Corey Andrew Powell (00:02)

Hello everyone, I am Corey Andrew and welcome to another inspiring episode of Motivational Mondays presented by the NSLS, now impacting over two million members nationwide. Now today we have a really, really insightful guest joining us. He's a two-time bestselling author and host of the Learn It All podcast and CEO of Learn It, a live learning platform that has transformed the lives of over two million people. That's a pretty common number apparently between us, which is really cool.

And so he has a background as a professional baseball player as well, and he brings an athlete's mindset to his leadership sharing game. And he also, you know, it's a platform that really helps people learn and adapt and helps teams as well thrive as a collective. So we're really happy to have Damon here today. Damon, welcome to Motivational Mondays.

Damon Lembi (00:50)

Corey Andrew, it's an honor to be here. Thanks for having me.

Corey Andrew Powell (00:54)

very

welcome sir, Mr. Damon Lembi. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Now before we dive in, you are the CEO of Learn It as I mentioned, and I gave a little bit of the background, but can you share a little bit more about like really what it is and what it provides?

Damon Lembi (01:10)

Sure, Learn It is a live learning platform. And essentially what we do is live instructor-led training, lot of Zoom and in-person. And customers turn to us mainly B2B when they're looking to upskill new managers. Let's say somebody's got promoted from an individual contributor to a first-time manager and they don't have the skillset they need. So we help upskill them to learn everything from how to communicate better, coaching. Customers also turn to us.

when they're looking to improve communication across the organization. So we help design training programs that align with their goals and outcomes.

Corey Andrew Powell (01:45)

Right, very cool, that's excellent. And also when it comes to your own career trajectory, if you will, I mentioned you started in baseball. So before that transition to the world of business, what was that connection for you that goes, I'm gonna be an athlete here and be a businessman here, or was it some sort of continuation of that path for you?

Damon Lembi (02:08)

Not at all. I I put all my eggs in the basket being a professional baseball player. And a very short version of that is I grew up in the San Francisco Bay area. I love sports. By the time I was like a sophomore in high school, I knew if I was gonna play college or pro baseball, college or pro sports, it had to be baseball. So I went all in on baseball. I was a high school American. And really my first big decision was my senior year, I got drafted by the Atlanta Braves in the 13th round. And do I go to college?

or do I start playing professionally? My parents were super cool. They said, hey, this is your decision. I chose the route of going college and it was one of my first great leadership lessons. I did so because our coach, Hall of Fame coach named Andy Lopez, he set this, Corey, this moonshot vision that small school like Pepperdine is gonna win the College World Series with only 2,500 people and we're gonna do it by working as a team. So I went there, I ended up getting hurt and leaving.

And sure enough, they won the College World Series the very next year. Moved on to Arizona State, had a good career there, hit a home run in the College World Series, like my wife says, my glory days. getting ready to be drafted again and play professionally, it didn't happen. So here I am. I'm 22 years old. My whole identity was being a baseball player. I wasn't sure if my skills were transferable into the business world. And I was lucky, though. I came from a family who had different

businesses, real estate, hotels, savings and loans. And my dad was starting this cool little company called Learn It. And this is dating myself back in 1995. So I started as a receptionist there. And I did that for two reasons. One, I wanted to roll up my sleeves and learn. And two, didn't want to be someone, know, daddy puts me in a high level position. I wanted to work my way up and show that I belonged.

And so that's really where I got in to make in the transition from losing your identity as a baseball player, which was very, very hard, but knowing I got to pivot now and I got to figure out what I'm going to do the rest of my life. And I got lucky that the athletic education I got from playing baseball has really helped me ever since.

Corey Andrew Powell (04:19)

That's a wonderful leadership lesson. I love that you mentioned the pivot because very often we do discuss how people have a certain ambition or a dream that they are going for, or sometimes they don't know what they're even going to do with life. And there's a moment where you have to sort of make a decision just to change course or alter the direction you're going in or change your trajectory, but do it fearlessly and just kind of believe that you're going to land somewhere. But I think the first...

The first step is the willingness to pivot, quite honestly.

