

bCause w/Erin & Nicole

Rarely in real life did they actually need a CEO centric solution to the questions or the problems that they were facing. They actually already knew what to do. (14:01-14:17)

And then I took it one step further and said you know, perhaps even the very meaning or purpose or mission of a life on earth is for humans to self-actualize, that we're all here just trying to find our own true voice. The unique, never to be repeated essence of who we all are and to know that voice and love it and bring it forth and share it with the world. Perhaps that's actually the purpose of life. (20:37-21:12)

That's the model we've been indoctrinated into, but in the 21st century, we're awakening to the truth, which is that each individual is sacred, and an organization's value is dependent upon what it gives to its individual members, not what it takes or extracts from. (52:49-53:14)

Erin: Hey guys, it's Erin. Hey, I'm just jumping on before the interview that we're doing this week. It's an interview that I did with a gentleman by the name of Kevin Hancock. And I have to tell you, I've done a lot of interviews and they're all pretty special, but this one really touched my heart and I really found a connection with Kevin immediately when we first were introduced. And I hope that you listen to this because it really moved me and his story and it just keeps, it keeps going and it keeps inspiring.

I also want to jump on because I don't normally give the thick of the plot at the beginning, but I think it's important here. Kevin actually was diagnosed with a rare speech disorder, and that's certainly part of his story and his leadership journey. And I wanted to let you know that because you might jump on and think, oh, there's something wrong with the recording, something on our end, your end. But it's actually Kevin and his voice, and it's something that you'll get used to very quickly. And I just wanted to make sure that I let you know about that, because again, I think this episode is really going to change your perspective and just inspire you to be a better leader, a better person, and so I want to make sure that you stick with it. I hope you enjoy it, love to hear from you. Join our bCause Facebook group and tell us what you thought. Thanks and enjoy the interview with Kevin Hancock.

[00:01:22] **Kevin:** What really got me thinking Erin, when I looked at it, it was probably historically across time leaders of established organizations had probably done more en masse to restrict and limit and direct and intimidate and control the voices of others then to liberate them.

[00:01:54] **Erin:** Welcome to the bCause podcast with Erin and Nicole.

Nicole: Wait, are we recording?

Erin: Yes, this is our intro. So we've been friends long enough to basically go from idiots to executives.

Nicole: And then we got fed up with the fake working world, the rat races, and all the parts of our lives where we needed a costume to cope.

Erin: So if you're in, drop the superhero disguises and the photo filters, and join us as we explore and empower authenticity, everywhere.

Well, hello everyone, it's Erin. And good morning to Kevin.

Kevin: Yeah, good morning.

Erin: So for our listeners, you know, I first have to start with, and I'll say this to you too, Kevin. If somebody would have told me a year ago that one of your most exciting interviews would be the CEO of a lumber company, I definitely wouldn't have believed them. But I'm really excited to talk to you. And importantly, of course, gather the lessons that you've learned and inspirations that you can bring to our listeners. So instead of reading your bio first, I'd love for you just to tell us a little bit about you, what you do, and tell the listeners a little bit about sort of the inflection point that you had about 10 years ago in your career.

[00:03:46] **Kevin:** Sure. So my name's Kevin Hancock, and I'm the CEO of [Hancock Lumber](#) company in Maine, and our company has been around a long time. It goes back to 1848, so before the first cannonball was fired in the Civil War, our company was in business and in Maine and I'm part of this six-generation family to work at the company. We are an integrated company, so we grow trees, which is a super interesting business in and of itself. We grow pine trees, and it takes 80 to a hundred years, Erin, to grow one. So in the 172-year history of our company, we had two crops, which always cracks me up. It's a business of patients. So anyway, we grow trees. We manufacture lumber that we distribute throughout North America and the world. And then in Maine we have 10 lumber yards that supply construction services and building materials to contractors. I have 525 people that are part of our team. So that's our company. And then my inflection point in 2010, kind of at the peak of the national housing and mortgage market collapse, which was a super stressful time for our industry and our company and me personally, it was very difficult. I began to have trouble speaking. I'd always taken for granted, never thought about and done a lot of, so when I would go to talk, all the muscles in my throat would kind of spasm, freeze, and contract, and my voice was getting quite broken and weak and often hard for people to hear. And turns out, I'd acquired a very rare neurological disorder called [spasmodic dysphonia](#), that affects only speech with no known cause and no known cure. So there I was at the peak of the housing market collapse, trying to figure out how to help navigate our company through that crisis without the consistent or comfortable use of my voice, something I certainly didn't see coming and wasn't really prepared to handle.

