



STORIES & INSIGHTS

Meet Larry Broughton

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We recently connected with Larry Broughton and have shared our conversation below.

Alright, Larry thanks for taking the time to share your stories and insights with us today. What do you think Corporate America gets wrong in your industry?

The term “Corporate America” is one of the things we get wrong in our society. Every organization, association, and corporation is made up of a group of humans...that is, individual people. Too many business owners look at our neighbors and fellow citizens simply as numbers, as resources from whom we can extract something. We call those who

purchase our products, “customers” and the ones who work inside our businesses, “employees.” As a long-time business owner, I understand the legal standing of those terms, yet we should remember “customers” are transactional, while “clients” are relational. Wouldn’t it be better as a business to have loyal clients, rather than one-time customers? Additionally, the term, “employee” conjures up the common refrains, “Is it payday, boss?” and, “Thank God it’s Friday.” When we call the people who work with us in our businesses, “employees” we are more likely to treat them as such, and they are much more likely to act like an “employee.” I’d rather call

them, “team members.” Everyone wants to be on a winning team. Team members on successful teams are willing to put the success of the team above their own personal agenda. I also fear that too many folks inside organizations hide their nefarious behavior



behind the “Corporate America” veil. At the same time, too few are willing to pull back the curtain to reveal what these scoundrels are really doing to their stakeholders, team members, and the country. In every segment of our society, I have to ask the question, “Is integrity dead in America?”

Great, appreciate you sharing that with us. Before we ask you to share more of your insights, can you take a moment to introduce yourself and how you got to where you are today to our readers.

Some folks have called me a schizophrenic entrepreneur because I have so many interests, businesses, and activities tugging at my time. The truth is, however, most of my business pursuits revolve around leadership and entrepreneurial development. From a young age, I’ve had a fascination with how leadership and vision casting (or the lack of either) have a direct impact on the success of a team or organization. In high school, I saw both inspirational and lousy leadership in action while working at restaurants, playing on sports teams, and earning the Boy Scout Eagle Award.

While serving several years in the US Army Special Forces (Green Berets) I became interested in foreign affairs and public policy. I decided to

leave active duty and pursue a degree in Political Science, with my sights on a gig at the State Department or in public office. The first job I took to put myself through university was a Night Auditor position at a rundown motel in San Francisco. While my roles and responsibilities grew at the hotel, and under new ownership, the property was converted into a hip boutique hotel, my interest in the hospitality industry grew. Simultaneously, after working on several political campaigns for candidates on both sides of the political aisle, I became disenchanted with our political process of choosing qualified representatives who were committed to integrity. So, I focused on the significant opportunity in front of me, which was as a Partner in the growing hotel company I was working for.



During my dozen-plus years with that San Francisco-based firm, I began writing and public speaking on the topics of leadership and business. I realized I was not feeling fulfilled in my “secondary leadership” role at the company,

and decided to chart my course as the “primary leader” of my own hotel company. Over the two decades since then, as our hotel portfolio grew to about 20 hotels, I appeared on every major tv and cable network, wrote dozens of articles, a couple of books (including the best-seller “VICTORY: 7 Revolutionary Strategies for Entrepreneurs”) discussing leadership and the power of entrepreneurship. The businesses we created, applying the leadership and team-building techniques I’d studied over the years were recognized with dozens of business awards; including Ernst & Young’s “Entrepreneur of the Year” award, Passkey Foundation’s “National Business Leader of Integrity” award, and Coastline Foundation’s “Visionary of the Year” award.



I was often approached by audience members after keynote presentations and television appearances inquiring whether I provide mentoring services to help grow businesses and leadership prowess. With that, another business opportunity was born, where I now actively mentor business owners and leaders in their entrepreneurial pursuits. I think we know what integrity is, but the truth is that motivation without integrity is dangerous! There are a lot of highly motivated people in the scamming and fraud world who lack integrity. And finally, we want people who have the capacity to grow with us. We want to build our institutional DNA and prefer not to outgrow our team members.

Let’s talk about resilience next – do you have a story you can share with us?



There are a couple of common missives that remain true on the leadership and entrepreneurial journey. First, “Loneliness is a required course for leadership,” and second, “Entrepreneurship is hard!” If either of these were easy, everyone would be doing them. There have been countless times on the journey when family and friends have asked if it wouldn’t be easier if I just went out and got a job. Although they may be correct, I’m certain the journey wouldn’t be nearly as adventurous, or rewarding.

Over the past couple of decades, I can recall times during national and global recessions when our hotel assets and businesses have lost up to 40% of their value due to a rapid decline in travel spending. While mortgages, utilities, and payroll expenses still need to be paid, revenues simply weren’t coming in to cover those basic operating costs. This was particularly difficult during the unprecedented times of the recent pandemic with a near-total shutdown of the hospitality industry that spanned two years. The truth is, three years after the start of the pandemic, many hotels across the country have yet to recover or reopen. Many have been foreclosed on, or converted into other use. More than once, I’ve exhausted personal savings, borrowed from friends, maxed-out credit cards, recapitalized deals, and conducted capital calls to keep team members employed.

I recognize that although entrepreneurship and business ownership may be the toughest professional challenge I’ll ever face, it can also be absolutely rewarding. I enjoy helping team members and mentees grow and expand their professional horizons while serving their communities. I’ve learned that rather than isolate myself during difficult times, I must continually surround myself with super-competent



advisors to guide me, professional allies who will collaborate with me, and friends who will love me.

My most recited mantra about resiliency I insert into nearly every conversation during dark times is, “Tenacity eats talent for lunch.”

How do you keep your team’s morale high?

This is one of the most significant challenges for managers, leaders, and business owners. Though the burden can be heavy, we must be enthusiastic leaders...you can’t light a fire with a wet match! Team members are always watching us and gauging our reactions versus the challenges we’re facing.

Plenty of surveys (including Gallup’s State of the American Workforce Survey) have shown a direct correlation between the amount of time an “employee” uses or works in their strengths and morale, positivity, and job satisfaction. Stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and turnover are often symptoms of team members working outside their strengths. Imagine if each day every team member arrived at their workspace knowing they would be utilizing their strengths the majority of their day. Positivity would increase, productivity would grow, and profit would balloon.

Additionally, finding the appropriate balance of both direct and respectful communication is a must to grow team member morale. Too often we are overly direct (lacking empathy) and we insult or hurt the feelings of those we expect to support our mission. At other times we are overly respectful, and never make our point, so resentment builds and performance

issues remain. We must take time to have difficult conversations in a supportive and loving fashion. I heard a mantra early in my leadership career that says, “Care enough to confront.”

Though we could do an entire seminar on this topic, spotlight coaching is key to managing teams and maintaining morale. The Gallup organization points out that one of the primary reasons people leave their jobs is because they feel like they are not being professionally developed. Formal professional skills training can boost confidence among our teams, and spotlight coaching throughout the week forces us to inspect what we expect. Too many immature managers withhold compliments and praise, choosing rather to micromanage and use the carrot-and-stick approach to motivation. The adage, “Catch people doing things right” by offering positive reinforcement in real time goes a long way when encouraging our team towards their fullest potential.

And finally, develop a culture of openness, trust, and appreciation. The recognition and celebration of each team member’s accomplishments leads to a positive work environment that encourages engagement, builds trust, and inspires “employees” to strive for greatness.



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