Damon Lembi (04:52)

You're 100 % right. I think that it's important for your listeners out there, life doesn't always go as planned and that's okay, right? And when that happens, what choice do you have? You could sit there and cry in your soup or you could make a pivot. And even if it's fearful, even if it's tough, even if you're unsure of yourself, I think that it's really important for us at all ages to get out of our comfort zone and not be afraid to go out and try something.

You know, that was really the situation I was in. I wanted to, I knew that I was capable of doing something. I wasn't sure at the time what it was, but I figured if I worked hard and really focused on learning, I would be able to make some of that myself. And I'm not gonna say I'm the greatest leader of all time, but I'm really happy with what we've been able to accomplish through a great team at Learn It over these 30 years.

Corey Andrew Powell (05:45)

Yeah, I mean, two million people have learned on and have been up skilled, I should say, on learn it. So this champion, the you as a champion of the learn it all mindset, like the learn it all mindset, like what exactly would you how would you define that?

Damon Lembi (06:02)

So how I define that is we all know, know it alls, right? You know, have a conversation with something, they're set in their ways, they have it all figured out. As you're speaking with them, they're kind of rolling in their eyes, right? I mean, they've got all the answers, you know, my way or the highway. The learn it all mindset, you know, similar lot to growth mindset is that you're open and you're humble. You're like, okay, I don't have all the answers, so, but I'm gonna be curious, I'm gonna learn from other people.

I'm going to go out, I'm going to try things, and I'm going to continuously find ways to learn and continue to evolve.

Corey Andrew Powell (06:39)

Well, you know, I think when it comes to that though, I how do people kind of get out of their comfort zone though? I mean, think that's sort of where that gets a little tricky, right? Because many people are like, you know, they're kind of stuck, if you will, they know what they know, and to kind of give them that push to kind of get outside of their own way, if you will. How does that play into your work? mean, is that are those obstacles that you have to overcome?

Damon Lembi (07:02)

Absolutely,

and I've gotten better at it over time and I want to just say one more thing You know when I say learn it all mentality I'm not saying constantly just learning learning learning, know reading going to classes you have to execute on some of that as well, right? I mean I had this one gentleman told me on my podcast David Katz. He's awesome He said learning without doing is treason. So you have to put in a practice some of what you learned now And also when it comes to being a leader

You don't have to run a team. You know, a leader can be a parent, a coach. We're all leaders. It starts with self-leadership. And to answer your question, I feel like I owe it to myself, my team and my family to continuously stay relevant. If you're stuck in your ways and you've got blinders on and you're not learning new things, you're going to get passed up, especially in the world we live in today, Corey. mean, the change of pace is never going to slow down.

It's not going to get any slower than it is right now. It's going to continue to evolve with AI and everything else going on. So if you're leading a team or you're a coach or you're a parent, you owe it to yourself and your team to stay relevant and continuously find ways to continue to grow. Otherwise, you're just going to get passed up. I we've all heard the blockbuster story and all those types of stories, but you have to push yourself to get out of your comfort zone. Otherwise, you know, you're going to be left behind.

Corey Andrew Powell (08:24)

Yeah, yeah, that is one of the most common denominators. I think when I have had people on like yourself, successful leaders, there is that moment where they all were like, you know what, if I don't evolve somehow, again, even the pivot conversation is still a part of that because pivoting means you're willing to have the growth mindset, if you will, being willing to learn new things. Otherwise you do become stagnant. And it's especially important in the AI age, as you mentioned too, because there's a certain demographic age wise.

that are very sort of afraid of technology. And then there's a, that same demographic sort of demonizes Gen Z for being such a tech, a tech heavy generation. And I'm like, no, you need to sort of embrace Gen Z because they're going to need you. You need them. You need them. just say, but we also can give to them because very often that generation lacks, so they say the soft skills. So there is this, I think push and pull with all generations to sort of learn from each other.

and continue for us to succeed as a society.