Erin: Well, and so just a few things I want to tell you. I don't think I told you this in our sort of initial conversation, but your team had reached out to me because they saw an article I wrote in Business Insider about culture and saw the synergies there and that we had a podcast and sent over both. I think it was in a New York Times article, as well as the Ted Talk you did. And there were a couple things that really stood out to me and gave me chills. And then more and more as we've talked, there's even more. The first thing I noticed Kevin was your Ted talk, which is so inspirational. And I actually sent it to some of my coaching clients immediately. It wasn't until at least a third of the way into your talk that you told the story about having the speech disorder that you acquired. And I got to tell you, I found it so inspirational to not only draw the wisdom you have that we'll get into and everything you've learned, but to be able to stand on stage, knowing that you sound different. Right. And I think intuition is to be like, hey, I'm different and here's why. And then let me tell you what I've learned from that. And I just wanted you to know that I thought that was really inspirational that, you know, it wasn't till a third or halfway through your talk that you availed that. And I found that a lot of power in that was very subliminal.

The other thing that really just immediately connected me with you beyond all the things you have around your leadership principles, and I told you this, was that, you know, and lucky for me, it was

more of a warning, but I had a leadership summit a couple of years ago. And as I told you, I was a CEO of a company about the size of Hancock lumber, a little bit bigger. And we were going into this huge leadership summit, we had worked for months, we had leadership training up to it. It was a big deal. We had a hundred leaders in town for it, and literally two hours before we kicked it off. And of course who kicks it off, right? The CEO- I got laryngitis for the first time in my entire life. And you know, not that I want to at all compare laryngitis to what you have, but at the time, of course, when you think like this is really crappy timing, I'm supposed to be the ra ra ra I'm leading us off. I'm obviously going to be talking with people the whole entire time. I do remember reflecting like this is going to use different leadership muscles. But you literally lived that. And what I'll also say is when I left my corporate job and decided to retire and pursue my own business, this was one of maybe three or four things that happened to me, physically, that had never happened. So I also got pneumonia that year, I got laryngitis, I got my first ever sinus infection. And I remember thinking none of these are life-threatening. No, maybe the pneumonia, if you don't treat it well. But it was okay, I hear you. There's a sign that I'm probably running myself too ragged. Right. It's those initial health indicators. And so, you know, when I read your story about this speech disorder and how it really shaped how you saw things, I couldn't help, but sit back and go, oh my God, I'm so glad I listened. Tell me about Kevin Hancock, pre spasmodic dysphonia. What was Kevin like as a leader?

Kevin: I bet we were pretty similar, Erin, is my guess. So I was super motivated, super energized, ever present. I was the voice of the company that stood a tremendous amount of energy at being everywhere leadership was needed and being the central leader that organized the meeting or gave the talk or made the key decisions. If you had to watched me, I think you would have said, well, that's pretty much how corporate leaders operate, he's pretty typical.

Erin: Right, right. Yeah. That sounds about like me and probably still me to a certain extent. And so, you have this disorder come through it. What was that time like? Did you take time off? Did you think about if you're going to have to step down? Did you get right back in there? What happened during that time?

Kevin: Yeah. Great question. So it was happening in a time of economic crisis with the housing market collapse. So taking time off was not an option at all at that point in time. And I really initially did probably what we all would have done, which is, I just kind of fought through. But what happens without thinking instinctively is when talking becomes somewhat difficult, you develop strategies for doing less of it. And my primary strategy was to answer a question with a question, thereby putting the responsibility for speaking back on the other person. So in that classic scenario, someone would come up to me at work because I was the CEO or the leader, or the boss with a question or a problem. And I started saying essentially, geez, that is a good question. What do you think we should do about it? And initially this was not a leadership strategy. It was a voice preservation strategy, but over time, what really struck me and got me excited and got me thinking differently was that people actually already knew what to do. Rarely in real life did they actually need a CEO centric solution to the questions or the problems that they were facing. They actually already knew what to do.

