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MBS ([00:00](#)):

We network and we're linked and connected. And we're not known and we're not seen. We're followed and we're following on social media, but we're lonely. We transact, and still, we crave intimacy. The how, and I wrestle with this question all the time, do we find and build and nurture actual relationships?

MBS ([00:31](#)):

Welcome to 2 Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book. A book that has shaped them, a book that has inspired them. David Nour's most recent book, Curve Benders is starting a movement around strategically and authentically building relationships that will help you achieve your career and your goals, and I think also will enrich your life.



MBS ([00:54](#)):

The journey started for David by stepping foot ashore in America.

David ([00:59](#)):

I am an immigrant, originally from Iran, came to this country with 100 bucks, a suitcase, didn't know anybody, didn't speak a word of English.

MBS ([01:06](#)):

He didn't know anyone. You know we're going to come back to that. But first, how did that even happen? Well, David's parents were part of an exchange program to Kuwait, but a new regime in Iran gained power, canceled that program, demanded they return. The decade-long Iraq Iran war was just beginning and Nour's parents realized the truth of it.

David ([01:29](#)):

My aunt is American. She basically convinced my uncle, "you send them back and it might as well be a death sentence." So my parents... And Michael, now that I'm a parent, I can't imagine this, but they gave me up for adoption so my aunt and uncle could adopt me and I could stay in this country.

MBS ([01:47](#)):

Nour was a teenager. That's an impressionable time, but he had to figure out how to get along and he had to figure that out quickly. He had to commit to this new life.

David ([01:57](#)):

I was homesick and I missed my family and all that, but there's no going back. So, it's the proverbial burn the bridge. So there's no going back, you've got to just forge ahead and you've got to keep... One day at a time. You kind of learn and you learn how to get along and I played soccer, I dated a cheerleader. Those



two things kind of move you forward in the social chasm of your friends. And you learn, not just by nature but nurture, how to adapt and how to stand up on your own two feet and never behave like a victim. Never feel like a victim. And always say "how do I learn, how do I grow, how do I improve my condition?"

MBS ([02:41](#)):

But it was more than just understanding, because it takes action to improve your condition. This is where Nour also discovered the secrets sauce to succeeding later in his professional life.

David ([02:54](#)):

The common threat in all that I had experienced before I went out on my own, was really this idea that beyond great products and services are relationships. Are our biggest asset beyond your educational foundation and professional pedigree, the breadth, the depth, the diversity of the relationships you build will be your sustainable differentiation.

MBS ([03:19](#)):

We'll talk more about sustainable differentiation in just a bit. But first, I asked him why more people don't really understand the power of building relationships.

David ([03:30](#)):

It's series of events that happen in all of our lives that really, we may get it... We may understand its importance-

MBS ([03:39](#)):

Yeah.



David ([03:39](#)):

But we don't really understand its significance.

MBS ([03:42](#)):

Right.

David ([03:42](#)):

And by that I mean, Michael, you see people around you get promoted.

MBS ([03:48](#)):

Yeah.

David ([03:48](#)):

You see people around you get the job that you really wanted. You see... Or it happens to you, you get laid off. Right?

MBS ([03:56](#)):

Right, right.

David ([03:56](#)):

So in our professional environment, these things happen and at some point it dawns on you, it can't be just competency or capability, right?

MBS ([04:06](#)):

Right.

David ([04:07](#)):

It can't be just luck.



MBS ([04:12](#)):

Right.

David ([04:12](#)):

At some point you realize that they had a better relationship than you did.

MBS ([04:18](#)):

Right.

David ([04:19](#)):

That's what politics is. A lot of times that's what I call the three ships. Mentorship, sponsorship and leadership.

MBS ([04:27](#)):

Nice.

David ([04:28](#)):

If you're lucky enough to have those. If you're lucky enough to put yourself in a position to benefit from those, it even doesn't become who you know, it becomes who knows you.

MBS ([04:40](#)):

Right.

David ([04:40](#)):

That taps into you and say "we want you to lead this key initiative, we want you to run this business, we want you to run this opportunity for us." And over the years, I saw that. The other thing is, I spent six years, Michael, in a private equity firm where we bought and sold 110 different companies.



MBS ([05:01](#)):

Right.

David ([05:02](#)):

And I start to notice that the companies that outpaced their competitive peers didn't just have great products or services-

MBS ([05:12](#)):

Definitely.

David ([05:12](#)):

Michael, they build phenomenal relationships-

MBS ([05:15](#)):

Yeah.

David ([05:15](#)):

Both inside their organizations, but also external to it. And it showed when we went and did our due diligence. You would talk to customers and the customers had less expensive options.

MBS ([05:25](#)):

Right.

David ([05:25](#)):

They had easier options, but they bought from this team because of that relationship.

MBS ([05:31](#)):

Yeah, yeah.



David ([05:31](#)):

And they stayed with that company because of the relationship.

MBS ([05:34](#)):

Right.

David ([05:34](#)):

And the management team... You've heard the proverbial Gretzky quote on go where the puck's going to be.

MBS ([05:42](#)):

Yes.

David ([05:42](#)):

The leadership team anticipated each other's moves.

MBS ([05:47](#)):

Right.

David ([05:47](#)):

And completed each other's key initiatives and you saw that. And some of the very early genesis of my work was really observing companies that... Mediocre ideas-

MBS ([06:01](#)):

Yeah.

