**Max Irzhak** 00:00:33

My next guest is a Serial entrepreneur, New York Times bestselling author, a global keynote speaker and pecks contestant on the reality show, Paradise Hotel and really an all-around likable Guy. This is motivational Mondays. I'm your host Max Herzog and joining us is Dave Kerpen. Dave, welcome to the show.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:00:33

Thanks so much for having me.

**Max Irzhak** 00:00:33

Many people believe there's all kinds of secrets to being a great leader. But a lot of success really just comes down to having good people skills. Why does it pay to be likable?

**Dave Kerpen** 00:00:33

So I've spent my career writing about and hopefully trying to practice good people skills and building relationships with people. The thing is life is very long and the world is very small and what I have found matters in the long run is the relationships that we build with people and the kindness that we express along the way. And the way that we treat people and Maya Angela has a quote about you know, people won't remember what you said but they'll remember how you made them feel and I really believe that and I've been very fortunate to build some great relationships with people over the years that have really served me.

**Max Irzhak** 00:01:15

And so much of leadership is seeing how you can add value to others, right? Givers gain takers lose, it's as simple as that.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:01:26

Yeah, totally. And I think it's a hard mindset to learn for some because we think about asking for what we want, to being assertive and going for stuff. And the reality is that the way we get what we want is by helping others get what they want and need. You know, I learned that from Carnegie and It's really quite true.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:01:45

The more we help others feel heard and feel understood, and then help them get what they want and need, the more they are going to want to help us get what we want and need. And once we make that paradigm, shift and focus truly on others and hearing others and understanding others, we're going to be so much better off.

**Max Irzhak** 00:01:45

You previously wrote a really popular book where you shared 11 simple people skills that help you thrive in life. Walk us through some of the really effective ones that our listeners can Implement in their lives starting today.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:02:23

Sure. So the book is called "The Art of people —11 simple people skills that will get you everything you want." It's actually more than eleven, it's 53 in 11 different categories. And so of course I'm not going to cover all 53 but I'll talk about a few things, very broadly speaking because I've already mentioned this idea of listening. Most people aren't good listeners. They think they are but they're not. Most people listen to reply vs. listening to understand and so if we can get just one skill down, it's listening better.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:02:55

So, listening 101 is listening to understand versus listening to reply, listening 501. If you will, mirroring back what the other person said with a special attention to emotions that we're hearing, and mirroring 1000, the super advanced class is validating walking in the other person's shoes. And this feels at first, it feels a little forced but having done this now, with literally thousands of people including hundreds of college students through Apprentice, I can tell you that it works every single time. So I'll give you an example.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:03:32

You're having a tough day and you say to me, man, I'm so annoyed. I'm having such a lousy day. So I could say well how can I help you have a better day but that wouldn't be listening. I could say man me too. I'm having a shitty day that wouldn't be listening. It's making it about me. Instead, if I said Wow. Oh man. It sounds like you're having a horrible day and you're really annoyed. Now, I'm demonstrating to you that I am absolutely listening to you. And I'm with you in that feeling and then you might say, yeah, you nailed it. People are so annoying and I might continue, yeah, I totally understand where you're coming from, man. I've been there.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:04:18

That process, that simple process of listening, mirroring, repeating back the emotions that we're hearing and validating walking in the other person's shoes — 99% of people don't do that. If you do that, you will get more dates. You will get more sales. You will get more jobs. It is a very powerful thing. A couple of other really quick things here. This is the chapter that I get the most feedback on, it's very simple. It's very tactical. But I'll share it: Why you should always take the water and I read an interview about when you're offered water at a job interview or a sales call, or any new opportunity, you should always take the water.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:05:00

Why? Because, you know, if somebody comes to your house and you offer them water, something to drink and they say no I'm good, you actually feel like a bad host, so sometimes people say, no, thanks when they're offered the water. They feel like they don't want to put the other person out, but on the other hand, if you want to let the other person feel like a good host, you say, yes, to the water, to the beer, to the coffee, whatever it is, and give them an opportunity to serve you. That's going to put them in a good mood. And that's always better for influencing them. So those are a few of the types of skills that I write about and most important, really believe in, Max. These things really do. Make a difference in building relationships with people.

**Max Irzhak** 00:05:46

I've heard you say that authenticity plus vulnerability breeds trust and trust breeds business. This is such a powerful formula for Success. Can you elaborate on that?