Erin: Yeah. That's so right. And so you're going through this tough time, you're obviously becoming a different leader by default. What were some of the things that you noticed, you know, tangible things you notice happening that maybe weren't happening before?

Kevin: That's a great question too. The way I've come to look at that, Erin, is that it's obvious, but I think it's important. Within a company or a work team, the senior leader gets first dibs on all the work. So a senior leader can scoop up everything he or she wants to do and everyone in the organization will let that senior leader scoop up whatever he or she wants, and then they pick up the rest. So what happened to me was that I had to talk less, be present less, in a traditional sense, and it was creating, unexpectedly, a lot more space for everyone else to share leadership responsibility, for everyone to be the voice of the company, for everyone to be decision-makers for the company. And essentially the

less I did, I'm oversimplifying, but the less I did, the better the company performed, which was totally counter-intuitive to everything I kind of learned growing up competitively as an athlete in school and business. It was like this idea of dispersing power at creating a culture where everybody is encouraged to share responsibility for leadership. That started to become my new focus, which is when I unexpectedly started seeing what had happened to my own voice as a bit of a gift and an invitation and opportunity to create something really different, both for myself and for everybody in the organization.

Erin: So interesting. You know, this is where I think it's really interesting to our listeners could be saying oh, that's great. Got it. Guy used to be a CEO, unfortunately had this medical condition come and he learned how to be a great leader, but what's so interesting is the story doesn't stop here. You know, that was epiphany number one, which I just find fascinating. And so tell us a little bit more about where you headed next and in 2012, you had quite an adventure out to South Dakota. Can you tell me about the idea to travel there and tell us about that experience and how that sort of continued to build on this turning point in your career?

[00:16:37] **Kevin:** Yeah, exactly. So what happened to my own voice really was the beginning of a much larger journey. So by 2012, the economy had stabilized, and our company stabilized. And I could see that my tribe, if you will, was going to be okay. And I had a growing feeling at that point that I could let down my guard a little bit and serve myself a bit more kind of regain my balance, or if you will literally and spiritually kind of search for my voice. And I didn't really know how I was going to do that, but that summer in August, I picked up a copy of [National Geographic](#) magazine, and the [Pine Ridge Indian](#) reservation was on the cover. There was a picture of a young Sioux boy riding a horse bareback across a bowling plain. And I think the title read In the Spirit of Crazy Horse, the Rebirth of a Sioux Nation. And I'd always had a love affair with the American West. But anyway, I read that article and it was as if every character from that story came out of that yellow magazine, Erin, and gave me a great big hug. I'd never had that experience before or since reading something. And I finished the article and said to myself, I'm going to go there. I want to see what life is like for the people who live there.

So I made a connection out there on the reservation, made one trip from Maine to South Dakota, one trip, became two, two became more. I've now been there over 20 times. I wrote my first book about my experiences there, but to pull it back together, what really struck me there is that at Pine Ridge I encountered an entire community on this reservation that didn't feel heard, that felt like a piece of their voice had gone missing or been taken, or it was stolen. And so I was kind of searching for my own voice in a community that was searching to regain its voice. And I put the two together and said to myself, wow, there are lots of ways to lose your voice in this world. Kind of a pretty obvious thing when you think about it, but... And then I took it one step further and said you know, perhaps even the very meaning or purpose or mission of a life on earth is for humans to self-actualize that we're all here just trying to find our own true voice. The unique, never to be repeated essence of who we all are and to know that voice and love it and bring it forth and share it with the world. Perhaps that's actually the purpose of life. But what really got me thinking, Erin, when I looked at it was that probably, historically, across time, leaders of established organizations had probably done more in mass to restrict and limit and direct and intimidate and control the voices of others than to liberate them. And that was when it all came full circle for me. And I got this idea that because I was in a position of leadership and had a company or a tribe or a community back home that perhaps my own voice condition was an invitation to lead differently and to strengthen the voices of others. So that's how, from my own voice to Pine Ridge, that kind of spiritual journey came full circle.

