrance fee, a little add on here, there which pretty much you can roll those out here and there. And that's just, I thought no brainer for business owner.

Dane Espegard: Yeah.

David Phelps: What about some of the bigger items on the dream list? Is there a way that you help business owners kind of figure out based on achievement milestones that employees met, like in the practice in terms of their growth and their training, or they've got extra skill sets to align with something that might be bigger in terms of a dream list head on?

Dane Espegard: Absolutely. I think for sales organization, it's a little easier because there's benchmarks and you hit it and then you're so in that scenario, yeah. I think it makes so much sense for a business to say, when you achieve this, you've now earned a, instead of a \$500, a \$1,000, 1500, it's you get a \$1,000 trip. And we're not just going to give

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you the money, but we're going to book the tickets, right? Or something of like that. I think if it's in a non-commission based thing, it could be tenure and it could be, "Hey, once you at your five year mark, you don't get some box of stakes but we send you on a very memorable trip and we figure out how to make this a dream trip." One of the things Cutco does great is they're so phenomenal at showing appreciation.

Again, I think it's a little easier when it's a sales organization, but they do different things where milestones, when you hit a certain mark, you get to go on, they call it a hall of fame trip and they give you money for it. But I still remember mine was to Thailand and I don't remember the five grand they gave me, but I remember that trip like it was yesterday, so does my wife and how amazing that was. And it was, it didn't just give me enjoyment on that trip, it gave me enjoyment planning. It gave me enjoyment the year leading up to it where I was like, "I'm about to hit that here it comes." So, the idea with this, it's the same feeling that David, if you've got a trip in the schedule with your wife, right, or your significant other, your family or whatever, even a solo trip, it's not just the trip that gives you the enjoyment.

It's the planning of it. It's the month leading up to it. It's the anticipation. And so, imagine if not only we, but everybody that was on our team had something in the calendar once every month or two months, they're never just going year to year, but they're working with purpose. They're showing up to their day excited. And that has such a, you can't put it on your bottom line, right? We can't measure it necessarily but you can feel it when those people show up to work each day.

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David Phelps: Well, that's a huge benefit for the owner, entrepreneur of the business. When you get to show up to a culture that's upbeat, energized versus walking in the front door or the back door and finding it's problems, it's problem centric. It's well, that takes your joy out of it and we should all be in our workplace having joy out of it. I think that's a key and so much of life has been that that's not the way it can be and you just, you can have to martyr down and it's like, no, that's not going to work. So, with the book and I love books because that's a starting point with a new idea, a new concept. How would you, let's just say someone's going to read the book, what should they be able to do and implement? After reading the book, what are some easy, quick action steps that might come out of reading the book just to give our listeners a little bit, "Okay. Here's what I might be able to do with this and get some quick wins?"

Dane Espegard: Yeah. Great question. So, I think the first, one of the really important things is that the leader has to be willing to do this themselves, right? So, it's kind of, it's living life out loud. And to me, that's the fun part. I feel obligated to live the life of my dreams because that's what I preach to my team. It also gives the business owner permission to talk openly about the trip they took or that investment that they made. For me when I was a business owner prior to this, if I took a vacation or something else, I was a little hush hush about it because I knew that the people on my team maybe they didn't have the same financial opportunity that I did or the flexibility, so I wouldn't talk about those. But now that we're encouraging everybody to accomplish their dreams, it was actually my duty to say, "Hey, I just want everybody to know I'm going to be taking a trip coming up."

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It's on my dreams." And people wouldn't resent if they would celebrate it. So, I think number one is that the leader has to practice this themselves. So, really it starts with creating their own dreams list. When somebody buys the book, they're going to get access to a master list of like a 1,000 plus dreams. It's kind of the biggest menu that somebody could pick from and then they can highlight and steal the ones that if they want to start their own. We're also doing a dream storming workshop. Dream storming is kind of that first like process of creating a list. I do this within businesses, but as part of the launch of the book, we're doing anybody who purchases three copies gets a free ticket to an online one, which will be about three hours in the middle of October. And that's a great place for a business owner to show up, do it themselves. And then really from getting the book and attending that, they should feel confident being able to take their team members through this roll out of the dreams process.

And even if they just start with that and they don't do all the other stuff that's in the book, they've already made some big wins [inaudible 00:29:25] concept to their team.

David Phelps: Yeah. No, I love that. Yeah. So, I'm going to buy three books just so I can do that because I'd love to be again, like you said, the leader's got to do it first. You've got to buy into it and you got to understand it because that's going to give you the excitement to take your team and that's a fun thing to do. So, we can order the book at [dreammachine.com](http://dreammachine.com) or is it dream-

Dane Espegard: [thedreammachinebook.com](http://thedreammachinebook.com)?

David Phelps: ... [book.com](http://book.com), yes.

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Dane Espegard: Yeah.

David Phelps: Okay. So, dreammachinebook.com is where you can order the book. You can order one, or you can order several copies. You got some different of additional bonuses that people can have. But look, go get least one. But I'd say if you're a leader who's thinking about, "Hey, how can I improve the culture?" I think that workshop would be an amazing place to go, because look, I can read a book, but I love to have someone helping me implement.

I'm just a whole lot better with someone who's done it to take me through the process. It's a lot of brain damage for me to take a concept that I go, well, this is great, but gosh, could someone just walk me through it one time? And then it's like, it's a whole difference. Okay. So, this is great. So, we'll put these links in the show notes. You can again reach or find Dane at his personal website or business website, which is daneespegard.com and I spelled that earlier. So, what that there, and then thedreammachinebook.com is where people can go and actually order the book which will be how out in their hands if they order now in just a little over week or 10 days. I mean, we're that close. So, really exciting stuff Dane, thank you so much for being here today.

I think again, as I said earlier on our beginning of the call today that this is an era in which we as business owners, if we want to continue to not just survive but thrive, we've got to focus on this and it's like anything in life, we have to be intentional about it and you really have the roadmap or the blueprint on how to do it. So, thank you so much for being here today.

## **Ep #347: Dane Espegard - How to Thrive Post-Pandemic Through Team Dream Achieving**

Dane Espegard: Yeah. Thanks for having me. I enjoyed the conversation.

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