



**Ron Kiskis, former president of Chevron Oronite Company, on the danger of ROMO**

[Transcript](#)

**Mike Kearney:**

Since I started this podcast, I talked quite a bit about my family; my wife, my beautiful daughter, my two sons. I've even talked about my dad who is a San Francisco motorcycle cop. I haven't talked a lot about my mom; but you know what? If I were to think about somebody I really looked up to when I was younger it was my mom. She worked pretty much since the day I was born. I remember – and it was probably a good thing for me finding my own way to school – because my mom was contributing to the family. And that was because she had a really important job – a job that, I remember when I was growing up I was just so proud of her. She was an executive or manager – I don't know exactly what her level was, but she was at Chevron and had a very important role. And I remember to this day going to 555 Market Street when my dad and I would drop her off sometimes and just thinking, "Wow! How cool is that? My mom is working in this big building and makes such a big impact on this iconic organization."

And, you know, when you think about Chevron they are one of the most iconic oil and gas companies in the world – and why wouldn't they be? They are over \$100 billion in revenue. And what's interesting is that I recently lived in the town where Chevron had their global headquarters; which is in San Ramon, California – probably most people wouldn't know that. And I'm really excited because today – and my mom would be really proud (she passed away many years ago, but she'd be proud) – because I am talking to Ron Kiskis. And I've gotten to know Ron quite a bit over the last couple years. When I started the strategic risk business at Deloitte – I've talked a bit about it in the past – I formed an advisory committee. And what was really important to me was to engage a group of very senior executives – CEOs, board members, presidents,

and the like – and I asked Ron to be on the committee. And I loved the way that Ron thought. He was very pragmatic. He understood what we were trying to achieve and gave us some incredible feedback – really some nuggets that to this day have served us extremely well. But it was beyond just the insights that he gave. From my perspective, Ron is just a great person. He’s – and you’re going to hear this in the podcast interview – he’s humble. Humble maybe to a fault – teasing, Ron. But he’s extremely humble, which I am beginning to find is kind of a key hallmark of great leaders. Very, very practical. And then, inspirational in his way. And so I’m really looking forward to sitting down with Ron.

I’m going to talk to him about a few things. I’m going to talk to him about how does an executive – a president – look at risk. I’m not worried about how a risk manager looks at risk – I know that. But how does an executive look at risk? That’s one thing I’m really curious about. I’m also going to ask him, obviously in an organization like Chevron, safety is paramount. So how do they look at safety in crisis? And what can other leaders in other industries learn from Ron? I’m also really interested to ask Ron some questions on leadership. Once again, I’ve observed Ron over the last few years and I think he’s an incredible leader, so I am going to ask him some questions in that area as well.

**Ron Kiskis:**

The world is changing really fast, and I mean, you can argue it’s changing for the better, changing for the worst. To some degree, it doesn’t matter. It’s changing and it’s going to go on changing, and again, you can adopt the view that change is good or change is bad – it depends on where you sit. It can be some of both, but change is inevitable, and our job is to embrace good change, precipitate good change, and try to use it as an ally, not as an enemy.

**Mike Kearney:**

Welcome to [Resilient](#). My name is Mike Kearney. I am a partner at Deloitte within the strategic risk practice and I have a really cool new role that I’d love to share with everybody. I’m leading something call our Brand and Reputation Venture, where I am essentially an investor making investments in new offerings kind of under this brand and reputation theme. So, really cool job; I love innovating, so it’s right up my alley. And I’ve had this incredible opportunity – I think I say this every podcast, but you know, I pinch myself because I get this opportunity to sit down with some iconic leaders, people who have been kind of into the fire and back and have stories to share with you. And what’s important is this podcast is not about me. I think if you look at the way that we market this, the way we promote it, it’s not about Deloitte; it’s not about me. It’s literally about these guests. And today, I’m at Deloitte University for the first time.

Now, Deloitte University is one of the things that, as a partner at Deloitte, it’s probably what I’m most proud of. It’s a place where we come and it really demonstrates the culture of Deloitte. It’s a where I get to come and see friends that I haven’t seen for quite some time. It really is the backbone of our culture. And, you know, if you recall back to our interview with Barry Salzberg, our

former US and global CEO, it was his inspiration and his leadership that built this place. So if you every have a chance, if you're out there, to come visit, Deloitte University is an incredible place.