Erin: It's just incredible. And you know, as you tell the story, I mean, there's so much inspiration to be drawn and obviously the parallels, but I even go back to, you were looking at a National Geographic magazine, not a travel magazine, not a brochure, right? Come visit us and learn about how we've lost our voice. As I understand it, you literally, you know, so many people don't even say

yes to those invitations that are in front of them. Right. Those callings, those opportunities, and yet you saw something in a magazine that wasn't even truly an invitation to come visit and you went out there and had such an incredible, you know, epiphany and time. And it's such that you've been back in this, you said 20 times, that's just incredible. Have you always been somebody like that? I mean, have you always been somebody that sort of sought out this type of inspiration and went on sort of crazy trips or was this really the first time that you had maybe surprised yourself and taken this trip to South Dakota?

Kevin: Yeah, it was more of the first time. So what really happened on a personal level with my voice condition is it really made me sit still more often, be quiet more often, think more often. And I really went searching to recover my voice, and on the surface, a lot of that was medical searching. But what it really was a nonmedical bit of a spiritual invitation to kind of reconnect with my identity outside my role. So what really happened to me, I believe I had gotten super absorbed in my role as the CEO of Hancock Lumber, that my identity, to a degree, was my role, that a shock to the company, economically, was the equivalent of a shock to me physically. I was so intertwined with that. And so, so my voice conviction, I really came to see it as a gift from my own soul to reconnect with the essence of who I was separate from my roles. And I started listening to myself in a way I hadn't before.

And the first big manifestation of that was my trip to Pine Ridge. It really was a transition. It's cliché, but a transition from living with my head primarily to living more so from the heart or the center. And I remember that first trip to Pine Ridge, I took an early Sunday morning flight from Portland, Maine, through Chicago, on to Rapid City. And I remember just pacing the O'Hare airport, like, what am I doing here? Why am I going there? What is everybody going to think about this? Because of that traditional leadership model, of course you have to be at work. You always have to be at work. And I was really deconstructing some very kind of traditional paradigms about what CEOs should or shouldn't do.

Erin: That's so important. It's so profound. And you know, there's this guilt that oftentimes, when you were making this trip, it felt very much an investment in Kevin and I'm sure on a spectrum, you knew it was an investment in Kevin and the business, but maybe eight tenths of it Kevin, and two tenths of at the business when obviously the outcome was very flip-flopped. I'm sure that business and the people that you lead and support have gone way more out of that trip and so much else you've done. I think it's so important to say, because even a CEOs, I mean, it goes all the way up the chain, we all as humans have this feeling that if we're not doing something tangible for the business, answering emails, doing meetings, writing documents, making phone calls, then we're not contributing. And I would say CEO all the way down to frontline employee, that if you don't take care of your health, you can't perform. That's number one. And you take even huge risks and leaps, and do you know really interesting things like the adventure you went on there's no boundaries to the impact that will have on the company, no matter what level.

Kevin: That's so well said. I totally agree with that, Erin. I've really become a big champion now, the idea that done correctly being selfish is selfless. That the only way to give maximum value to the world is to start by strengthening yourself and listening to following your own true voice. And what really struck me at Pine Ridge is I began to learn more about the traditional culture and spirituality of the Sioux tribes, was that this was central to who they were as a society.

So for example, one of their seven sacred rights is the vision quest right. Which many people would have heard of, but maybe not stop to think about what it really is. But anyway, the vision quest right, young people in Sioux society coming of age or adults at a transformational moment in their adult lives, would intentionally leave their tribe alone and journey into the wilderness for the sense of seeking, for the purpose of seeking a vision. The Lakota term, which is lovely, *hanjbléchéyA*, which means 'cry for a vision'. And you would go and sequester yourself in the wilderness. And if you were

lucky, you might receive a bit of deeper insight into your connectivity with all the world, and then the essence of what makes you unique in that world. And if you are fortunate enough to have that insight, you then came back to your tribe, stood in front of your tribe in a circle and shared what you learned about who you were, and then it was your mission to live your truth authentically. And this just gave me chills even to re-explain it to you today.