David ([06:02](#)):

Amazing teams took to new heights. And amazing ideas that functional teams took off a cliff.



MBS ([06:08](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

David ([06:09](#)):

And you're like there's got to be something there that should be more intentional, should be more strategic, and I believe it can also be more quantifiable.

MBS ([06:22](#)):

And we all kind of know that in theory. Everybody goes like "it's not what you know, it's who you know", we've heard that before. What does it take to do more than what most of us do, which is kind of hope that we'll bump into that person again sometime?

David ([06:38](#)):

Right? So number one, hope is not a strategy.

MBS ([06:39](#)):

Yeah.

David ([06:39](#)):

We also all know that, right?

MBS ([06:41](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

David ([06:41](#)):

So, you have to start by understanding some guard rails, understanding some limitations. So, Michael, sociologists tell us that an average individual can proactively manage about 100 to 150 relationships.



MBS ([06:56](#)):

Right, Dunbar's number.

David ([06:57](#)):

That's right. That's all you really have the bandwidth for.

MBS ([07:00](#)):

Right.

David ([07:00](#)):

So one of the first things that I suggest to people is; if you believe in this notion, that relationships are an investment of time, effort, resources, you simply cannot invest in everybody equally.

MBS ([07:15](#)):

Right.

David ([07:15](#)):

So, if you... If this is the bandwidth I have, and I can't invest in everybody equally, how do I then prioritize which relationships I invest in?

MBS ([07:25](#)):

Right.

David ([07:25](#)):

And I would submit it's based on depth and relevancy.

MBS ([07:29](#)):

Okay.



David ([07:29](#)):

And it has to have... Probably says the same thing, end in mind.

MBS ([07:33](#)):

Yeah.

David ([07:33](#)):

So the entire first chapter of my first book, Relationship Economics, was the top ten reasons most networking doesn't work. And I'll give you and your audience the cliff-notes, there's no purpose, there's no goal, there's no plan.

MBS ([07:47](#)):

Other than that, it's awesome.

David ([07:48](#)):

Yeah, other than that, it's fantastic.

MBS ([07:48](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

David ([07:49](#)):

So, if you have an outcome in mind-

MBS ([07:51](#)):

Yeah.

David ([07:52](#)):

Why are you trying to build relationships? Not transactional networking-



MBS ([07:57](#)):

Yeah.

David ([07:58](#)):

But I want to build relationships because I want to reach this destination, by the way it's not just the destination, it's also the journey-

MBS ([08:05](#)):

Yeah.

David ([08:05](#)):

But if I have that outcome in mind, then I can work my way backwards. And I call this the relationship currency roadmap.

MBS ([08:12](#)):

Okay.

David ([08:13](#)):

The outcome I'm after, who do I need, is pivotal context-

MBS ([08:17](#)):

Yeah.

David ([08:18](#)):

Who do I know, is my existing relationship bank?

MBS ([08:22](#)):

Yeah.



David ([08:22](#)):

And my deposits are investments I'm willing to make and I'm able to make for some of those relationships to create access and opportunity to relationships I need, to accelerate my ability to get things done. You do that and you'll not only see the fruits of your labor-

MBS ([08:41](#)):

Yeah.

David ([08:42](#)):

You'll start to see a return on your impact, return on your influence-

MBS ([08:47](#)):

Right.

David ([08:47](#)):

Return on your integration of your work and life, return on your image. These are the quantifiable benefits of prioritizing your relationships. Does that make sense? Does that resonate?

MBS ([09:06](#)):

Yeah, well it does, but I'll tell you my fear about this.

David ([09:07](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([09:07](#)):

Which is that if I keep... Every time somebody comes into my life, I have a question in the back of my mind which is like "and how will you help me?"



David ([09:19](#)):

Great pull.

MBS ([09:19](#)):

It feels like I diminish myself in this.

David ([09:25](#)):

I actually don't want you to do that.

MBS ([09:25](#)):

Right.

David ([09:26](#)):

I actually... And you... What you do... I think might be subconsciously, is what I actually coach people to think about and do, which is every time you meet someone, ask "how can I help this person?"

MBS ([09:36](#)):

Right.

David ([09:36](#)):

"How can I be an asset?" Because one of the things I talk about is it's a heck of a lot easier for every one of us to ask for something after you've made an investment.

MBS ([09:44](#)):

Yeah.



David ([09:44](#)):

And if you invest in others, those... Michael, there's also some fundamental laws in relationships, right? Number one is gratitude-

MBS ([09:51](#)):

Yeah.

David ([09:51](#)):

You do something for somebody, they should absolutely say "thank you."

MBS ([09:54](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

David ([09:55](#)):

Number two is, reciprocity.

MBS ([09:57](#)):

Yeah.

David ([09:57](#)):

Maybe not today, tomorrow, next week or next month, but they should say "Michael, thank you, you've been kind to me, what can I do to help you?"

MBS ([10:03](#)):

Yeah.

David ([10:03](#)):

"How can I be an asset to you?" Last but not least, none of us are an island.



MBS ([10:08](#)):

Right.

David ([10:08](#)):

Ideally you see them, observe them paying it forward. You observe them-

MBS ([10:13](#)):

Right.

David ([10:13](#)):

Giving to others. If they don't, my yellow flag goes up-

MBS ([10:17](#)):

Yeah.

