

SEEKING THE EXTRAORDINARY

Ep 2 - Jim McCann: How Delivering Smiles Became An Extraordinary Success

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[00:00:00] Lisa: **[00:00:00]** Seeking the extraordinary is sponsored by The Colony Group, a national wealth and business management company that seeks the extraordinary by pursuing an unrelenting mission of providing clients with peace of mind and empowering their visions of tomorrow to learn more about how The Colony Group manages beyond money. visit [The Colony Group.com](http://TheColonyGroup.com).

Michael: **[00:00:28]** Welcome fellow seekers of the extraordinary. Welcome to our shared quest, a quest, not for a thing, but for an idea, a quest, not for a place, but into the inner unexplored regions of ourselves. A quest to understand how we can achieve our fullest potential by learning from others who have done or are doing exactly that.

May we always have the courage and wisdom to learn from those who have something to teach. Join me now in seeking the extraordinary. I'm **[00:01:00]** Michael Nathanson, your chief seeker of the extraordinary. Today's guest is one of the great entrepreneurs and retail visionaries of our time. After graduating from college with a degree in psychology, he became a bartender, a social worker, the owner of several flower shops in New York city and ultimately the founder of something much larger and much more impactful, what we now know as 1-800-FLOWERS. In 1995, he launched one 800 flowers.com becoming one of the early leaders in e-commerce. When the rest of us, we're still trying to figure out what e-commerce ultimately might be. His company did an initial public offering in 1999 and his business model not only changed the way we shop, give gifts and express our emotions and appreciation, but also the way other businesses now operate.

He's been entrepreneur of the year, retailer of the year and direct marketer of the year. He's now a **[00:02:00]** celebrated philanthropist, board member, author, speaker, and even professional baseball team owner. Please welcome the extraordinary Jim McCann.

Welcome Jim.

Jim McCann: **[00:02:11]** I'm a little embarrassed.

Michael: **[00:02:13]** I bet you hear that all the time.

So Jim, great to have you on our show.

Jim McCann: **[00:02:17]** Thanks Michael.

Michael: **[00:02:20]** So I, so Jim, everyone's heard of one, 800 flowers.com and we're certainly going to get to your story, and we want to learn more about that. But this is a show about seeking the extraordinary and what we're really looking

for are the secrets to how you did it and to your life so that we can better understand how a guy who maybe was born like the rest of us, ordinary, truly achieved his fullest potential and became extraordinary. So with that, Why don't we start with your childhood. And could you tell us a little bit about your childhood and maybe focus specifically on any parts of it that you think [00:03:00] might've contributed to whom you are today?

Jim McCann: [00:03:02] Michael, very simple. Common unremarkable childhood. I grew up unlike you fancy folks up in New England. I grew up in not so fancy Queens, New York, a very blue collar neighborhood. I'm the oldest of five children. My mom and dad started young and had us quickly. My dad for a living was a painting contractor.

And I, and as I look back now, I guess the reason they insisted I work at a very young age was to keep me from hanging around with the kids on the street, because while it seemed like fun, it could not always lead to good outcomes. So, my father's philosophy was old enough to walk old enough to work. So, before I found jobs on my own, if I had, I've always ran into some of the time I went to work for dad and worked for his different job sites and that, so I did all the things that the men who worked for them wouldn't do. I remember one time Michael, so painting [00:04:00] contract that he specialized in churches, funeral homes and schools. Brooklyn and Queens. And I remember we were doing a church in Brooklyn and he told me, okay, tomorrow you're going to be working on the steeple on the outside. And about, we have a piece of equipment for you called a postings chair.

So, I definitely, well, that sounds like a pretty fancy piece of equipment. A boson share was a piece of rope with a piece of wood across it that my butt went on and they threw the pulley over the top and they yanked me up to the scrape and paint the people. I said, well, I got fooled on that one. I got picked because I was the only one who would do it.

And I was light enough. I wouldn't break the rope, but so I grew up in a good family, extended family, not an affluent neighborhood. All role models, Michael, growing up or policemen and firemen, once in a while, there'd be someone who would put a suit on and go to the city. And when we say go to the city for us, that was [00:05:00] Manhattan and we weren't quite sure what they do in an office all day.

And then there were some shopkeepers holding the clothes that were some celebrated entrepreneurs. One who used to live down the block from me was a fellow by the name of John Gotti. But that was a whole different kind of notion that. You didn't really aspire to go into.

Michael: [00:05:18] Different kind of entrepreneur.

Jim McCann: [00:05:20] Indeed.

Michael: [00:05:21] So were you a good student?

Jim McCann: [00:05:23] No, always curious, but didn't do a good job of paying attention in school. A lot of my fantasy is to run a ride, so just it. Okay.

Okay. And those fantasies. So, what were your dreams, did you think about what you wanted to be when you grow up?

Yes, I, so these were the people I most admire in our community where, you know, the policemen.

So, I thought I'd be a New York city cop ergo. When the first couple of colleges I went to suggested I go elsewhere. I was fortunate enough to wind up at the Sydney university of New York.