So the whole approach to their culture was really that iconic line right out of Rudyard Kipling's [The Jungle Book](#), "The strength of the pack is the wolf," and that if every individual was following their own true voice, then the tribe as a whole would be healthy. And this really changed how I thought about my mission as a leader, that it now first was to make myself whole, to get myself right, to be the essence of who I was. And that was the best way to be valuable to others. And then, it was to try to create a culture within our organization that supported that path of individuation, not conformity, for everyone back within our company.

[00:29:41] **Erin:** Yeah, that hits me really hard in the heart, I will tell you. When I left my position, you know, I left when things were really good and I was - for the most part - a very beloved leader. And the guilt that you feel in that situation, you know. I had a lot of people very much impacted some, you know, just sad and some real impact by me leaving. And although mine was different, right, I left, I flew the coop completely, my intent wasn't to leave all those people behind, but to instead in part, in an expand on the leadership that I had been able to do that to more people, including those people that, that are still at the company I worked at.

And you know I have been asked many times, you know, and sometimes you feel like a hypocrite because I, a lot of what I coach is that women really understand they can have it all and to take the jobs and opt in. Right. Yeah, I didn't, you know, I did for 22 years and then I, and I opted out. But what you talk about there is exactly right. I knew in my heart of hearts I was no longer the same Erin. I wasn't firing on all cylinders. I knew that there was more and the big vision perspective, I wanted to help more people in a better way. And so anyway, I just, that really touched me because there's ebbs and flows of guilt that I feel for leaving. And that certainly helps we put away a lot of that guilt. So it was really beautiful.

Kevin: Yeah. And it's so interesting too, as I listened to that, I was thinking that to what you said earlier in the talk, which was that your body was actually telling you that change was required as well. So one thing we share in common and one thing I've really taken away from my experience is that our bodies speak to us on a regular basis, and it's about learning to listen to them. So for example my voice is very different in different situations. It's not consistently poor. And I have taken a really simple strategy of following my voice. So in that setting is where my voice is better, I'm like that's telling me to spend more time in those settings and settings where my voice is worse, it's telling me to spend less time in those settings. And so to kind of segue too, I really flip-flopped how I saw the world from learning. The way I think about it is from a traditional approach to leadership to really more learning to follow. I've really come to believe that our future, our path, bumps into us all the time, but we're often too busy or pre-determined where we're supposed to be headed to see it or focus on it. So for me, this has been a journey of learning to follow and to flipping that leadership model kind of inside out.

[00:34:14] **Erin:** Upside down. That's beautiful. So, you know, again, the story doesn't stop here. Right. It continues. I thought it would be good to talk a little bit about the book, which obviously reflects on what we talked about with Pine Ridge and what you've learned there, but also the Seventh Power, it's called, [The Seventh Power: One CEO's Journey Into the Business of Shared Leadership](#). And by the time this airs, it will be very close to releasing. And we'll have all of that information in our show notes. But first there is a question that sort of highlights, maybe a rhetorical question that sort of blankets this entire book that is so powerful. Will you tell us that question that you ask?

Kevin: Yeah, the question is this: what if everybody on earth felt trusted, respected, valued, and heard, what might change? And I think as I know you do too, Erin, that everything might change. I think that everything could change on that one question. And this made me think very differently about the mission of work, the core mission of work. What if that new mission was just that, to help everybody at work feel trusted, valued, respected, and heard. That higher calling and purpose of work that will also have the outcome of producing better business performance. But what I love to point out now is that improved performance really becomes the outcome of higher calling, that higher calling is to help everybody come into their own voice.