David ([10:17](#)):

That that person just doesn't get it.

MBS ([10:19](#)):

Yeah.

David ([10:19](#)):

And you and I regrettably, unfortunately have some colleagues in our work that, that's not their mode, that's not how they think.

MBS ([10:28](#)):

Right.

David ([10:29](#)):

And everybody sees it. I jokingly say everybody has a BS radar.



MBS ([10:34](#)):

Right, right.

David ([10:34](#)):

If you have an agenda and you approach every relationship with an agenda of what can you do for me?

MBS ([10:39](#)):

Yeah.

David ([10:40](#)):

People are going to see right through that. They're going to disengage. Conversely, if you're authentic, if you're open, if you're genuine. "Hey, how can I help you? How can I..." And I got to tell you, I love your... The digital happy hours, cocktails and questions-

MBS ([10:55](#)):

Yeah.

David ([10:55](#)):

You would put together. And every interaction I've had with you, you give. You invest.

MBS ([11:02](#)):

Thanks.

David ([11:03](#)):

And I'm telling you... People who are recipient of the value can't help but think "he's been nothing but kind to me, what can I do to help him?" And that's how we all-



MBS ([11:13](#)):

Yeah.

David ([11:13](#)):

Get ahead, is that reciprocity that others are kind enough to demonstrate.

MBS ([11:19](#)):

You know, I've said this... Not on every single podcast, but almost every podcast I come back to a phrase that a woman, Jacqueline Novogratz, taught me recently in her book *Manifesto for Moral Revolution*.

David ([11:31](#)):

Hmm.

MBS ([11:31](#)):

And her phrase is "what if we could give more to the world than we take? And what if everybody gave more to the world than we take?" And I was like oh. I just love that phrase. I love how scalable it is. And how intimate it is.

David ([11:47](#)):

And let me just add to that, I wrote about it in a couple of my books, I actually talk about what I call the Jerry Maguire business model.

MBS ([11:54](#)):

Right.

David ([11:54](#)):

Based on the hit movie with Tom Cruise.



MBS ([11:57](#)):

Yeah.

David ([11:57](#)):

Everybody wants more, right?

MBS ([11:59](#)):

Yeah.

David ([11:59](#)):

I want more contacts, more relationships, more business, I want more. I can't help but wonder, would you get further-

MBS ([12:09](#)):

Right.

David ([12:09](#)):

In your personal professional growth in your success of your business if you focused on fewer-

MBS ([12:15](#)):

Right.

David ([12:15](#)):

But more authentic, more real, more impactful-

MBS ([12:19](#)):

Yep.



David ([12:19](#)):

More... Right? So, think of the lifetime value of that relationship, not a transactional-

MBS ([12:26](#)):

Right.

David ([12:27](#)):

Right? Deal, or a project or an initiative, or whatever, right? So-

MBS ([12:32](#)):

Yeah.

David ([12:32](#)):

I'm actually... At the beginning of this pandemic, one of the things I did is I actually made a list, Michael, of my top 100 business relationships.

MBS ([12:42](#)):

Right.

David ([12:42](#)):

And I literally went down the list and I called every one of them, for your audience, I used this prehistoric device called a telephone.

MBS ([12:49](#)):

I've heard of that.

David ([12:49](#)):

That you actually... You hit these numbers-



MBS ([12:51](#)):

Yeah.

David ([12:51](#)):

And their voice comes out of the other side. [crosstalk 00:12:56]. Right? Crazy. I asked "how you doing?"

MBS ([12:58](#)):

Yeah.

David ([12:59](#)):

And what are you seeing and what are you-

MBS ([13:01](#)):

Yeah.

David ([13:02](#)):

Hearing? And what concerns you? And what are you most excited about? Where are you investing? Where are you... Right? And I'm blessed that I work with a lot of different types of companies that... What happens is from those conversations you gather incredible insights.

MBS ([13:18](#)):

Yeah.

David ([13:18](#)):

And everybody's looking at this pandemic that none of us know where it's going or what's going to happen to it... With a very different lens and perspectives and-



MBS ([13:26](#)):

Right.

David ([13:27](#)):

You feel richer, you feel-

MBS ([13:31](#)):

Right.

David ([13:32](#)):

More aware, situationally-

MBS ([13:38](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David ([13:39](#)):

Aware of what's happening because of those rich conversations.

MBS ([13:40](#)):

Yeah.

David ([13:40](#)):

And I captured those and I shared those insights with others, and-

MBS ([13:43](#)):

Right.

David ([13:44](#)):

I connected people.



MBS ([13:45](#)):

Right.

David ([13:46](#)):

And I'm not a recruiter, that's not what I do for a living, but I helped someone who was looking to change careers. I introduced them to somebody and this client was looking for PPE's and I referred them to somebody else who had just found an excess supply of them. And you become a purveyor of relationships-

MBS ([14:01](#)):

Right.

David ([14:01](#)):

And as you can imagine, people remember.

MBS ([14:04](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

David ([14:05](#)):

And 2020, beyond the lives and the livelihoods that this pandemic impacted, was a really good year for my business-

MBS ([14:14](#)):

Nice.

David ([14:14](#)):

Because of those relationship investments.

MBS ([14:17](#)):

Now take us to the book you've chosen to read for us. What have you picked?