A [00:06:00] place called John Jay college of criminal justice, because I thought I would become a policeman while I was going to school there.

Michael going part time, lots of the decisions you make early in life have a real consequence in terms of your optionality as you get older. And one of the things I did was get married very young and we started a family very young. So that narrowed my options that I wasn't conscious of it at the time, but you know, the amount of risk you could take and what options you take.

I've only had two career jobs, did lots of things, but two career jobs. And the first one was social worker. And how that came about was I was tending bar locally in Queens. And which was a good thing to do for someone who be try and overcome shyness, because you had a natural role to play.

You were the host. And so, you were the middle of the action. So, it was a good thing to do.

Michael: [00:06:52] And this is after college.

Jim McCann: [00:06:54] This is uh, during college, I was on the seven- or eight-year program. I figured it was so good. Why [00:07:00] not go as long as you? And what am I? One of my customers, a very good friend worked at this, a home for teenage boys, and I'd ask him about it all the time.

And one day he said to me, sounds like you'd be interested in this. Why don't you come visit me at work one day? So, I did. And he ran a component for 10 teenage boys in a very tough neighborhood. And I went and had dinner with him there one night. And after dinner, he said, do you think you'd like to give this work a try?

And I said, yeah, I think I would. He said, okay. And he flipped me a ring of keys and said, you're on duty tonight. Cause I have no one else to work. I'll see you in the morning. And that's how I started my first professional career in the social services. So, it was a great experience for me. But then I got promoted quickly and at a very young age, I've now the administrator of this home for boys.

So, it wasn't a nine to five. Certainly, it wasn't a 24 seven job anymore. I liked it was when I lived in the group homes, which I did for a few years, but I've been married young and having kids young, these kids [00:08:00] wanted to do some really strange things, Michael like eat and go to school and buy clothes.

And even as an administrator on a not-for-profit social services compensation, you stop. So back to doing things on the side, back to the bartender and a place on the upper East side of New York at a customer who would stay late on a Friday or Saturday night and we'd chat. And he owned a flower shop across the street, tells me one night, I think I'm going to be selling it.

I have this whole new other business scheme we're going to pursue. So, I thought about it and I thought retail flower shop, there was a guy in my old neighborhood where I grew up. I had a very successful flower shop operations seem to be doing quite well, interacting with the public good times in their life.

So, I asked him, I said, can I come work in your shop? A couple of Saturday afternoons before I come into work at the bar, he said, sure. Why? I said, maybe I'm a buyer. And there's certain deputy would have it. I, one of the things working for my dad, I learned how to do carpentry and painting light, electrical, plumbing, that kind of stuff.

So, I'd buy buildings in [00:09:00] tough neighborhoods, fix them up and either rent them out or sell them. And I just had sold the building and I had a \$10,000 profit. Yeah.

Michael: [00:09:06] Now, wait a minute, you were about 25 years old at this time. If I recall correctly,

Jim McCann: [00:09:10] not quite.

Michael:[00:09:12] So you're a pretty young guy to be talking about. Maybe I'm a buyer and buying and selling buildings.

Jim McCann: [00:09:18] Well, yeah, I've been just doing that for forever there. I wasn't old enough and I bought my first building, so my father hadn't signed for it, but so I had a \$10,000 profit in a building. What's he asking for the flower shop? \$10,000. And so that's how I got into the flowers, but I got in with the idea of building a business, not just becoming a florist, which of course I did, but so bartending and curiosity led me to both of my fun career choices.

Michael: [00:09:45] Okay. Well, great. And so now you get into the flower business and then what happens? You start getting interested in expanding that business. So, tell us about that.

Jim McCann: [00:09:57] Well, Michael, like Colony Group, we're [00:10:00] just DNA coded to try and grow whatever we're involved in. In the painting business, we try and grow it. And all the time when I ran the home for boys, I try and take care of more and more kids every year. So just that innate interest in growing, because if you're not growing, you're going backwards.

Right. And so, our version of seeking the extraordinary was I went into the business to build it as a business. So six months after I bought the first flower shop and made a commitment to open up every six months, if I could generate the cash from the ones that had already opened up. So, we had a pretty big collection of flower shops before I realized, Hey, there's no synergy in scale does not matter here.

In fact, there was some distant energies from scale in the flower shop business. So, I said, there's gotta be a better way. And that's when we decided to switch, I bought the company that headed in it, that telephone number 800 flowers. When I say a company, this was a failed deal, but it changed how we thought about growing.

[00:11:00] It changed how we thought about customers accessing our front door.

Michael: [00:11:04] your book, you talk about how you actually were doing business with the company that owned 1-800-FLOWERS, and that you got interested in the business and you talk about how surprised you were to learn how much money they had sunk into this gigantic building. And it was basically a failing business.

Those are my words, not yours, at least I think they're my words. Not yours.