Erin: Yeah. And you know, there's so much beauty in that. I think what's most powerful and poignant is the, what if. I think so many times leaders and people throughout companies will all nod their head. Yes. Our goal is to have all employees trusted and respected and valued and heard. I mean, all of those things, nobody would disagree with. If you turn it on its head, and I really, you know, I'm going to beg some of, as many leaders as I possibly can to listen to this episode, the most powerful is what if. What if, what would happen, get curious, whether that's about your business, about your family, about nations of indigenous people, whatever that group is. Ask what if. And I think that just gives so much more inspiration to then be the one that helps empower that because when you find the answers of what is on the other side and what could happen it just really propels you to follow those principles. I want to talk about a few chapters of the book. What a wonderful overview, you've got a great architecture, and the seven lessons, and your adventures continue.

But first pause on chapter one, where you actually gain insights from a son. He was in fifth grade at the time. I am a huge believer in, I call it 'kids-spiration'. My 11- and 8-year-old, I tell stories all the time, kids are way smarter than anybody gives them credit for and so much more pure in their thoughts. And so I love that you went there. Specifically there was a quote you know, it says "for generations in different languages and for a variety of reasons, individuals have been coaxed into seeding a piece of their own unique voice in exchange for the false safety of following it and reciting a collective truth". And that's just really powerful. And can you tell a little bit more about how this, I think you were having ice cream with this boy. How this sort of epiphany came about.

[00:38:20] **Kevin:** Yeah. So chapter one, it's titled 'Evan's Notebook'. And Evan is the son of someone that works in our office. And when he was in third grade, he picked up my first book and read it from start to finish. My first book was like 500 pages, so he was my youngest known reader. And I had taken him to have an ice cream when he finished the book and was actually celebrating that moment. Because it was during the work week, like at 10 o'clock in the morning on a Wednesday, when I certainly previously would have been buried in meetings and to-do lists. And here I was having an ice cream with a fifth grader, which really got me thinking about the importance of us not staying in our lanes but getting out of our lanes. Which was starting to flip another business paradigm, which was the way leaders gain success is by ultra-focusing within the business. And I was starting to explore a very different model, which was to get out of my lane for inspiration and ideas and balance and so forth.

But anyway, Erin, at the conclusion of that ice cream social gave me a notebook, another journal, and inside simply said, "keep on writing, love Evan". And that got me really thinking about what I learned from my voice disorder, what I learned from Pine Ridge, and what more I had to learn to really kind of internalize these lessons and which became the focus of this book, a transition, a personal awakening into a corporate Renaissance. Because I wanted to, at this point, not just have a cheap change in my own life. I wanted to try to share it with everybody at our company.

So in this book, the man goes out on a new series of travel adventures looking for a set of core lessons that are fundamental to what I talk about is the age of shared leadership. For centuries, leadership has been about collecting power into the center. And I pause to think about, well, how's that actually going? How effective are institutions today? And why is engagement at work or government so low?

And I really concluded that in the 21st century, in the Aquarian age, more and more individuals are awakening to this sacred power that lives within us all, but that their institutions are still stuck in a past based power to the center model. So this book then goes in search of lessons or guiding principles for dispersing power instead of collecting it.

[00:42:01] **Erin:** Yeah. And I love how you talk about how nature runs itself, obviously without hierarchy, whether it's the animals, the trees, the flowers, right, the birds, and it runs pretty well, one would argue. But yet very different models in the working world, especially the corporate working world. And so, another principle I loved. So this was your third lesson. Change is created first from within. This you obviously talked a lot about, but I think the thing that is worth underlining, bolding, italics, whatever, for our listeners, whether it's the example of where you took the initiative to go out to the tribe. It wasn't your board of directors that made you go do it. It wasn't your wife. It was you. And you say in the book, you say, "when we turn our focus inward, listen to our own voice, we enhance our ability to add value to the lives of others", which, we obviously talked about, can you talk a little bit more about just how this principle came to be and how you feel about how about this for everybody, for our listeners and leaders out there as well.

Kevin: Yeah, of course. So Gandhi had it right when he said long ago, hey, the change you wish to see in the world prior to my voice condition, this is probably the single biggest transformation. I was really focused on what other people needed to do, how they needed to change, and how they needed to think, how they needed to act. That's kind of the traditional model of management, it's designed to be looking at others. But post voice condition, I really, over time, let go of that model and got super focused on how I needed to change. And this was so liberating, Erin, because when you think about it, this is intuitive, but who is the person in all the world that we all have the most control over? It's ourselves, it is ourselves. And with this fresh lens, my life got a lot simpler.