But I am sitting down with Ron Kiskis at Deloitte University and I am looking forward to chatting with him about all of the topics I talked about before. And I am sitting in one of our "City Places." And these City Places are incredible – they are on every floor, we have multiples of them on every floor where our rooms are. And it's a place where our professionals got to lounge, they can eat some food; it's just a really cool little spot. So, I am sitting with him in one of these City Places – in the San Palo room on the fourth floor – and I am really excited to pick Ron's brain. This is going to be a fun interview for me personally; I hope you enjoy it. So, without further ado, let's get to my conversation with Ron Kiskis.

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**Mike Kearney:** What a fantastic day! I'm sitting here at Deloitte University with what's becoming my good friend, Ron Kiskis. Ron, welcome to Resilient.

**Ron Kiskis:** Yeah, Mike, thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here.

**Mike Kearney:** So, Ron, I love first of all starting off and just getting to know people on these podcasts, and I uncovered a fun fact, which is [that] you went to UC-Berkeley. I think you got your PhD in organic chemistry. Got to give us a little background on that.

**Ron Kiskis:** Well, that is absolutely true. From 1970 to '73, and bottom line is I enjoyed it tremendously. Probably very unexpected for me—and everybody else— [that] I'd end up there. Basically in my heart and my upbringing, very, very conservative in Southern California, and Berkeley at that time was probably the most liberal place on the face of the earth, maybe it still is.

**Mike Kearney:** I think it still is.

**Ron Kiskis:** I think it still is, and in that regard, I didn't fit in, but having said that, I fit in wonderfully. I absolutely enjoyed it and certainly I enjoyed it a lot more than my undergraduate years at UC-Santa Barbara, which you'd think a lot of people might like even better. I ended up liking Berkeley far better, pretty much on every dimension. So yeah, really some of the best years of my life. Really enjoyed it.

**Mike Kearney:** And organic chemistry. How'd you get into that?

**Ron Kiskis:** Sort of by happenstance... my goal when I started into college, frankly, was to be a mathematician, and I got to my first calculus course and I absolutely bombed. Everything else had been easy—algebra, trigonometry, geometry, everything was like a piece of cake. I got to calculus and it's like, I don't understand anything that's going on here. And at the very same time, I was taking an introductory chemistry course just because I had to fill out electives, and it was

the easiest thing in the world. I thought this was so easy, it makes all the sense in the world, and so I just started doing something that I was inherently a lot better at than math, and so totally by chance. I think as most people end up in a lot of things by chance.

**Mike Kearney:**

Organic chemistry. So the funny thing is, when I reflect back on my college years of one class that I had to drop was calculus. I got to the middle of it and I'm, like, I'm not going to be able to finish this semester. I'm not doing well. And I ultimately found out it wasn't necessarily calculus—it was the teacher, because I got an A+ my second time; and it taught me the importance of great teachers, which is, I think, one of the things in business [that] is so important.

**Ron Kiskis:**

I think in my case it was a problem with the student, not the teacher.

**Mike Kearney:**

Oh, that's so funny. So we're going to get a lot into your career at Chevron, but I'm curious, when you reflect back on kind of your upbringing in sciences or your background in sciences, how did that help you when you were an executive at Chevron? Maybe a bit of a different type of background than many, at least, executives that I work with. Did it help you in a different way when you reflect back on it?

**Ron Kiskis:**

You know, that's a really good question, Mike. I'm not—in all honesty—I'm not sure I've ever had that question exactly posed that way. I think it did help me, but at the very same time, I'll tell you that I think it hurt me, as well. When I came into the company, naturally, Chevron was my first employer out of graduate school. I'm a research chemist at the bench, if you will, and I intended my whole career to be in the technology area in Chevron. It didn't play out that way.

And so my world at that time was sort of black and white. Two plus two was four, or if you didn't know what two and two plus was, it was your job to figure it out. So the world was fairly black and white. There wasn't a lot of room, if you will, for interpersonal relationships, and that doesn't mean you didn't work in a team environment and you didn't enjoy your coworkers. It doesn't mean that, but it really does mean you're dealing in the world of facts and data and, again, right and wrong, and you're trying to figure out what to do.

That's very different than the world an executive lives in. Not that an executive isn't worried about right and wrong and the right things to do, but you have to rely on so many other things as an executive. You can't do it all yourself, no matter how smart you are or what your leadership style is, or what the leadership culture is of an organization, how much hierarchy. It doesn't really matter because, as a leader, you have to rely so much on everything—your people, the systems, the structure, the culture, your suppliers. So it's all about relationships. Two plus two is still four for sure, but it's all about relationship and leveraging the relationships.