Jim McCann: [00:11:27] Well, I think I disagree with the tent, the tense. That is it failed, but I was amazed when I went down to Dallas, as you say you were a florist for the New York area for them when they launched and just in a few months they spent a fortune on TV ads and full page color ads and weekly magazines. And then also, boom. It stopped three months later; it's gone. So, I went down and bought what was left of it, which was very little, I just, this morning sore, I grabbed one desk and a couple of chairs and loaded on the truck [00:12:00] as we looted to the building right before we lost it. And that was the secretary's desk to the boss then, and we still have that desk here and it's still a beautiful desk. I still have a desk as nice as that, but one of the guys here in our shop uses that desk.

Michael: [00:12:18] But it sounds like you, you still had to put up a good amount of money, really just for that phone number and you assumed all kinds of debt.

And then even after you acquired the company, the foreclosure was occurring. That must've been a scary time.

Jim McCann: [00:12:33] It was frightening as could be it in all, but a physical sense. Right. In 10 years of operating my flower shop business, that accumulated enough assets that I could get together, \$2 million, which was what cost to me to put down, to buy this business.

I thought so much of that 800 number. I thought it would be worthwhile. And as you point out Michael, trying to make me feel bad about my mistakes here. Thanks spike.

Michael: [00:13:00] Oh, please. I really think it was a mistake.

Jim McCann: [00:13:03] Well, it was, but I, and smart enough to, or worldly enough to understand how I could work with someone like The Colony Group or any kind of professionals in terms of bankers or lawyers or accountants.

And so instead of doing due diligence, I did due negligence and signed for all this stuff myself. And then came to learn that they had accumulated \$7 million in debt that I didn't know about, frankly they didn't know about. And now I was responsible for it personally, and I had great motivation to get up in the morning and try and make a business out of this.

Michael: [00:13:38] Yeah, I can imagine you did. And in fact, you've talked about publicly, how so? Look, you're being humble, and I hardly think that this was luck, but you do talk about how luck does matter. And you talk about how your timing worked well in terms of the [00:14:00] confluence of various events and why this became successful for you. Can you speak to that a little bit?

Jim McCann: [00:14:05] But Michael, look at what we're living through now. Look, plays a role now, clearly hard work, but I know lots of people who work hard and having had the good fortune that I've had. And it goes both ways. How about the poor fellow in Boston who works for 15 years for other people saves up enough money and finally opens up his own restaurant on March 15th of 2020.

What did he do wrong? Nothing, but it just got screwed. And so, you can have good luck. You're going to have bad luck and bad luck was the decisions we made in the beginning. But then so many people that I've had the good fortune to learn from and have taught me to learn what I mean by that is looking around at people who success, who are successful and what common characteristics do you see in them?

And one of my heroes is a man I got to know and thought the world though, [00:15:00] was a fellow by the name of Wayne Heizer. And Wayne is one of the most celebrated and deservedly. So entrepreneurs that our country's ever produced, he built from scratch five fortune 500 companies, which is a feat not to be accomplished by anyone's sense.

And when I was in a conversation with him one time and he said to me, he's laughing. You tell me about this mistake he made in his early day. And he said to me, Jim, what's the difference between you and me and other people who make mistakes. So you and I probably make more mistakes in the average guy a lot more because we do it.

So, we do things we're going to make more mistakes. He said, but what's the difference between you and me. And I'm so flattered to be included the UNB Wayne Isaac. You said you and I laugh about it, not at first, but we learned to laugh about it, but we pick ourselves up, we dust ourselves off and we get on with it.

He says, it's the people who go low as me. I'll never make that mistake again, who then again, becomes so [00:16:00] risk adverse that they're a challenge to try and think of anything to do, and they become paralyzed. And so, I, that, that lesson I got from him, the meant the world to me, in terms of. looking around saying yes. And so, you'll hear me around our shops, all celebrate failures. I try and let people in our shop know that it's okay to make mistakes. In fact, I work with my younger brother. Who's now the CEO of the company and has been for going on five years. But for a while, we had a big bookshelf and on it was called Jim's wall of shame.

And it was all my mistakes,

Michael: [00:16:37] all your mistakes.

Jim McCann: [00:16:38] The vase I thought it would be the big seller, the jacket I thought we could sell as long as I've floral print. And so, we had all of my collection and the guests would come in and they'd walk them over to show Jim's wall of mistakes. But there's a little lesson in there.

Michael:[00:16:54] Right. In your book, you call it an art form. In your book, I believe you called the art of making [00:17:00] mistakes.

Jim McCann: [00:17:00] It's trying to let people know if you're trying hard and you're doing the right thing. We're all going to matter. We're not going to bat a thousand and the highest paid people in baseball in the three hundreds.

So, let's recognize that there'll be mistakes. It's a person who never missed that makes a mistake. Who's not doing anything.

Michael:[00:17:18] So I want to just get back really briefly to the point about luck. And specifically, you talk about you believe that one of the reasons 1-800-FLOWERS became so successful was the emergence of the internet.

People being more comfortable using credit cards, you advertised on CNN. No one watched CNN and then the Gulf war happens. And then everyone's watching CNN and seeing your advertisements on CNN. So, was it luck?