I now can look at any challenge or opportunity within our company and trace it back to me, which is all I really focus on doing. There's always something I didn't do or did, or should have done, that could have impacted the situation differently. So now when I see a change I'd like to create within our company, I put 80% of my energy into thinking about how I need to become something different in order for that change to manifest. So looking at creating change in the world today is I think really overwhelming. Everything looks too big, too complex, too fast, moving too many variables. There is a sense of helplessness that comes with that, but I've really come to believe it's because we're looking in the wrong place to create the change that we really just need to create within ourselves, which then starts to create change for the people right beside us. And in time that ripples through an organization or a culture or a society. And if there are 7 billion people on earth or whatever the number is, if we all focused on becoming the change we wish to see, the world would actually transform in a hurry. So this was really learning to look in the right place for the fundamentals of creating change, which is to look within not externally.

Erin: Yeah. And I think that's just so important, even, like I said, even if you're not, I talked to so many people, right? They're not even managers or maybe they are, and they have bosses that suck, they have companies that suck, they have peers. I think they discredit the amount of impact and the sort of things that happen to them. And I will say not only do you inspire, as you mentioned. People on your team, people next to you, bosses get inspired too. I mean, you and I can both speak as being bosses. Right? One of the biggest inspirations I've had for leadership has come from below me. I mean, I didn't spend much time with my boss because I was the CEO of my company. I was part of a broader enterprise. Sure. I had a boss, everybody kind of has a boss, whether it's a board or what have you. I didn't spend much time with them. The time I spent was with my team and they were inspiring me all of the time. It is not a one-way street. And I think people often feel like this one-way street and it's not.

Kevin: So the subject gets right to the title of my book. So the seventh power is a Sioux phrase that comes out of the medicine wheel. So if you Google a medicine wheel, it'll come right up. Then the medicine wheel honors the six great powers: west, north, east, south, sky, and earth. But a gentleman told me one day at Pine Ridge that those who know the old ways still know that the center of that wheel, at the axis, lives a seventh power, and that seventh power is you. It's me. It's the individual human spirits.

So the Sioux believe that everything that exists is related and interconnected, and this really matches up with our best science today, that from a big bang or an inception of the universe, everything in the universe is made up of the same star dust or secret sauce or whatever you want to call it, to the extent that the universe is sacred, has sacred energy to it. That energy is present within all of us, that we are each sacred manifestations of the energy of the universe. Again, it's shifting the focus back from what traditionally has been an organizationally centric human society, where individuals are asked to sacrifice for the empire to be served. That's the model we've been indoctrinated into, but in the 21st century, we're awakening to the truth, which is that each individual is sacred, and an organization's value is dependent upon what it gives to its individual members, not what it takes or extracts from them.

Erin: That's so right. Yeah, I always talk about the energy that we are all radios walking around and when I talk about wanting to raise people's and affect people's energy, I think people probably initially think, oh, just like high energy. Right? And now, it means really more about the right frequency. And we all know that a song once you find that right frequency on the radio, can do amazing things, right. You can jam out to it, and you can dance. But if it's not tuned into that, if it's on the fuzz or it's only half there, then we're not at our best. That's a leader's goal is to get everyone, once you get everyone tuned into their best frequency. It's not in everybody, some people are loud, some people are low, but to find their frequency where they are doing the things that they are powerful and they have their voice. Then you have a symphony, and that's one beauty in a corporation, in a family, in a life.

Kevin: I love that. Love that. I have a close friend from Pine Ridge who's a tribal elder and storyteller. Their name is Verola Spider. And she taught us about the Lakota phrase '*wakhán*', which means that 'all children are sacred and holy'. So when we think about a baby, we all can relate to that concept. Yes, that's a sacred and holy being, but where this gets lost is if all children are sacred, then all adults are sacred. We don't forego our sacredness by growing up, but we're not really treated as sacredly as we are when we are born, which is really silly.