**Dave Kerpen** 00:05:57

Yeah, sure. Authenticity is really important and it's really scary for people. I think especially young people because they think they have to have all the answers, be a certain way. And you know, when I interview people, I don't want them to be forced and fake and have all the answers. I want them to be themselves. And if they're forced and fake and they get the job, it's not going to work out anyway. So they might as well be themselves and then I can build a relationship with them. Look if I don't like them for who they are then they're not going to get the job but that's probably better. And if I do like them for who they are, then they're going to get a job and that's great. And so by being your authentic self, you're able to build credibility and trust in whoever it is that you're speaking with and ultimately trust is such a powerful thing to build business. I mean, we all do business with people we know, like, and trust and fakeness, perfect-polish, arrogance —these are all big turn-offs. These are inauthentic and big turn-offs When people are real, when they're vulnerable.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:07:15

Oprah Winfrey said, if I'd realized that being my authentic, vulnerable self would have made me as rich as I've become, I would have done it a lot sooner. So we have this sense sometimes that we need to be a certain way in order to get people to like us or higher us or do business with us. The way we need to be is our authentic selves because that's going to breed trust, credibility and connection and ultimately help us be more successful.

**Max Irzhak** 00:07:46

You've also previously said that gratitude is the best drug on the planet because there's no side effects. Why is gratitude such a big part of your Mantra?

**Dave Kerpen** 00:07:56

Yeah, it's huge. And I almost said it when you talk about people skills, it's the last chapter of every — listening is the first chapter of all my books and gratitude is the last chapter of all my books. Gratitude is a wonder drug. It's amazing. So there's actually a lot of data that suggests that when we express gratitude, we cannot feel unhappy at the same time and by expressing gratitude, it sets off mirror neurons that actually, literally put us in a better mood.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:08:26

So my reference to gratitude, being a drug, is kind of true. It changes our chemistry. And so why do coffee or cocaine or weed? When we can literally write a thank-you card for somebody — express gratitude to somebody, and get the same effect. It's totally free and side-effect free. And it literally lifts our mood. The other thing that lifts our mood, by the way, is acts of kindness, going out of the way to, to be kind to someone. A super quick story on this. I was having a very bad day. I lost a $250,000 client in the morning. I was on my way down to Washington DC from New York to make a big investor pitch to start off my day losing $250,000, that sucked.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:09:25

And I thought I would solve the problem with food and have a really good sushi lunch. So I get to Washington on my train. I get out, I walk in the heat. And now I'm sweating which is bad for my investor pitch and I finally arrived at the top-rated sushi restaurant in Washington DC — and they're closed for renovation.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:09:44

So I'm like, oh my God, this is horrible. And now I basically don't even have time to find a new place to have lunch. So now I'm walking to my investor pitch and I see a homeless guy, and I did the move where I kind of reached into my pocket to look for change and he sees me, makes eye contact when he starts walking over, very excited, but I got no change in my pocket. So then I'm like, oh man, now I'm screwed. I take out my wallet. I have no dollar bills. All I have is a $50 bill.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:10:11

So I'm like, this is so bad. He's like standing right by me, thanking me. And so I made a decision, I just went for it. And I gave him the $50 and you would have thought that he won the lottery. I mean, he was so happy asking if he could hug me is pre- covid, of course. Just so so happy. But the amazing thing was my mindset completely changed. I went from being miserable and frustrated, and hungry to feeling grateful that I was in the position that I could have given him that and just touched with how great grateful he was and how happy he was.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:10:51

And I walked into that investor pitch and I landed the deal and I'm telling you acts of kindness and gratitude are true game changers in impacting our mood. And moods are contagious. By the way, enthusiasm is absolutely contagious and so is the lack of enthusiasm when I run into somebody, a student, a young person who's full of energy and positive and optimistic. I'm like you're hired. You're awesome. Let's do this when I run into somebody that's nervous and, you know, not put together and you know, kind of negative... Well, that's contagious too. So why wouldn't we choose gratitude, acts of kindness, positivity, optimism and high energy, when we know what the impact of that is going to be.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:11:38  
I know you said short answers and I just ripped four hours. Sorry about that Max but I get passionate about gratitude.

**Max Irzhak** 00:11:44

No that one's great. And also seeing other people do those acts of kindness creates that chain reaction where you actually feel good and you want to do it as well. I think that that's really the strongest part about it is doing them publicly does create this ripple effect, which is really powerful.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:12:03

Totally and I have a go-to list of acts of kindness and gratitude. So when I'm feeling down, if I'm about to lead a team meeting or speak in front of a crowd of thousands or whatever it is, if I'm feeling down I have to authentically get to a good place, quickly. So what do I do? I might make a gratitude list. I pull out my notes app on my iPhone and make a list in two minutes of every one. And every person I'm grateful for. I might write some handwritten thank-you cards. I might call up my dad and say, hey, how are you? You know just an act of kindness. I might go to the front door and hold the door open for the next 10 people that come in. I might give a five dollar bill to a homeless person. By having a go-to list of acts of kindness and gratitude that I can access and authentically change my mindset, I am able to get to a good place at any given moment.