Jim McCann: [00:17:51] Well, I think there's a fellow who I grew up with. We played baseball together at 10 years old and he was a [00:18:00] terrific guy and a great athlete, good looking guy. And he and I was supposed to go on a police bobbin the same day. And I decided I was doing so well at St. John's home for boys that I'd played it out for a while longer. So, he went into the police department and I did not, and we stayed close to whole lives.

Unfortunately, after 30 years, he retired from the police department and within a year died from massive heart attack. And it was a tragedy that you see so often in those Frank said, and I remember my wife never gets mad at anybody and he called one time who's was chatting with her. I wasn't around. And she was telling me in the car that night we were on our way out to the end of the chiefs annoyed at him.

I don't think she's annoyed at somebody. She said he went on to say about how lucky you are. And she said here he's had his five- or six-weeks' vacation. He calls from his job because he was on the crash crew at the airport at that time, be

cause they did a lot of sitting around and eating, cooking. And he said, he's talking about how lucky, what, but he's never [00:19:00] missed these five or six weeks of vacation in a year.

He says, you've gone 10 years without any vacation. Now the stretch one time he said, she said, it's not just luck. I said, well, lots of people who've worked hard as I do or harder. And they just haven't had the good fortune, but I think so much of it, Michael is, as I'm sure you talk to your team about their colony, you gotta be in the game.

You gotta show up every morning and you gotta be willing to do things. And you gotta be willing to expose yourself to the fact that you might get criticized or you might do something wrong, or you might make a mistake. And look, you attract clients now, like mostly because of your brand and people know the quality of the work you did, but -- and you had to make some big, bold decisions, game-changing acquisitions that you've done. If that didn't go well, you would have caught the brunt of that criticism. And some people would not make that decision because they don't want to take the risk of the criticism. Right?

Michael: [00:19:58] So I'm hearing [00:20:00] that answer as sure there may be some luck, make a lot of mistakes, but you got to put yourself out there.

You've got to actually take those chances. Take smart chances, and then sure luck plays a role.

Jim McCann: [00:20:13] You do want to minimize the risk. No question about it. You do want to do your diligence, right? When you make an acquisition, you really know. What the biggest risk for you? I assume a cultural, right?

Michael: [00:20:24] Yes.

Jim McCann: [00:20:24] You have a culture.

That's important that your clients feel when they interact with you. They have a common sense, a sense of the common attitude among your people, that the customer comes first and what the responsibilities are, what your role is to fiduciary is. And if you're looking at an acquisition, a company has a little bit of an edge to it.

Like it's more about the comp and they're going to spend a lot more time thinking about new products. They can sell to people; not do products they can serve with those little subtle images of things I would suspect your antennae is looking for you.

Michael: [00:20:56] I should interview in the future about the wealth management business. You do [00:21:00] seem to have substantial knowledge, I guess that relates in part to the fact that you're now a, an auteur indirectly at North Magazine.

Jim McCann: [00:21:08] Well and so much of that community, it's an amazing community because these are people asking and earning. The trust of people, a hand, the most personal and threatening kind of inflammation and sense of responsibility for their clients.

But the only thing more intimate than that is their specialists. I mean, this is tough stuff. So you have to earn that reputation every day and you can lose it in a flash.

Michael: [00:21:33] Yeah, well, I'm going to, I'm going to come to that because I do want to talk about some of the key

learnings that you pointed out in your book.

But before I do that, I do have to ask. So, so then you became a partial owner of the New York Mets, and you have mentioned baseball a couple of times. So, was that just a childhood dream of yours?

Jim McCann: [00:21:51] Not to be an owner, but to be a fan. Yeah. So, I grew up in Queens. The Mets are in Queens and I was there. I cut school [00:22:00] in the eighth grade to go to opening day at Shea stadium.

And I think it was 1963 and it was a Misty rainy day with Casey Stengel as the manager of the met. So, a long, deep affinity and fandom. For the Mets and lo and behold, the over the years Mary Lou and I became quite friendly with. Another man. I admire and respect so much. Fred Wilpon his wife, Judy, and we were friends for many years. And then after Fred and family decided they needed to take in some limited partners, they asked if I'd be interested because of the friendship and relationship we had. And indeed, I was so a little over eight years ago, we invested into medicine as of a. A couple of Fridays ago we sold our interest and had a wonderful and happy experience, financially rewarding and a good experience.

It was nothing more fun than I have. We have three kids; we have six grandkids. I mentioned I'm the oldest of five. So once a year, we'd get a few suites together and have all [00:23:00] up. All of our families, brothers, and sisters, their kids, the next generation. So we'd have 40, 50, 60 people at a Met game once or twice a year, but all the kids there and they met ...

So, for a family from South Queens that get together and have our kids and the grandkids have a real interest in the team and up and coming players who's in the farm system. And it was just a lot of fun that came to an end just within a month. And it was a great eight-year ride.