So in that regard, I was very ill-equipped, frankly, when I got some of my first executive positions, to really fully appreciate what I just said, period, and then certainly to be able to be adept at it, even in the slightest, in terms of pulling teams together. If you would have asked me at that time, I would have said, hey, I'm a team player, because in my heart I was collaborative, but at the core, I really wasn't –.

**Mike Kearney:** So when did you pivot? I wasn't even going to go into this, but when did that pivot happen? So obviously, you know, a man of data and numbers. You realized at a certain point in time that is important. Foundationally that's critical, I think, and that's who you are still to this day, but relationships and some of the other kind of softer attributes probably are what made you successful. When did you pivot or when did you start to realize that?

**Ron Kiskis:** Another question I've actually never had before.

**Mike Kearney:** So I'm two for two. This is good.

**Ron Kiskis:** I would have to say it happened outside of a Chevron environment, which is interesting. Without getting into all the detail, this is back in the middle- to late-1980s, air quality was and still is a really big issue, but a really big issue in California—Los Angeles in particular—air quality, whatever, and certainly oil companies were directly involved in that, you could say from a negative side—automobiles, pollution, smog, etc. I was working in the fuels area at that time, responsible for all of Chevron's fuels activities, the additives that go into fuels to try to make fuels burn cleaner and less harmful to the environment, etc. There was a huge amount of pressure from the federal government, from the state government, the EPA, and from the California Energy Commission coming in with very, very onerous regulations on the oil companies and the auto companies to try to, in essence, make air very, very clean; I'll just say instantaneously, if you will, with very, very heavy-handed and well-intended, but ill-thought-out, regulations.

So our approach as the industry is not to deny any of the facts or not to be part of the solution. We wanted to be part of the solution, but there was a better way than onerous regulations not driven by science, [but] frankly, driven by wishful thinking.

**Mike Kearney:** Politicians.

**Ron Kiskis:** Yeah, politicians. And I don't mean that disparagingly. They were just doing their job. There was a better way, and that better way was science. So what the oil companies and auto companies decided to do was to collaborate in the areas where we normally didn't, and we put together a cross-industry team. It had, if I remember, eight oil companies and six or seven different auto companies, and we put together research that had not yet been done before, really trying to

unbundle what are all the effects that really lead to pollution beyond what had been done, so really looking at the fuels in much more detail, really looking at engines in much more detail and doing that collaboratively, where normally we wouldn't.

**Mike Kearney:**

What was the impetus for those groups coming together?

**Ron Kiskis:**

The impetus was the alternate would be regulations on both industries that would have been onerous. In other words, the politicians would have gone in, in essence demanded the engines be cleaner than they physically could be, beyond the technology capability. Same thing for the fuel, so stuff that we couldn't adhere to no matter how hard we tried. So that was the impetus, there's got to be a better way.

We convinced both the EPA and the California agencies to not change what they were doing but defer a little bit, give us a little bit of time—and that was months, not years—to come up with some science around what might be a better approach to doing this. And so we were charged with that. I was picked out at a very young age in my career to head up the research team, so I was heading up this research team, in essence, if you will, as the CEO, and I don't use that lightly.

So it wasn't my responsibility to do anything. It was my responsibility to get this team of 17 that never would have worked together to actually work together collaboratively, and that's when I realized the team is going to deliver the science. I'm not going to deliver the science. I need to deliver the relationships so we can actually work together, get some answers and do that. And I guess I did it well enough because it was successful, but that was my first sort of trial by fire. I've got to learn something really quick here.

**Mike Kearney:**

What would have been the biggest takeaway? So I'm guessing even if you said you did a fantastic job, was there one takeaway where you said when I bring groups together like this or when I lead in the future, I am always going to fill in the gap?

**Ron Kiskis:**

Consensus approach. Consensus approach. That probably was my basic style all along without knowing it, but that was the only way that was going to work in that because all 17 companies literally had their own view of what research [had] to be done, you know, what to do, how to do it, probably preconceived notions on what the answers were, and that wasn't going to take us to anything other than sort of self-serving bias, so it had to be something we could all agree upon, and so it was very difficult negotiations, but all driven by ultimately we're going to come to something. The definition of consensus may not be anybody's first choice, but it's something we can all live with. So I was sort of the adjudicator of getting to consensus, and some of the things we did wouldn't have been my first choice, but at least we did stuff and then we built on that. So

that was my first real exposure to the power and the necessity, I suppose, for collaboration and teamwork.