David ([14:22](#)):

So, I got to tell you, it's one of my favorites, the title of it is The Lords of Strategy. It's a little bit older, it's a Harvard Business Press book-

MBS ([14:31](#)):

Yeah.

David ([14:32](#)):

Dated back to 2010, Walter Kiechel is the author. The subtitle is The Secret Intellectual History of the New Corporate World.

MBS ([14:43](#)):

Yeah.

David ([14:44](#)):

And it's really about... I'm fascinated by strategy, I'm fascinated by the evolution of strategy, and it's one of those that made an indelible impression on me.

MBS ([14:54](#)):

I'm intrigued to hear about it because I don't know this book at all, I hadn't come across it until you told me that this was the book you were going to read. How did it come into your life?

David ([15:03](#)):

One of my secrets about books I choose to read, so number one, I read about four or five books at a time.

MBS ([15:10](#)):

Yeah.



David ([15:11](#)):

It might be ADD, I don't know, but I get bored and I think of them as-

MBS ([15:15](#)):

Yeah.

David ([15:16](#)):

A lot of different kinds of food, intellectual food, if you will.

MBS ([15:19](#)):

Yeah.

David ([15:19](#)):

My secret is, I ask the people I respect.

MBS ([15:22](#)):

Oh cool.

David ([15:23](#)):

I ask other executives that I trust. It's the word of mouth, it's "what are you reading?" And almost every... Pre-pandemic, every coffee-

MBS ([15:31](#)):

Yeah.

David ([15:31](#)):

Every... Post-pandemic, every Zoom, every conversation, I'm constantly asking people, "what are you reading? What are you..." And our MG100 and Thinkers50 friends have all-



MBS (15:42):

Yes.

David (15:42):

Become a great library, great source of the stuff-

MBS (15:45):

Right.

David (15:45):

That I read as well.

MBS (15:46):

Yeah.

David (15:46):

But this came from Eric McCarthy, is a former Coca-Cola corporate executives.

MBS (15:52):

Yes.

David (15:52):

And now he's a VC and private equity and just one of the most, Michael, intelligent people that I know, and thoughtful, and just a consummate reader-

MBS (16:03):

Uh-huh.



David ([16:03](#)):

And just a real proponent of the right strategy and the right place in the organization.

MBS ([16:11](#)):

All right, David Nour, give us these two pages from *The Lords of Strategy*.

David ([16:16](#)):

Okay. So, becoming an unstoppable force; it talks about, his career was saved by advisor heads, mainly that of John McArthur, soon to become dean of the school. McArthur suggested that the faculty table... The decision for a year, in the meantime, moving Porter out of business policy, and into teaching him one of the non-degree programs where he could try his ideas out on practicing managers. And the Program for Management Development, that was the name of it, Porter was freed from the doctrinal and... Ped... English is a second language-

MBS ([16:55](#)):

Pedagogical.

David ([16:56](#)):

Thank you. Rigidities of business policy. Younger than most of his students in the program, he says he learned from listening to them, shifting his focus slightly from industry to individual companies and their fight. Porter used his painful time out of the HBS mainstream, he admits he suffered discouraging moments to complete two large, ultimately triumphant projects. He developed, for the MBA curriculum, an elective course that he introduced there in 1978, under the title, *Industry and Competitive Analysis*, or ICA.



David ([17:35](#)):

It was an immediate hit. Over subscribed, students clamoring to get in, additional faculty brought in to teach under Porter's direction, the extra sections that had to be added to meet demand. Two things win your status among your colleagues here, another HBS professor says. Creating a huge popular billboard course, and which corporate boards you serve on.

David ([18:03](#)):

Porter had done the first. It was really ICA that silenced the doubters. Among his colleagues, Porter says, it was at the point that the power that he said, this an unstoppable force, we ought to just embrace it.

David ([18:19](#)):

With the new course, he had also... He put in a 2002 interview, begun a ped... pronounce that word again.

MBS ([18:30](#)):

Pedagogical.

David ([18:31](#)):

There you go. Battle around the school that has largely been won. Students were provided not just cases to analyze, but also to conceptual notes and frameworks to use on them. A handout for almost every class. Porter admits that he even lectured a bit at the end of some sessions coming out of behind the Socratic mask. His students ate it up. New style, intellectualizing, breaking through the [inaudible 00:19:00]. Each case is different missed. Instead of walking away from class discussions wondering what they were supposed to have learned, they came away with charts, templates, lists that they could apply to the next strategic problem thrown at them. Tons of takeaways as Porter described them.



David ([19:18](#)):

In the process of course, he was laying down the academic substrate for the principle that a well educated manager, armed with the right analytical techniques, could chart strategy, even without a wealth of experience. It allowed people who weren't geniuses, and hadn't been doing it all of their lives, to do it, he says. Another problem with the old way of teaching strategy, Christensen and Andrews, was that, unless you are lucky, you are reinventing the wheel every time.

David ([19:45](#)):

During his time in the wilderness, Porter had also completed the work for his 1980 book, *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*, today in its 60th printing. *Competitive Strategy* has become the most attended two treaties ever written on the subject. The only possible rival for the crown would be Porter's next book, *Competitive Advantage*, published in 1985. He heads the list of authors most frequently cited in the academic literature of strategic management and since Peter Drucker's death in 2005, of popular ratings of the most influential management guru.

David ([20:30](#)):

So, that summarizes... And then it goes into a lot of detail about-

MBS ([20:33](#)):

Yeah.