[00:52:21] **Erin:** Oh, so that's so right on. Oh, that's beautiful. So the book you continue you to continue to travel. You spend a lot of time in the Ukraine. You spend time in Maine at a peace camp. There are so many lessons that you draw from it, and we don't have time to go through all of them. And of course we want people to hopefully pick up the book as well. You know what's the one last lesson from the book that you'd really highlight from your experience and from what you've found.

Kevin: I would say it's that overreaching as consequences. Now that seems like a probably super obvious concept, but when I got the history of leadership, I really started to conclude that those who had the most power often go too far, they over play their hands. And that overreaching obviously has consequences for the community or people they take advantage of, but it ultimately collapses back upon the people that do the overreaching and that this is a fundamental human challenge with leadership today. You can see it everywhere you look, and a group gets the most power and they take advantage of it. They go too far.

That's the history of the Sioux on the Northern Plains to me is a great example. So we know they were Sioux tribes that were very healthy and self-sufficient, independent before America's manifest destiny to reach the sea to sun shining sea. And we ended up taking pretty much everything from them, which

when you go to the Northern Plains today is just so obviously unnecessary. There was plenty of room for everyone. The Northern Plains are largely empty today. There was plenty of room for everyone, but we had the most power and we took advantage of it. But the part of the story that the Sioux don't like to tell is that they originated as a community on the Missouri river. And as a result, they were the first tribe to acquire guns and horses as trading came up the Missouri. They then moved west onto the Plains, following the Buffalo herds, and they displaced a number of smaller weaker tribes. So the Sioux acquired their land the same way they lost it, which is kind of an un-talked about part of the story. And it's just universally human truths that we've got to overcome. Too often, those with the most power take advantage of it. And so if the traditional approach is overreaching, the new model that I talk about in the book is the opposite of it, which is restraint, which is having the power and not using it.

Erin: Yeah. And, you know, it's so interesting. In one of the first interviews I did on a podcast, and somebody asked me, so obviously my big threat is authenticity. And you know, he asked me, so why do you think so many leaders are inauthentic, fake, and have these poor qualities that you're trying to overcome. I said, because that's all they know, that's what they've seen. Right? We're learning creatures and we see patterns and habits and we see, okay this gentleman was successful or his company or his division was successful or this woman, quite frankly. And so that's how I have to act.

And to your point, they did the opposite of paying it forward and, you know, took it back in the same sort of violent way. And that's our big challenge. Reverse the trend, how do we get enough people out there back to your point, to be these new figureheads, these new people that say, this is how you can do it. Here's another way to follow. And that's not going to take one person. That's going to take millions and it's going to take them at all levels in the organization to reverse that. That's wonderful.

Well, so thank you so much for being on. So the book, [The Seventh Power](#), again your latest book comes out I think the beginning of March, so I think it will be right around the time this releases, if not a week after. And you also have a Ted Talk, I really encourage people to go out there. I think they probably can just search, '[Kevin Hancock Ted Talk](#)', to get them there. And then your first book as well, I have it here somewhere. It was called the...

Kevin: Yeah. It's [Not For Sale](#).

[00:57:33] **Erin:** Love that. So where else can people find you and follow you and continue to be inspired by you?

Kevin: Yeah, so I have a website which is simply [KevinDHancock.com](#) or on Hancock Lumber's website or people can just email me KHancock@hancocklumber.com. I'm trying to make a lot of time in my life to follow my books and be available to people that they speak to, and I love hearing from people who've heard this podcast or listened to a talk or read one of my books. So, I'm very reachable.

Erin: Oh, that's wonderful. Well, it's been a real pleasure. I am certain that people are gonna walk away from this, many people are gonna walk away from this very, very changed with their own epiphanies and awakenings, and hopefully it will propel them to start on their own journey, even if they don't have to be faced with a health crisis. So I thank you so much for reaching out and for your time, and we're happy to know you.

Kevin: I just want to say thank you. And then I love the work you're doing Erin, and the way you follow your own voice and are out creating a platform to strengthen the voice of others like you're doing with mine today. So I'm super happy we're connected and really inspired by what you're doing.

Erin: Well thank you so much, that means a lot. Keeps me going. Thank you. Bye-bye.