Damon Lembi (09:28)

You hit it on the point, I was talking to this gentleman yesterday and we talked just about that. We're in the workforce right now, we probably have four or five different generations and we all need each other, right? You know, some people might think that Gen Z stuff, some people might think my generation, you know, I'm 50, what is it? Gen X or whatever, you know, but we could all learn from each other and we all bring different skills to the table. And one of the things, and when we talk about this diversity,

One of the things I think that happens a lot of times is ageism. if you're leader out there and you're in your 30s, don't automatically forget about somebody who's in their 50s. You could learn from them. And if you're somebody in your 50s and you have a Gen Z-er who grew up with technology, it comes down to being a great leader. Be curious, learn from each other, and grow and evolve. Not saying you have to be best friends with the person, but I think everybody can bring something, every generation can bring something to the table.

to help you develop and also it's best for your team to have a diverse team with multiple generations and go at it from all directions.

Corey Andrew Powell (10:33)

Yeah, no, I agree. And mentorship, you know, for us at the NSLS, those are big pillars. The growth mindset that we just mentioned, learning when to pivot, mentorship is really great. And it's now I'm thinking about, you know, we always think of like the mentor as being like this older sort of like, you know, elder statesman or stateswoman and the mentee being this younger person. But you can actually reverse that. And the elder person can be learning something from the youngin.

as well, if you will, because there's something to learn on both sides. And I will also say I'm partial to Jinx because that's me too.

Damon Lembi (11:12)

mean, you look 20 years younger than me, but I'll say that. 100 % what you're saying, I mentor a bunch of people, and I love mentoring the Gen Zers, the ones in their 20s or 30s. Because I learn from them. And I feel like to a degree, they even keep me young. And they have a different perspective. this comes into work. Sometimes I've got younger people on the team.

Corey Andrew Powell (11:26)

Me too, me too.

Damon Lembi (11:42)

doesn't even have to be younger people. And they have these ideas. And your first initial reaction is, this will never work. But you have to take a step back and really think about things. And I think great leaders will look at it like, OK, well, let's hear this person out. Because maybe there are better ways to do something, or you can learn from them. And I just think that's what makes life exciting, is to surround yourself with different people who maybe have no common interest as you, and just get curious and listen to what they have to say and learn from them.

Corey Andrew Powell (12:12)

Yeah, no, absolutely. was reading a lot of your, well, watching a lot of your videos and reading a lot of your past talks, like the transcripts and stuff. And that was a key standout that you do mention a lot is the emphasis on great leaders are constantly evolving. And I think you can apply that just to life. Like we all should never declare ourselves completely finished. Like I want to literally be like 90 with a new fact someone drops on me like every day. Like it's just, you know, that,

You feel your mind expand when you gain knowledge. At least I do. I really feel like my mind grows. I feel it. And I don't ever want that feeling to stop. So that's just my personal take on that, you know?

Damon Lembi (12:53)

When I interviewed a guy by the name of Doug Conant, who is retired, he was the CEO from Campbell and several others like that, they said, when you stop learning, you die. And it's been amazing over the years on my podcast, but also the leaders I've been able to work with and see behind the curtains at Learn It, they have an insatiable appetite for continuous growth. And I think a lot of it though, Corey, has to deal with competitiveness. They wanna be competitive. And they're also, again, I keep mentioning it, curious.

and they want to stay ahead of the game. Because if they're not, then you could just get stagnant and fall behind.

Corey Andrew Powell (13:30)

Yeah. And it's actually, it's funny, it's more difficult now too, because like in my world, media, audio, video production, when I went to college for a lot of that kind of that work, I was in college with other college aged kids learning all these software programs for video editing, for example, like Final Cut and Adobe Premiere Pro, only to find out that now those courses were being like taught like an elementary school as like an elective to sixth graders.

You know, so my competition now is learning the software I'm learning in college when they're like 13. Right. And then so you're right. I mean, if you look at that kind of sort of disparity between age and learning, it's it is literally a do or die situation. You're not going to stay relevant in a world that's teaching kids software like that at 12. And you're a grown up. It's like a different world out there.

Damon Lembi (14:24)

It is a different world out there, and I think that's one of the things and you look at the AI world that we're in or we're going into the technology and all those skills are super important, but you know what else is really important? Soft skills. No, I don't like that. I don't like that term soft skills because you know they're not soft. know, whether it's whether it's empathy, communication, adaptability, creativity. These are all the skills you pick up the technology skills, but the people who are the most successful I I believe are they they weave in both.

the technical skills, but also the ability to communicate and collaborate with others.