David ([20:33](#)):

What he did and how he did it. But you see the impotence from me, was if you want to be an unstoppable force, you've got to... And what I took away from this, Michael, was what I call the elevator ride.



MBS ([20:49](#)):

Right.

David ([20:49](#)):

In the books I write, in the advisory work that I do, in the content that I teach, I believe the theoretical construct is important to understand where the idea comes from.

MBS ([21:01](#)):

Yeah.

David ([21:02](#)):

But at the end of the day, it's application, case studies, examples, how others have succeeded doing that, and most crucially, implementation-

MBS ([21:11](#)):

Right.

David ([21:12](#)):

Of those ideas is what delineates good managers, I believe from great leaders. Those that think of great ideas and those that are able to roll up their sleeves and implement them. And that's a small glimpse of what I've tried to do in my own work.

MBS ([21:28](#)):

Nour, what's the connection between that insight and your new book Curve Benders?

David ([21:34](#)):

Sure. So, this is year 19, going into 20 of my practice.



MBS ([21:42](#)):

Yeah.

David ([21:42](#)):

And if you think about my wheelhouse... By the way, if I start talking about I'm writing about cooking, I would confuse the heck out of my audience because-

MBS ([21:52](#)):

Right.

David ([21:52](#)):

Most people who know me know my favorite thing to make is reservations.

MBS ([21:55](#)):

Right.

David ([21:55](#)):

I believe we all have a wheelhouse.

MBS ([21:57](#)):

Yeah. That's good.

David ([21:58](#)):

And we should stick to it.

MBS ([21:59](#)):

Right.

David ([22:00](#)):

Stay in your wheelhouse.



MBS ([22:01](#)):

Motorbikes and reservations and restaurants are your specialty.

David ([22:04](#)):

Boom.

MBS ([22:05](#)):

Yeah.

David ([22:05](#)):

Boom. Michael knows me. So, my wheelhouse is this idea of relationships. As you eluded to, it has been around since the beginning of mankind, right?

MBS ([22:17](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David ([22:17](#)):

Everybody understands it's important. And, Michael, in 20 years, no one ever calls me to say "we have a relationship problem."

MBS ([22:28](#)):

Right.

David ([22:29](#)):

What they talk about is the application and implementation of either flawed strategies-

MBS ([22:37](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).



David ([22:37](#)):

Around their relationships, or they're blindsided by a strategic relationship concept that they didn't think of. So, what I've tried to do, from Relationship Economics to Co-Create, to now Curve Benders, what I call my Star Wars trilogy, is really show the profound impact of relationships on our lives.

MBS ([23:02](#)):

Right.

David ([23:03](#)):

Not just on our business, not just on our success, not just... But in Curve Benders, I talk about 15 forces that we've identified that are going to continue to disrupt our lives.

MBS ([23:17](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David ([23:17](#)):

And this global pandemic is one example. The only way to remain relevant is this commitment to personal reinvention.

MBS ([23:28](#)):

Right.

David ([23:28](#)):

And that's the proverbial S curve. Your fastest path through that S curve are few of your most strategic relationships, who I call your Curve Benders. And Michael, beyond helping any of us achieve, accomplish, drive performance, drive execution, drive transactional results, Curve Benders will leave an indelible



imprint, it'll profoundly shape the managers, the leaders, the executives that we become.

MBS ([24:00](#)):

Right.

David ([24:01](#)):

So, million dollar question. Who are they? Right?

MBS ([24:04](#)):

Yeah, who are these people?

David ([24:05](#)):

Where are these magical, mystical creatures? How do I find them this afternoon? because I've got a board meeting tomorrow. Right?

MBS ([24:13](#)):

And by Curve Benders, you're... The metaphor you're using is you're kind of bending the curve towards the bigger goal, the greater impact to help your life.

David ([24:21](#)):

Unequivocally, yes.

MBS ([24:21](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

David ([24:21](#)):

So, most people are on this linear growth trajectory-

MBS ([24:25](#)):

Yeah.



David ([24:26](#)):

Curve Benders create the hockey stick-

MBS ([24:28](#)):

Nice.

David ([24:28](#)):

They create that non-linear growth because they dramatically accelerate our path, both... They impact both our direction and ultimate destination. And a very good litmus test for you and your audience would be, think about your career, think about where you've been and what you've done.

MBS ([24:44](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David ([24:45](#)):

Most people can name one or two people who've had a profound impact on them. [crosstalk 00:24:51]. When I interviewed you for my podcast-

MBS ([24:53](#)):

Yeah.

David ([24:53](#)):

You could rattle off-

MBS ([24:55](#)):

Sure.



David ([24:55](#)):

You could clearly remember individuals who... You didn't just sell them something, or they didn't just-

MBS ([25:02](#)):

No.

David ([25:02](#)):

Do something for you, they shape us. They shape-

MBS ([25:06](#)):

Right.

David ([25:07](#)):

Who we become and our futures. So, unequivocally, whenever I describe Curve Benders, as you and I have talked about, everybody wants to know "who are they, where are they, how do I meet them?"

MBS ([25:15](#)):

Yeah.

David ([25:16](#)):

I believe a more profound question is, "how do we become Curve Benders in the lives of others?"

MBS ([25:22](#)):

That's such a better question.

David ([25:24](#)):

How do we become Curve Benders?