Michael: [00:23:28] That's great. Well, I'm going to, I'm going to share with you my own Jim McCann story. And I wonder if you remember this, I'm guessing you don't, but I did meet you for the first time at the worth headquarters. And I was shooting a video there. And I heard you in a group of other people talking about the meds. Now, I didn't know that you were one of the owners of the Mets.

And so I said, Oh, you've got to see that there's this great clip on Family Guy about the New York Mets. And I showed it to you. [00:24:00] And I had no idea you were one of the owners of the Mets when I showed it to you and then I'm going to actually just play it right now. If we can.

CLIP: [00:24:07] So far, Halloween's a bigger letdown than being a Mets fan.

Opening day. And here's the first pitch and the season's over.

Michael: [00:24:16] Do you have any memory of that? I'm guessing

Jim McCann: [00:24:18] I do. I remember exactly where it was in the office. And I was over in a small conference room. I use on the side, you were over where the production goes and he came over to say, hello. And then as we were walking out and you showed that to me on the way out, I think I booted you in the rear to get outta here.

Michael: [00:24:37] Exactly. If only I had done more research on you at the time, that was probably not my best way to introduce myself. Well,

Jim McCann: [00:24:44] I think it's a great way.

Michael: [00:24:46] You actually have a, you're clearly very charismatic. And let's talk about that because really one of your themes. And again, for our listeners who are interested in getting Jim's book, it's called Stop and Sell the Roses and it's [00:25:00] actually quite entertaining.

And there's a lot, there's a lot of good stuff in there. We're going to talk a little bit about it, but really one of the things that you talk about generally is just this need to connect with people that you could talk about. Great technology and great business and great products, but really what it all comes down to is connecting with other people.

Jim McCann: [00:25:20] I think it's ... If we understand that about ourselves and about the people around us, we'll be better friends. We'll be better partners. We'll be better business associates. If we just maintain our consciousness about that. And I guess working as a very young man, 1920, 21 years old, 22 years old, working at the St. John's home for boys living in that group, home that I described to you earlier. And here I had these 10 guys who are 10 tough guts, 14 to 20 years old, who came from very tough backgrounds. And I was terrible at the [00:26:00] work when I began. But what I learned from them was a real eye opener for me. And it changed my life, frankly, Michael, and that is just what you said.

We as creatures on this planet yearn for and crave social intimacy. We want to have friends. We want to be your friend. We want to love; we want to be loved. And I know it sounds corny, but it's just real convenient to me. It makes the world go round. And even though these were tough, these are kind of kids of you saw them on the streets or on the subway.

You made sure you moved away from them. But I realized, and I learned a way to develop relationships with each of them individually, which is not how I started. I sorta felt like I was a lion Tamer, trying to keep these two kids from ripping one another pot. And I tried to have a relationship with the group.

You don't have relationships with groups, you have relationships with individuals. And I had, yeah, a mentor in this work, a member of [00:27:00] a religious order of brothers who ran it St John's and this one fella mentored me in saying, take a look at who's successful in this work. You can be successful too.

And it's all about relationships and forming relationships and serving those relationships. And I think my job is still a little bit like that today is to take people and create an environment where they feel comfortable. Where they feel appreciated where they don't feel threatened and they know that they're expected to try things and do things that they would have never thought would ever have thought that they could do without the prompting or without the encouragement.

And my job with 10 kids in a group on their own is to find ways to shape their behavior, to create goals, to create ways of keeping score, to make it fun. To make it interesting to laugh at myself, by the way you live with 10 teenage boys, you will learn an awful lot about yourself. [00:28:00] That a hundred years of psychiatry, I'll never let you know.

Michael: [00:28:02] I'm sure.

Jim McCann: [00:28:03] Wait a minute. Your left bicep is smaller than your right bicep or every time you're about to say something. You have this little tip, please, guys. I don't need to know everything, but they will tell you everything about you. And anything you were inconsistent on when we created the curse jar, trust me if I slipped a date all come and watch me put the money in the curse jar, but it was such a good and important learning experience. Not without pain. And the pain was having most, a couple of kids over the years that would terrific young men that shouldn't have gone. Because of

violence because of drugs or one specific case, a car accident, or a kid coming back late at night, tried to jump across the expressway and get it.

He was killed so pain. Yes. But knowing that you were a good influence in the lives, but more importantly, realizing I was getting much more out of it than I was giving [00:29:00] to it. And it was all about the kid, these big, tough guys. You wanted to know that you cared about that and that you were consistent and that you were going to go out of your way for them any chance you could, because it was beyond a job.

It was something much more important than that. Yeah. So, I, that, that's a lesson I took away from that. I'm not going to tell you, I learned it that day. But as I reflected over the years about that work, I did the more and more I thought about it. The more and more I realized what a valuable lesson they taught me.

And I'm quite concerned right now, Mike, and you as a leader of a big and important company, like Colony must be, have the same concerns, but this remote working environment. Yes. I'm frightened. I'm frightened about the consequences it has on people. I'm in the office today. I'm at least one day a week now. And I can't wait to get in here and see other people.