Corey Andrew Powell (14:57)

Yes,

absolutely. Yeah, we've moderated, I've moderated quite a few conversations with leaders through our web series that we do different programs throughout the year. And that's been one that's come up quite a bit. And some people say they don't like that term soft skills. one particular educator deems them durable skills because they are the long lasting ones. And when there's no computers, there's no electricity, what do you have remaining that's durable would be those skills that you have to kind of know innately.

like the communication collaboration, just having a way to be able to talk and convey ideas. I think that is in many ways lost on certain generations, maybe because they are so tied to the technology. I don't want to bash Gen Z, but there is that notion that that is a lacking area for them. What do you think about that?

Damon Lembi (15:49)

I mean, you, you, yeah, absolutely. You know, I don't want to, I don't want to bash it. It's a thin line. I don't want to bash me there. But a lot of times if I go out and I do a keynote or a talk or talk to the customers, yeah, they pulled me aside and they'll say, how do we work with the younger generations? They're so stuck in their phone, you know, and they have a harder time communicating. You know, and I say, you know what, first of all, we're their parents a lot of times, right? So we have some of it, the blame, but also,

Corey Andrew Powell (15:54)

It's a thin line.

Damon Lembi (16:18)

Let's leverage what they're really good at. Let's leverage the fact that they're much better at us than in technology and learn from them around them. And I think a lot of these younger generations, the other thing that they do is they force us to be better. They want to know what the purpose is and what value they bring into the organization. And they want crystal clear goals and directions sometime. And they want professional growth opportunities. And I think that if you...

Switch your framework from being, maybe they're tough to work with, to like, OK, they're pushing us to develop ourselves and be better leaders and run a better organization, and leverage the skills that they have. I think that that's the best way to go about it.

Corey Andrew Powell (17:01)

Yeah, because they are of all generations, one of the most socially conscious, aligned with like the 1960s. I mean, where they are literally demanding corporate responsibility from brands before they even consider working for them. And they will tell you, you know, in many cases, no, I'm not interested in your cubicle. I need remote.

And we need to listen because they have the upper hand with the technology. So they kind of got to be flexible with that generation too. So they're in a really good position. So Jen's ears, if you're out there, use your leverage, get it, you know, but just balance it out with a little bit of those durable skills too. I do want to talk to you about conquering imposter syndrome. That's another one that is one of those things that we all sort of deal with. And, especially when you go onto a leadership role, like my first time becoming a manager as a copywriter.

for a national brand, I was mortified because I I was always like thinking like they're gonna pull the veil off and realize that I'm not good at this and they made a mistake. I was like constantly thinking that and then I got over it and I did okay. But when it comes to something like, know, imposter syndrome, how do you help people deal with that?

Damon Lembi (18:13)

So I first really dealt with imposter syndrome when I got to Pepperdine and everybody, I was used to being always the best player on the field. Of course I always played with great players, but then everybody was as good as me. And like I said, I ended up getting hurt and I left. And when I had the opportunity to go to Arizona State, a lot of people said, don't go there. There's so many great players out there. But I knew it was my last opportunity to play really high level baseball. And this is where I built a framework.

that I've used for my whole life on how to overcome imposter syndrome. And it's really a four step framework. Number one, it's like, okay, well, what are you afraid of? So you get put into this role as a new manager. And so you first figure out what are you afraid of? And I use this term called purposeful awfulizing. What is the worst thing that could happen? Okay, the worst thing that can happen is I fall flat on my face and maybe I lose my job. Okay, that's the worst case. Can you live with that? Yes, you can. Okay, great, I can get over it. So it's not life threatening.

So, okay, I understand what the label is what I'm afraid of. So the very next step is hard work. There's no shortcuts in any of this or hacks. You have to be willing to put in the hard work. The next step is deliberate practice, right? So you get in on that job. I wanna take a step back and just say, if you're put in that role, it's because people believe in you. So it's not your responsibility. You're there, focus on doing a good job.