**Max Irzhak** 00:13:25

Let's talk about personal branding in one of my previous episodes. I interviewed Megan Murphy who's known for wearing lightning bolts on everything she owns. If somebody Google's a photo of you they'll instantly see this classic color orange on everything you wear like you wear,right now. We see examples like this all the time. Why is personal branding? So valuable.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:13:25

You know, I think personal branding and having a signature style is really, really valuable to help you stand out in a crowd. I wear orange shoes every single day. I've eighty seven pairs of orange juice now and I usually wear an orange top. Although, sometimes my wife, you know, thinks it's a little too much but I'm always wearing orange shoes, no matter. The logo of our first company was orange and I fell in love with it too. It's a positive persuasive color. I'll tell you a real quick story when I was fundraising for my second company, I had just started wearing orange shoes. I think it was my first or second pair and I just had a little bit of a gut feeling that I should wear orange shoes to this conference. I wanted to meet this investor that I was pitching to and I actually sent him an email and I got an auto response saying, I don't respond to emails, get more creative. I think, alright, so I booked a ticket to this conference.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:14:17

A thousand bucks I spent and I went all day long planning to pitch this investor —Dave McClure from a fortune 500 startup in Silicon Valley and all day long I couldn't get to him because there was a line, 40, 50, 60 people deep. Everywhere he went, apparently, other entrepreneurs also wanted to talk to this guy. So I'm standing in line for a cocktail at the end of the day, feeling really frustrated. Like I wasted a whole day, a thousand bucks on this ticket. And all of a sudden I hear, I need to meet the man wearing those mother effing shoes.And I look up and there he is in a sea full of people pitching him. He had sought me out because of my bright orange shoes.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:15:02

We had a conversation. He wrote me a 250 thousand dollar check. Boom. Now I'm not saying if you wear orange shoes or if you have a signature style, you're gonna, you know, attract money quite in that way. But I will tell you, you give people an opportunity to remember you. You give people an opportunity to notice you. You give people an opportunity to start to associate you with something. So yeah, when I walk down the street, people stop me. When I am at a conference people say wow, love your shoes over and over and over again.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:15:35

So my question for you, that's listening right now is what is your ‘orange shoes?’ Do you have a signature style? I had somebody that wore a different colored flower in her hair everyday. I had another woman that wore pearls every day. I have a friend that wears a purple tie every day. What is it that you can be remembered by that you can start to stand out with as your own personal style. I think it's a very valuable tool.

**Max Irzhak** 00:16:04

That's awesome. Sounds like the recipe is stand out be memorable. Stand out and be memorable.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:16:0

I mean yeah these are surface things but at the end of the day, hopefully it stands for something. I mean the pearl lady was super elegant and classy, right? So she wanted to be known for that.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:16:23

For me, orange is about positivity, bright optimism. So that's what I want to be known for. So I would think about not just getting noticed but what do you want to be known for in your own personality and brand?

**Max Irzhak** 00:16:39

You just sold your last company that you started with your wife and now you've already launched a new one called Apprentice. Tell me about *Apprentice* and how it started.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:16:49

Yeah. So it's been an amazing journey. I have been for my first few companies hiring college students as my assistants. And what I would do is I would hire them while they're in school. Mold them. And then they would work for me full-time after they graduated. And the best thing was, when they came to work for me, they would already have this leg up over all these other folks because they worked me very closely as my executive assistant.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:17:18

So I had one EA that became my co-author on a book. I had another EA that became my chief of staff, helping me fundraise, and helping me hire a team of dozens of people. I had another EA that became my marketing director and I had this one EA while he was at school. He worked on a million-dollar project for a client. He helped write the third Edition of my first book,"Likeable social media." And he came to me two years ago. And he said, you know, Dave, I think there's something here. I've learned more from you than I learned in college. And I know I've done a lot of valuable work for you and I feel like you've done this with other college students. Do you think there's a business model here? And I was like, yeah, there is, let's do it.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:18:05