Michael: [00:29:52] I, yeah. And I have been writing about this extensively. Speaking about it extensively. This is a concept that we call social capital [00:30:00] and social capital. These bonds that hold us together. This is the kind of thing that can be developed best only when there are these intimate connections.

And I agree. I think that this whole remote environment ultimately could have some difficult consequences for it.

Jim McCann: [00:30:16] Well, right now, here we are early in December. I feel for our group, for our company, I was asked to write up the labor data forecast when I saw it happening. And I'm on the board of one of the most, one of the best health systems in the country here in New York called NYU lingo.

And so, I have access to the clinicians and the researchers. So, I have good inputs. From a lot of different camps. And my forecast then was we were going to have a tough winter, tough, not just because of what we know is happening now with the second surge here. But also, the days getting shorter, the temperatures dropping a darker, more could be not going out to the restaurant.

My wife and I went out probably four or five times to restaurants at the [00:31:00] end of the summer because they had outdoor dining and we could be with friends. But now that's all this, so you can't do anything out there. So people are much more contained now. And I think we've had a loneliness epidemic going on in this country for years, and this is just accelerated it.

And you know who a young lady who works with me pointed out to me the other day, last week, generation Z has grown up digitally. They're digitally native, and these are people 18, 22, 23 and 79% of generation Z say they felt alone most of the time, most of the time and millennials are the most gregarious.

I wouldn't say no. They're so self-centered that they're not going to work hard. They don't meld well, they don't really feel company spirit. Well, you know what? I know, that's nonsense. They worked very hard. We have a charity called smile policy. They volunteer their time all the time. I'm just amazed by this.

But 21% of them [00:32:00] say they never, I had a friend, a close friend. It's scary to me. I'm a social being. And I know how I feel if I'm an old guy. So, I have family, I have friends. I have extended family. Yeah. I know all the people in our

workplace, but I'm concerned about folks, especially in this quarantine kind of time, what the consequences are of that.

And I've been spending a lot of time. Talking to people who know what they're talking about from the clinical world on the subject. Good. Frankly, I find it frightening.

Michael: [00:32:35] Yeah. I wonder if you see any irony in the fact that one of the people who was frankly, one of the early pioneers in e-commerce thinks so much about personal connection, despite the fact that you were one of the people that helped put e-commerce on the map is way for us to engage with us with each other less directly.

Jim McCann: [00:32:58] Well, how much worse [00:33:00] would this pandemic be, Michael. If we didn't have Zoom, if we didn't have high speed internet and we didn't have the ability to buy things through, e-commerce

Michael: [00:33:11] Certainly true.

Jim McCann: [00:33:12] I mean, I have to think of how bad this would be, but we do have it and I'm not going to tell you it's the same, but I just, over the weekend, I was chatting with Meredith, who is my chief of staff who I haven't seen in person now in nine months. And I said, Meredith, I know you're not here, but the fact that we can, at the beginning of this, I didn't do a lot of zoom. People wanted to do a zoom call. I said, look, regular phone calls, fine. That's enough. But now I'm all in because it freaks me out. And the thinking that Michael, you and I have to, while you forget that we're doing this electronically, I feel like we're in the same room and thank God for that.

But you know, as it, in terms of our business, it's look, it's binary. We talked about that poor fellow who opens up a restaurant on March 15th of 2020. How bad [00:34:00] luck is just overwhelming to that individual but from a, so this has binary consequences. It seems to me and our business, because we're in two things where e-commerce enabled and we're in the business of helping people express and connect.

This has been quite good for our business in terms of demand. Now we're not just selling digital products. We make real products. Food stuff. So, we grow off food, we make our flowers, so we still have to get it out the door. So, the challenges are positive challenges. How do we handle the demand? How do we keep our people safe?

But it's had a very positive effect on demand because people really need, especially now to express themselves and connect to all those important people in their lives.

Michael: [00:34:47] Jim, just a couple more questions before we move into our final, rapid round of questions. And one of the things that I loved about your book with these 10 semi commandments of success, [00:35:00] and I'm going to just really briefly read them.

I'm going to ask you to maybe speak to a couple of your favorites and expand upon them. So, spend your youth doing something original. Don't worry about not having an MBA. Don't wait to know everything before you start brand yourself, ruthless types finished last. I love that one. Don't reinvent. The wheel smarter labor is cheaper than cheap labor. Trust your family ties high margins. Aren't everything get personal and plan lists isn't necessarily clueless. So, I wouldn't expect you to remember those. Maybe you do remember them all, but pick a couple of, expand a little bit on them.

Jim McCann: [00:35:40] Well, listening to you go through those - wrote those a long time ago. No, as we've gone through a very interesting political season and now the good news is we know how things came out and we didn't have this big period of disruption and concern that so many feared, but one [00:36:00] of the, so I'm a curious political fellow.

I like the politics. I like a good debate. But I'm a little disappointed. You don't hear anyone really pushing forward is of thoughtful change. It seems to not be a lot of original ideas and one that I would like to get involved with. And I'd ask your advice as to how Michael. But someone sent me a link of thing on the online the other day, about all the people, the Hollywood people that my parents would know.