MBS ([25:26](#)):

How do you give more than you take? Which is like, how do you be a force for good in this one? I love that.

David ([25:30](#)):

That's exactly right. So beyond... Think about it. Now let's translate that, I'm a realist.

MBS ([25:34](#)):

Yep.

David ([25:34](#)):

Let's translate that into what you and I see in companies, in organizations every day, right?

MBS ([25:40](#)):

Yep.

David ([25:41](#)):

Onboarding, training, management development, leadership development, we teach them about the products, we teach them about the services, we teach them about the competitors, we teach them about the market, everything else except, how to become an incredible human being.

MBS ([25:55](#)):

Right.

David ([25:56](#)):

How to invest in others, how to take others, those that are in the spring of their careers, under your wing-



MBS ([26:03](#)):

Right.

David ([26:03](#)):

And teach them empathy. We keep talking about empathy, we keep talking about compassion, where are we supposed to learn what that really looks like? What does that... How does that show up?

David ([26:14](#)):

So for those that are in the... Maybe the summer or the fall of our careers-

MBS ([26:19](#)):

Yep.

David ([26:19](#)):

What a phenomenal opportunity to have a profound impact in, not just the work, but lives of others, just like those that did it for us 20 years ago.

MBS ([26:30](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

David ([26:31](#)):

30 years ago.

MBS ([26:32](#)):

You know, one of the things I was struck by in the passage that you read, was the sense of exile, that Michael Porter had to go. It's like, we're going to kick you out of the main stream, we're going to put you into the wilderness, we're going to see what happened out there. I'm wondering what the role of exile or



banishment or at least just pulling yourself out of that mainstream, how that can be a powerful force for change.

David ([27:03](#)):

You ready? One word; freedom.

MBS ([27:06](#)):

Right.

David ([27:07](#)):

Michael, in so many organizations, we abide by both written and unwritten laws.

MBS ([27:13](#)):

Yeah.

David ([27:14](#)):

Unwritten rules of decorum. This is how you're supposed to behave, this is how you do what you do, this is a P&L-

MBS ([27:21](#)):

Yeah.

David ([27:21](#)):

If you're a good boy, and you meet your P&L this quarter-

MBS ([27:26](#)):

Yeah.

David ([27:26](#)):

You'll get a really nice bonus.



MBS ([27:28](#)):

Yeah.

David ([27:28](#)):

Nothing wrong with that. God bless the people that do that.

MBS ([27:31](#)):

Yeah.

David ([27:32](#)):

But imagine how many short term decisions we make, to make that quarterly result at the expense of the longterm viability of our teams, of our organization, of our customers, of our partners, of our relationships.

MBS ([27:47](#)):

Yeah.

David ([27:47](#)):

So, that excommunication-

MBS ([27:54](#)):

Yeah.

David ([27:55](#)):

That... You are now riding into the desert, the abyss.

MBS ([28:00](#)):

Yeah exactly.



David ([28:01](#)):

I see it as freedom. I see it as a phenomenal opportunity to shed those shackles-

MBS ([28:09](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David ([28:09](#)):

And just like Porter did, rethink, reimagine, reinvent. Now, it all depends on how you choose that opportunity, right?

MBS ([28:19](#)):

Right.

David ([28:19](#)):

Listen to what he said. He came back with a course-

MBS ([28:22](#)):

Yeah.

David ([28:22](#)):

That was so popular. There was such a demand. He basically put competitive positioning and competitive strategy and competitive differentiation, and by the way, decades later, we're still talking about Porter's five courses.

MBS ([28:36](#)):

That's right.

David ([28:36](#)):

On the map. That's what he did in his exile.



MBS ([28:40](#)):

Okay.

David ([28:40](#)):

So-

MBS ([28:41](#)):

Let me ask you this, Nour.

David ([28:42](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([28:44](#)):

How do the majority of us find freedom, when actually we are constrained by expectations and quarterly reports or whatever. Most of us are not exiled. Most of us are set up in a system that has expectations on how we should behave and what rules we should follow.

MBS ([29:04](#)):

If this is so important, how do the rest of us find the freedom that we need?

David ([29:09](#)):

Yeah, I would cement that it... And I wrote about this in Curve Benders, is a blueprint, Michael, it starts with a mindset that actually has got three components. You need that growth mindset.

MBS ([29:19](#)):

Right.



David ([29:20](#)):

So, I deeply believe to remain relevant, you have to learn and grow.

MBS ([29:25](#)):

Yeah.

David ([29:25](#)):

And develop a passion for learning. And I think that's something you and I and several of our colleagues that we know, in our communities, have in common. This genuine passion for learning.

MBS ([29:34](#)):

Yeah.

David ([29:35](#)):

Number two is a digital mindset. I think increasingly, this pandemic has proven that you've got to think digital, you've got to think about both digitizing, but also digitalizing-

MBS ([29:47](#)):

Right.

David ([29:47](#)):

Your business model, your go to market strategies and all of those things. Number three is entrepreneurial. Regardless of what role you're in, you've got to start thinking, behaving, more like an entrepreneur. Because if you think of oh that's somebody else's job, or that's somebody else's budget, or that's somebody else's problem-



MBS ([30:04](#)):

Right.

David ([30:04](#)):

You're never going to really materialize fully. So, Porter didn't go to exile and hang out on some beach with a margarita. He went and worked his ass off-

MBS ([30:15](#)):

Yeah.