And, you know, he went from being my executive assistant in college,18 years old — to being my business partner on Apprentice within a few weeks and we've been at it now for less than two years. We've already built a wonderful business, and will do a million dollars in revenue this year.The idea behind the business, Max, is we connect CEOs and entrepreneurs with the best and brightest college students in the world. If those CEOs and entrepreneurs wanted to hire a brilliant Harvard student the day they graduated, they'd have to pay them 80-90 thousand dollars.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:18:40

If they hire them a year before they graduate through Apprentice they can pay a lot less, I can still afford to pay my apprentices. And my apprentice gets real world experience with great entrepreneurs, small business owners. So to me, what I'm so excited about what we're building is this true win-win-win ecosystem, where students get real-world experience that they're not getting in school quite often and entrepreneurs and small business owners get young, brilliant, hard-working energetic employees. And I as the middleman get to mentor all these students and get to connect all these students with entrepreneurs.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:19:25

It's been a wonderful journey and I'm so grateful to Rob, my partner, for coming up with the idea.

**Max Irzhak** 00:19:34

That's so cool. You and your wife are partners in life, but also in business. You've built this massive company together and actually just sold it earlier this year. How do you guys balance your personal and professional life, to make it all work?

**Dave Kerpen** 00:19:51

Well it's funny you ask right now because right after this podcast recording, we have our annual strategic planning retreat, where Carrie and I go away for a couple days and think about, and we'll talk about the future and career planning and whatnot. I think the most important thing is communication, communication, communication, in all relationships, and certainly in relationships with our significant others and certainly in relationships with our business partners, and most certainly in relationships with our significant others, who are also our business partners. Communication is so important, lots of it. Lots of love, and kindness, and communication, and I statements.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:20:29

A lot of people get caught up. So, getting back to people skills, but it's really valuable stuff. A lot of people get caught up in, you need to do this and you should do this and when you did this. John and Julie Gottman are two of the great, the best relationship therapists in the world. They're fantastic. And so we studied them and we practiced using I statements: I feel frustrated, I feel sad, and then when we mirror and validate each other, we can get to a better place, but it's really, really important to communicate in all relationships. And I know a lot of men struggle with that a little bit more than women and young people struggle with it. But, I would focus, I would suggest that people take a look at Gottman and focus on using I statements and not judging and listening mirroring and validating.

**Max Irzhak** 00:21:25

Many of our listeners will soon be graduating from college and applying to their first jobs or first internships. What's your number one advice for successfully navigating their careers and becoming stronger leaders?

**Dave Kerpen** 00:21:38

Yeah, it's a great, great question. Very, there's a lot of stuff I could talk about, I would say, tactically speaking, use LinkedIn, connect with second-degree connections, figure out how you can help. I would say my number one thing is to figure out how you can help people and add value. And you know, when I, when I lecture for college students and I talk about this, they say, well, how can I add value to a college student? What do I know that this big-time CEO doesn't know, —because I literally tell people to reach out to the CEO of the company, where you want to work. Go for it, be bold and they're like, well, what can I do? I say, here's an example. Here's an easy example, Snapchat fundamentally changed the game with how folks communicate using social media. And I can guarantee you that pretty much every person listening to this knows how to use Snapchat, and pretty much no fortune thousand CEO knows how to use Snapchat.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:22:42

So, if you reached out today to a fortune thousand CEO on LinkedIn and said, hey, I'm a big fan of your company. I'm going to be applying for this position and along the way. I just wanted to let you know, if you ever wanted a 20-minute quick tutorial on Snapchat and why Snapchat is so important in fundamentally changing the way folks communicate, I would love to do that with you. Would you like that? Would you like me to reach out to assistants to do that? I guarantee you that a.) you could actually help them and b.) you're going to be significantly likelier to get a response than any other type of response to a fortune thousand CEO.

**Dave Kerpen** 00:23:25

So think big, think outside the box and think about how you can truly add value for the person at the other end, no matter who you are, no matter who they are because it's always possible.

**Max Irzhak** 00:23:36

And how can people connect with you and learn more about Apprentice?

**Dave Kerpen** 00:23:41

So I'm easy to find Dave. Kirpan my name on every social network because of my entrepreneurial and writing experience in social media, I make myself super accessible. We mentioned the schedule, Dave.com and apprentices at choosecpprentice.com. We are filling our seventh cohort right now. So any students that are interested in working with an amazing CEO or entrepreneur and having the experience of your life, check out *chooseapprentice.com* to learn more.

**Max Irzhak** 00:24:12

Dave, It's been wonderful. Getting to know you. I encourage every single college student listening today to visit *chooseapprentice.com*, sign up, learn new skills and work with some of the biggest entrepreneurs in the world. And as always, we'll see you all back here again next week for Motivational Mondays.