And I knew some of and how they all served in world war two, and everyone seemed to have service and we don't have that anymore. Yet the institution was so proud of, and we hold in the highest regard in this country. It's a military deservedly. So, so I, I say that to come to a recommendation, which is, I think, as a country, we'd all be better off.

If all young people did a year of service, could we do that? Look at the Springs of what's going on in Israel now with the tech boom. [00:37:00] And I know so many of these and invested in several of these young technology companies out of Israel, but there's something about that service that they all do, men and women, and it doesn't have to be combat related.

That creates a team spirit, a can-do kind of attitude. Nothing's nothing can be done. It does a lot, the culture. And when you look at the military in this country, how it was oftentimes such a big social change agent in terms of integration, in terms of how women are treated in the workplace. I'm not saying they wanted to cutting edge, but once the military or business.

Got behind the social change it happened, and it wasn't really going to happen until each of them did. So, I just think a year of service would help us know one another better help us to mature better and maybe learn lessons. Like I learned in a home for boys, people in a year of service would learn those same kind of life lessons.

Michael: [00:37:58] Yeah. Yeah. And of course, [00:38:00] beyond military service, there are just so many opportunities to serve in the community,

Jim McCann: [00:38:05] Teach for America. What a wonderful program.

Michael: [00:38:07] Exactly. There are so many of those opportunities and unfortunately, some people never take advantage of them. And some people don't take advantage of them until it's safer to do that later in their career. And may miss the formative experience that you had, for example.

Jim McCann: [00:38:24] Well, plus some people never get out of their own element. They grew up and the social network never really changes or expands. And I just think if you're working in a teach for America and you're away from your family, and you're forced to create a new circle and this social community, you learn skills of relationships that serve you the rest of your life, and then not likely to look exactly like you are having the same background issue.

Yeah. So, when you're hiring people and you see that little something special, the young lady who went to [00:39:00] a small college, you went to Bentley college outside of Boston there, but she was, she had okay. Grades pretty good. She was a B student, but she was in student government. She ran on the track team, not a battle winner, but always participated.

She ran this committee, that committee and was in charge of the spring dance. There's something special there. Right?

Michael: [00:39:21] You see the potential, you see all the upside, and this is a debate that we frequently have. And I'm with you on this, Jim, that I'd much rather hire for potential. And you actually go so far as to say that hire for.

A gut feeling, so to speak much more so than a resume. And for me, it's just more about fit and potential. Yeah. The resume. I'm not saying it's irrelevant, it's relevant, but yeah, for me, it's much more thinking about whether this person, for whatever reason their life experience has the potential to.

Jim McCann: [00:39:55] Do you have an intern program at Colony?

Michael: [00:39:58] We do indeed. Yes, we do. [00:40:00] And I'm actually very involved in it. I like to be very much involved with the interns. I very much enjoy it. In fact, the last summer we had an intern program and we actually did some projects around gen Z and how gen Z seeing the world.

Jim McCann: [00:40:14] And any great insights that came from that?

Michael: [00:40:18] Yeah, actually, I would say this, that I've written about this for anyone who wants to look it up, but yes, actually I would say that gen Z is still full of hope. Despite everything that's happening, these are people. And again, it's hard to generalize about a whole generation, but the people that, that I got to work with, they still have a lot of hope and enthusiasm and optimism for the future of our country and for their futures as well.

Jim McCann:[00:40:48] No, we have an intern program here in flowers, and so disappointed this year that we had to go to a virtual program with a smaller number of people, but we would have on average in our long Island office where [00:41:00] it was about 500 people, we'd have 38 people in our intern program. And it's always, you find ways to interact with them, bump up against them.

And they'd always be the two or three or four. It just had that little something sparkle and yes, it was smart. And yes, we tried to get real diversity in our program. So different schools, different ethnicities, different geography as best we could fancy schools like you went to and not. So fancy schools get a really good mix, and we do some projects, but anyone who doubts that young people are going to want to work hard and build their own careers. Come hang out here and watch these 38 kids. First of all, and make us they up our game a lot. When they first arrived, the buzz really gets louder in the shop and there's a little something going on and we give them projects so that they have to work with people from other departments to get us stodgy bosses here, to do things that she, that they did a couple of [00:42:00] kinds of videos that were really funny. But you always find those three or four that had that little something special, that little spark or curiosity, that little personality that makes people want to be around them.

Michael:[00:42:14] Keeps energy.

Jim McCann: [00:42:15] Exactly. So that doesn't come across in one or two interviews.

Michael: [00:42:20] No, I would imagine. Not exactly. So, so let's move into our teaching moment. And I'm going to ask you three quick questions. If you have a quick answer off the top of your head. Great. If not, you can take a little bit of time and think about it, but here's a question for you. What single habit technique or tip could you offer us that has helped you be your most extraordinary self you've got to pick one. What would you say it was?