So get back to step three, which is deliberate practice. Focus in on the areas that you think you're weak on or that you could do better at and really just focus on that. It's easy to procrastinate and look at other things to do and check emails. But if you're struggling with having difficult conversation, do role playing and have more difficult conversations. And then finally, let's say it's public speaking, you practice, you do all this. Like in baseball, when it's time to step up to the plate,

You step up to the plate. You stop thinking about everything you've done because you've known you put in the hard work. You put in a deliberate practice and you just learn and let go, right? So you give it your best shot. You might knock it out of the park. You might fall flat on your face. Whatever happens. Number one, you should pat yourself on the back because too many people are afraid to get out of their comfort zone. Stick their neck out there and try things. And number two, it's you're to learn from every opportunity and you can always move forward. I look at.

I look back on some of the things that in life where I don't know whether it's asking out a girl or trying for something that I just didn't do because I was afraid to fail that I wish I would have I would have tried differently. And what do you really have to lose a lot of the time just going out there and if it's something you're passionate about, just go for it and make it a learning opportunity and give yourself more credit than I think a lot of people do.

Corey Andrew Powell (21:01)

Yeah, that's really great. You you tap on a really important part. Like in most cases, if you've been offered an opportunity, it's because someone's already deemed you worthy. That's why they've asked you to do it. Right. So it's so counterproductive at that point to be like, I don't know if I can do this. Well, you know, someone else thinks you can. So that's like kind of half the battle if you if you have someone who is rooting for you. But we've all been there. It's easy to kind of get in our own way, if you will. And

I think the second part of that is again with all the successful people I've interviewed, they all have had a moment where someone offered them an opportunity. They were terrified, not sure if they could do it at all. And they said, yes, I'll figure it out when I get there, right? Versus no, and then stopping their own progress. They just say yes, and then they just deal with whatever that looks like. I'll do it.

Damon Lembi (21:55)

say yes and figure it out later. And everybody has imposter syndrome at some point or another. And those who say they don't, they're either a sociopath or just lying, right? So it's just the way it is. And so, I don't know, I've always kind of felt better about myself when I've stuck my neck out there and tried something. And sometimes hearing no isn't that bad, know, it's just, or not being successful, but you're never gonna know until you try.

Corey Andrew Powell (22:22)

Yeah. Yeah. And on that same note too, there's a, there's an education that happens when you are, I don't want to say rejected, but when things don't work out as well as you had planned, there's learning there.

Damon Lembi (22:35)

If things don't go the way you want them to go. That you take accountability for it. You don't always just make excuses like, they should have. You know this happened to me. The world's happening to me. You know, take accountability. Maybe there's something you could have done different and get feedback. You know there's a lot of talk about, you know, giving feedback all the time. I think it's so important for all of us to learn how to receive feedback. Because if you're open to feedback, you're not defensive. You don't have to implement everything people tell you all the time. But if you do.

And are open to feedback. It's like fuel for learning, so get comfortable with failure, you know, and then learn. And like you said, it's free marketing to see what you can want to try and experiment next time.

Corey Andrew Powell (23:17)

Yeah, there's an amazing girl, young woman, I should say. She was a radio, Disney radio host, young adult woman now. Now a successful influencer. I had her on the show. She's part of I guess, Z, younger Gen Z. And she literally, when she gets turned down for a pitch or a job, she will respond very, very academically and respectfully. And she will say to them,

I really were, I was really looking forward to this opportunity. I understand that you're not going to go with, go forward with it. Would you mind sharing with me what it was that made you take another direction or say no to me? Like I'm very open to know so that my next time pitching to you or perhaps someone else, I can prepare differently. It's brilliant. And the first, I was like, that sounds terrifying. She's like, it is terrifying because you also have to be willing to, because you don't know what they're going to say.

Yeah. So like to your point, Damon, you got to also be like willing to hear the feedback when you ask for.

Damon Lembi (24:23)

Yeah, I mean, I think that's great what she did. And a lot of times, you know, from a work perspective, if we're in a competitive opportunity and we lose that opportunity, I'll reach out to the prospect that we lost to and say, Hey, I would just like to understand what we could have done differently. I'm not trying to get you to change your mind and go with learn it. I just want to learn, you know, what the other competitor did that maybe we could learn from so we can

you know, compete next time, you know, and when you when you approach it that way, it was just like that young woman. I mean, you get great feedback again. Of course, like you said, you never really know what they're going to say. Yeah. So you got to be open to that. But I think that's a great way to continue to develop as an individual or as an organization.