David ([30:15](#)):

To build something-

MBS ([30:16](#)):

Yeah.

David ([30:16](#)):

To bring back to the school and say, I believe this is a different way to teach. I believe this is a different approach and different content that the audiences that I see, would dramatically benefit from. So, I think, every one of us have an opportunity and Michael, I'm going to go one step further. What an awesome responsibility-

MBS ([30:41](#)):

Right.

David ([30:42](#)):

To ourselves, to our families, to our colleagues, to our relationships, to continue to reinvent myself, to continue to develop what I wrote about in the book, I call it your personal market value.



MBS ([30:55](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David ([30:56](#)):

So, you want a better job? You want a better promotion? You want a P&L responsibility? You want to lead a big organization? You want all of these things, what are you willing to do? What are you willing to... As you said... I loved your to me, what are you willing to sacrifice?

MBS ([31:12](#)):

Right.

David ([31:13](#)):

To go after? That's going to set you apart from everybody else whose competent, capable, and a competitive peer.

MBS ([31:21](#)):

Now do you think everybody can hold an entrepreneurial mindset? I mean, you're so entrepreneurial, I mean you've kind of got that somehow wired into your DNA. You are... You've been writing books, starting businesses, starting from nothing and working your way up into the world. I have a... I am surprised that I have a degree of entrepreneurialism, because it's not really part of my family DNA. All of my brothers and my parents work for the government here in Australia. So, I'm surprised... And even more surprised that I'm out running businesses and starting businesses.

MBS ([31:59](#)):

I'm wondering if it's a lack of wiring plus lack of circumstance or whether that entrepreneurial spirit is something everybody can embrace to an extent.



David ([32:09](#)):

Yeah, classic nature vs. nurture, right?

MBS ([32:12](#)):

Hmm.

David ([32:12](#)):

So, Michael, I'm an eternal optimist.

MBS ([32:15](#)):

Hmm.

David ([32:16](#)):

I genuinely believe the ability is inside every one of us.

MBS ([32:22](#)):

Right.

David ([32:22](#)):

It's part of our evolutionary nature. Frankly, we've learned how to evolve over centuries.

MBS ([32:29](#)):

Yeah.

David ([32:30](#)):

And you have to be entrepreneurial to think of "how do I evolve?"

David ([32:35](#)):

So I believe everybody is born with it.



MBS ([32:37](#)):

Right.

David ([32:39](#)):

It's the nurture part that delineates some vs. others, right?

MBS ([32:43](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David ([32:43](#)):

So, those that grew up with entrepreneurial parents, much more... Right? They realize it might be feast or famine. And by the way, Saturday and Sunday are just two other days on the calendar, right?

MBS ([32:54](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

David ([32:54](#)):

There's no... Right? And summer vacations, I don't know what those are, we just got to go when we can and we have money.

MBS ([32:59](#)):

Yeah.

David ([32:59](#)):

Right. So, if you're born in that environment, obviously you're going to be stronger and you're much more likely to become an entrepreneur yourself.

MBS ([33:06](#)):

Yeah.



David ([33:06](#)):

Others who work for entrepreneur companies, see, aspire. Others who work for big companies and say "crap, there's got to be a better way to do that." That spark, that catalyst, kind of starts in them and they go on their own.

MBS ([33:20](#)):

Right.

David ([33:21](#)):

And then regrettably, there's a lot of people who are want-to-preneurs.

MBS ([33:26](#)):

Right.

David ([33:28](#)):

They like the idea of... They like the... They buy in on the fallacy of... How many times have you heard "wow, you work for yourself, you must be on the beach all the time and you have all these other people working for you" and my other favorite comment you hear from friends "it's amazing what an overnight success you've become."

MBS ([33:44](#)):

Exactly.

David ([33:46](#)):

Right? This is year 19 of the practice.

MBS ([33:49](#)):

Yeah.



David ([33:49](#)):

And early on I told my wife "honey, be ready, we're going to be poor for a while."

MBS ([33:54](#)):

Yeah.

David ([33:54](#)):

She was like "I don't care, do it. That's what lights you up, go do it." So-

MBS ([33:57](#)):

Yeah.

David ([33:58](#)):

I believe like any other muscle, the more you practice it, the more you exercise it, the better you're going to get at it. Like anything else, if you're drawn to it, you'll develop a competency. And also, Michael, I genuinely believe it takes a certain level of courage.

MBS ([34:15](#)):

Yeah.

David ([34:15](#)):

It takes a certain level of commitment and then it takes a construct.

MBS ([34:20](#)):

Yeah.



David ([34:20](#)):

It takes a business model, it takes a willingness to go... And as our mutual friend Garry Ridge said, "not failed, but have learning moments" that you stumble, you're going to scrape your knee.

MBS ([34:33](#)):

Yeah.

David ([34:33](#)):

Just like, you brought up motorcycles. Falling off of motorcycles is not an if, it's a when.

MBS ([34:39](#)):

Right.

David ([34:39](#)):

It is going to happen.

MBS ([34:41](#)):

Yep.

David ([34:41](#)):

But if you learn from... You wear all the gear, you protect yourself, if you learn what you did and how it happened, you learn not to do that again. If you go get the right education and ride enough. I ride about 25 to 30,000 miles a year. That's a lot of saddle time-

MBS ([34:59](#)):

Yeah.