Jim McCann: [00:42:45] I had a conversation last week with a young man who used to work at a charity. I was involved in. I was just blown away by this young man. So smart. So clever. So creative and we hadn't chatted probably in a couple of years. So, we caught up last week and he said, [00:43:00] Jim, I always liked talking to you because you're so curious about everything.

And I was like, well, I guess I am. And I had this chat with one of my sons recently met. My sons are grown. They have their own kids now. And he said to me, dad, you always went out of your way to expose us to all the really smart people. You were lucky enough to come across.

And he said, I will confess to you that in my earlier years, I was intimidated by that as, as much as you can imagine. He says it wasn't until I got a little old that I said, geez, what an opportunity this is. And I shouldn't be intimidated. You should recognize that there's going to be a lot of people, a lot smarter than you in this world.

But that doesn't mean you can't learn from them. You can't appreciate them and want to be around them to learn more. So, I'd say curiosity is an important ingredient in success. So, Michael, even when you're interviewing somebody and you realize five minutes in, they're not right for this, [00:44:00] they're not right for colony.

They're not right for this job, but, and then you stop to think what's the amount of time I should give this person to be courteous, even leave soccer, to work out in a job. Well, there's something you can learn from that person. Agreed. And so, make good use of that time. And don't assume just because they're not right for your shop, that they don't have some value and something that you can learn from them, whether they're generation Z or millennial, what their habits are, what their interests are, how they consider relationships is something you can learn.

So curiosity, I think is an important ingredient.

Michael: [00:44:31] I love that. And I so agree with you. And I agree with you about that observation. I myself do take criticism. We're spending too much time with people that we're not going to be work with working with, and I'm with you. There's an opportunity to learn and to teach in that context.

And those little opportunities are how we change the world. So, my next question for you is what's the best advice you've ever received from someone else?

[00:45:00] Jim McCann: [00:44:59] I, the first thing that comes to mind is what I've mentioned earlier, which is understand that you're going to make mistakes, but understand successful people recover quickly, get over it, get up, get on with it. And if you're really good, make a joke out of your failure.

Michael: [00:45:17] Okay. And in turn the best advice you've ever given, would it be the same thing?

Jim McCann: [00:45:23] I dunno, there's a young man who I, one of my mentees and he's just a remarkable young man and I'm torn because he and I would just and he's an African American kid. He's just a remarkable young man. He worked for us for a while. A buddy of mine said, let me tell you a story about this fellow. And he did, and they said, I want you to hire him. I said, well, can I interview at first? He said, no, you're going to hire him. So, we did. And he worked here for about a year and then he had an opportunity to move to Washington.

And I gave him advice recently and I hope it was right. He says, I'd like to go [00:46:00] be an entrepreneur. I said, well, okay, let's take that apart. Let's delve into what he's doing very well. He's a manager at a tech company. And I said to him, we have a mutual friend. So, when I introduced him to his, in charge of recruiting at a very big brand name company in New York, that everybody knows, and I introduced it to them, and she's been quoting him that she'd like to recruit him.

And I said, you have an opportunity at this point in time because of your intellect, your personality, your obvious integrity. Then you're going to get a disproportionate size of opportunity without putting money at capital at risk within a compa-

And I said, you have an opportunity at this point in time because of your intellect, your personality, your obvious integrity. Then you're going to get a disproportionate size of opportunity without putting money at capital at risk within a company. I said, I thought, I'd be the last one to ever say this.

I said, look before you cash in and you didn't have any great, he just was in love with the idea. He didn't have a business he wanted to pursue. He didn't have a passion for the dis craziness. I said, you have optionality that I never had. So, before you make that leap, play out this hand a [00:47:00] little bit further and go listen to her offer is to maybe come work for this big company. So, I hope it's honest advice in a context of a point in time. I think it's reasonable. I don't know if it's the best advice.

Michael: [00:47:13] It sounds prudent as well. Well, thank you, Jim. And let me just say that having gotten to spend this time with you, I can see the warmth inside of you. I've now experienced it and the way you engage with people. It is pretty special, the way that you continue to use my name, to engage with me, to ask me questions as well. I can see exactly what you're talking about in terms of addressing this need that people have. And I suspect it just comes naturally to you, which I really experienced. And I want to appreciate that. Thank you.

Jim McCann: [00:47:43] Well, I don't know if it's snack and natural, but I think it's just being, it's filling my own need. I want more and better relationships. And if we just had a conversation, I just answered your questions that wouldn't help us to build a relationship. So when we're allowed to engage a person together [00:48:00] again, which will happen, come this summer.

So, summer of 21, I hope when we see one another, we stop with a relationship that wouldn't have happened if it was just me answering your questions. And so that's how I can do any of this. I just say, no, I have way too many friends. I have way too many good relationships in my life, and I just don't have any interest or any need for anymore.

I'm going to tell you that person doesn't have a real friend in the world. So, can you ever have too many Michael? I hope, but we've begun a friendship.

Michael [00:48:32] Me too. And that ladies and gentlemen is the extraordinary Jim McCann. And thank you to our sponsors. The Colony Group is a national wealth and business management company with 15 offices across the country.

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