Corey Andrew Powell (25:10)

Yeah, it really it's helped her a lot and she's also said in a couple times that response actually got her back in good graces with the client and in a couple of instances they actually did go on to work together because they were so impressed by her wanting to know. Yeah, yeah, it was really cool. So that's awesome. My gosh, we're already almost at like a 30 minute marker. I can talk to you all day brother. So I want to keep going here. One more thing I want to talk about is.

Damon Lembi (25:26)

It takes guts.

Corey Andrew Powell (25:37)

this notion of you talk about the possibility spotting and the constraints, yeah, turning constraints into possibilities and also possibility spotting. So let's talk about those two things. Possibility spotting means what?

Damon Lembi (25:55)

So what I mean by possibility spottings, and we talked about this a little bit earlier, everything doesn't always go as planned in life, right? So sometimes chaos happens or adversity happens. I'll give you a quick example. the pandemic happened, which was awful, right? We had to pivot everything from in-person learning classes to remote. And at first, weren't even sure if our clients were gonna stick with us.

I was walking up the hill one time going home. And I thought to myself, well, how we how can we make the best out of this? And and I wanted to need to hire more sales reps. And typically before it was all local, because we are an in person business. So I said, Okay, what's the possibilities out here? You know, there's a lot of these organizations that are selling tickets or whatever, and you know, they're not doing too well. So this could be a great time to find great talent. So instead of looking at something as like, my gosh, it's horrible.

you got to learn to work within your constraints and find ways to make the best out of things. And so I went out and I hired five sales reps who worked at different, you know, selling sports tickets or event planners and things like that. And I would have never had access to those people had it not been for this challenging situation. possibility spotting is again, you know, if whether you're making a pivot in your career, or, you know, you're dealing with some adversity.

Find out what you can do to make the most of the constraints that you're dealing with and make the best of it.

Corey Andrew Powell (27:26)

That's great advice. And then I guess finally with that sort of when it comes to the more corporate situation or a organizational growth situation, how does fostering a learning culture within an organization like directly contribute to company growth and the ability to stay competitive?

Damon Lembi (27:47)

Well, from an employee standpoint, and it doesn't matter what generation you are, one of the number one things that everybody wants is personal growth opportunities. a survey assessment after assessment shows that. And I'm not just talking about formal education. I'm talking about working for an organization where you create a safe space where people can go in, they could use their initiative and have some autonomy.

autonomy and actually try things, fail and learn from them. Where the flip side is, know, command and control leadership that doesn't work anymore. Right. So, you know, we need to be able to set people up for success, delegate to them and give them opportunities to learn. And it really starts at leadership level. If you want to have a learning organization, then you as a leader need to be able to

to be humble and vulnerable enough to say, you know what? I'm gonna go in, I'm gonna learn these skills, I'm gonna try things, maybe things won't work, I'm gonna delegate this off to somebody. If they make a mistake, guess what? I've got your back, let's learn from this. And Corey, what I've seen over the years is when you do that, when you have an organization like that, people don't just show up for the paycheck anymore, they show up because they believe in the organization, they feel like they're part of the purpose, that they feel valued and respected and ideas.

creativity bubbles up from all over the place. So that's what I mean by trying to foster an organization that is a learning organization.

Corey Andrew Powell (29:22)

Wow, wonderful words of wisdom, Mr. Damon Lembi. And again, two-time bestselling author and host of the Learn It All podcast and the CEO of Learn It. Damon, it's been a great conversation and hopefully we can talk again, do a part two and bring you back on and share more of what you're working on and all the great stuff you're doing. So thank you for being here today with us on Motivational Mondays.

Damon Lembi (29:44)

Thank you for having me, Cory, I had a great time.

Corey Andrew Powell (29:47)

Thank you for listening to Motivational Mondays presented by the National Society of Leadership and Success and available wherever you listen to your favorite podcasts. I'm Corey Andrew Powell and I'll see you again here next week.