David ([34:59](#)):

That puts you in a lot of different conditions and types of roads. And I ride a lot of different kinds of bikes and all of them develop my competency-

MBS ([35:09](#)):

Yeah.

David ([35:09](#)):

And my capability. Entrepreneurship is the exact same way.

MBS ([35:13](#)):

Interesting.

David ([35:13](#)):

What entrepreneur have you met that has never failed?

MBS ([35:16](#)):

Exactly.

David ([35:16](#)):

Or never had a business go bust? Or never-

MBS ([35:19](#)):

Apart from you and me, obviously, we're flawless.

David ([35:23](#)):

Clearly.

MBS ([35:24](#)):

But other people.



David ([35:24](#)):

Clearly.

MBS ([35:25](#)):

Hey Nour, let me ask you this, as a final question. It's a big one, but I'm curious to know what your answer is. What has not yet been said that needs to be said in this conversation between you and me?

David ([35:39](#)):

Other people tell you this. Michael, you and I are about the same age.

MBS ([35:43](#)):

Yep.

David ([35:43](#)):

And you don't realize it until it actually starts happening to you. Which is, at some point, we're not going to be here.

MBS ([35:49](#)):

Right.

David ([35:50](#)):

And I've increasingly thought a lot about that fundamental shift from one of success. You know, you and I have just hustle and we chase it and you build and the next job and the next opportunity and the next engagement. We're in essence, climbers, right?

MBS ([36:10](#)):

Right.



David ([36:10](#)):

At some point, you become a maintainer. And then at some point you start to kind of slow down and decline, and all of those... So, I think a lot about that leap from a life of success to one of significance.

MBS ([36:26](#)):

Right.

David ([36:26](#)):

And I would submit to that the fallacy is at some point.

MBS ([36:31](#)):

Yeah.

David ([36:31](#)):

Just like, I'll be happy when.... I will be fulfilled when...

MBS ([36:35](#)):

Right.

David ([36:37](#)):

I will create a significance when... And I think that's a fallacy and I think-

MBS ([36:42](#)):

Yep.

David ([36:43](#)):

Particularly around this idea of relationships. I'm reminded of Jim Collins being asked by Peter Drucker, "do you want to be remembered? Or do you want your ideas to be remembered?"



MBS ([36:56](#)):

Right.

David ([36:56](#)):

And I think in the work that you and I do, we all want our ideas to be remembered.

MBS ([37:01](#)):

Yeah, exactly.

David ([37:01](#)):

We want to leave a legacy that somebody... Whether it's the books or the work that we do with people, we made a small difference in the lives of those that we were blessed to touch.

MBS ([37:14](#)):

Yeah.

David ([37:14](#)):

We were blessed to come in contact with. And that's where I'm trying to go. Now, more tactically it's a three year journey to digitally transform a lot of what I've done over 20 years manually, paper-based and-

MBS ([37:30](#)):

Yeah.

David ([37:31](#)):

Training and all that into apps, into tools, into technologies, into things that can scale beyond just me, internal organization. So, it becomes more impactful in their lives around this idea of strategic intentional relationships.



MBS ([37:55](#)):

You probably picked up that Nour has a bit of a hustle hard vibe to him. When he and I talk, he's always got about 15 different projects on the go. Honestly, it's inspiring and a little exhausting as well. I think he looks at relationships through more of a business lens than I do. And that's really helpful for me to hear. Not necessarily in the "what can I get from this, what can I give to this" sort of way, but more in a "what if I took building relationships seriously?"

MBS ([38:28](#)):

Having friends is one of the prime indicators of a good life. Happiness, flourishing, honestly, from what I've read, it might be a toss up between whether exercise or regular friendship is best for your health.

MBS ([38:42](#)):

I'm in Australia at the moment, my dad's health has dipped and it's telling to me to see how friends come out to support me and to support my parents and my brothers as well. And it makes me wonder, it makes me reflect, how much of a good friend have I been to people who might have appreciated me stepping forward and giving a helping hand and just expressing love and commitment to them? I mean, maybe if you're going to take one thing away from this conversation between David and me, it might be this; reach out, build the bridge, give some time.

MBS ([39:21](#)):

Nour's active on social channels of course, but I would say the best place to start is just going to his website, it's Nour Group, nourgroup.com, nourgroup.com. And that's the best place to find him and his blog and his podcast, which I've been on by the way, and other resources as well.



MBS ([39:41](#)):

Thanks of course for listening to 2Pages with MBS. Please join our free community, it is this little dose of awesomeness. It's called Duke Humfrey's, named after my favorite university library at Oxford, where the amazing old books were and in my Duke Humfrey's, you'll find unreleased episodes, some video episodes that are unique as well, some transcripts, downloads, it's a pretty rich cornucopia of stuff that you can grab.

MBS ([40:08](#)):

Membership is totally free, it's just a way for me to know who is listening to this podcast. And do you know how this podcast best grows? Which, I for one am quite interested in, it's by somebody like you, reaching out to somebody who comes to mind for you. And you think, "they would like that episode, I should pass that along." Email them, text them, call them up, walk around and visit them and say "Michael's podcast is amazing, subscribe, you should listen to it!" I'd be grateful for that. Also, always grateful for a review and a remark on whatever podcast app you listen to.

MBS ([40:42](#)):

That's it from me, I'll just sign off by saying you're awesome and you're doing great.