**Mike Kearney:**

So it's interesting that you brought up the emissions issue or the smog issue back in the day. What's your take on climate change and how the industry is dealing with that? Do you have any perspectives?

**Ron Kiskis:**

Well, I do, and these are as a private citizen, so I'm certainly not speaking on behalf of Chevron or anybody else or government or government policy. I think it's a big issue. I think it's really a big issue, climate change. I personally believe, again going back to the data guy, and I have looked at the data, I think it's irrefutable that humans are having an impact on the climate. I mean, to what degree and how much and all the implications, I think there's plenty of room for debate in those things, but I don't think there's a lot of room for debate, even though there is, about whether humans are really changing the climate. I think we are.

And the sad part is, you know, it might be decades before it truly is irrefutable and everybody agrees with it, but that's going to be a little bit too late, so we've got to get ahead of the curve, which is sort of where I'm at. I'm generally in favor of governments getting together. I'm generally in favor of things like the Paris Accord and things like that. Everything has a dark side, but we've got to do something, and I don't think collectively we're doing enough, even in our own country. In the US, I don't think we're doing enough on that. We just have to move faster, but we still have to—and you're not going to be surprised to hear me say this—it still has to be based on good science. It can't be based on just wishful thinking or something else. Those things will fall into their own weight inevitably.

**Mike Kearney:**

So you grew up in Southern California. Tell us a bit about kind of your upbringing, some of your heroes, just some of the things that made Ron who Ron is today.

**Ron Kiskis:**

Well, I'll broaden that out, but first I'll give you a very narrow answer to that, still around climate change. So I grew up in the LA Basin, not in Los Angeles proper, but in the eastern suburbs, and we had even worse smog there than in the city. I was an athlete when I was growing up in junior high and high school, so every day after school was sports, very intense sports.

**Mike Kearney:**

What sport?

**Ron Kiskis:**

Tennis in particular was my sport, which, you know, there's a lot of activity in tennis. You're breathing a lot and sucking in air that's got all sorts of things in it. I can remember, literally to this day, every day after tennis practice, going home and literally having to lie down in bed coughing for half an hour—I'm not exaggerating—until I could recover enough to have dinner. So, I mean, I knew something was wrong, my family knew something was wrong. We probably

knew it was air quality, but again, I'm back in the '50s now or '60s at the best, and exactly what was going on, we didn't know, but you couldn't really see across the street so, you know, things are so much better now. But that's part of my upbringing is I can just see from personal experience how bad things are.

Having said that, Los Angeles was a wonderful place to grow up. The whole area, there was a lot of, after the war, I'm a Baby Boomer, early Baby Boomer, and it was a wonderful place for families, you know, people [who] had gotten married, husbands, and wife that—my dad was from the northern part of the United States, my mother was from the south. They met at University of Alabama. She didn't like the south, he didn't like the north, they both said what's the farthest place we can get away from here. That was California, and then the kids were born, and a lot of families did that, moved there for whatever reason, had their children, raised their family, so it was a wonderful place to grow up and I really, beyond the smog, I don't have really any regrets about that. And wonderful upbringing, wonderful parents, and my dad [was an] engineer, and he was certainly the impetus that certainly caused me to think about math and science as a career.

**Mike Kearney:** Who were the people you looked up to when you were growing up?

**Ron Kiskis:** I certainly looked up to my dad. I looked up to my older brother. Even though I became a PhD organic chemist, he's a lot smarter than I am. He's actually a retired professor now of physics at UC-Davis, so he was the smart kid in the family. I was the dumb kid.

**Mike Kearney:** Yeah, UC-Berkeley, organic chemistry, the dumb kid. That's exactly what I think.

**Ron Kiskis:** Dumb kid in the family. Yeah, still am. Certainly looked up to my older brother. I looked up to my friends. I really had a lot of absolutely wonderful friends in sports. So on sports teams, I was a good athlete but not great, so there was always somebody on the team that was better than me and I looked up to that person, not so much with envy, but with respect in terms of them probably being more the leader of the team, but I was certainly a part of that team and proud to be part of that team.

So [I] probably got role models from anywhere and everywhere. In my whole life, even including in the business life, everybody that I interacted with was a role model in two senses. Either I saw things that they did that were effective that I respected that I tried to incorporate into my leadership style, made it my own, not just copied what they did, but learned from it and made it work for me, and I certainly had bosses that, I'll say in the office that since maybe had behaviors or approaches that I didn't like or weren't for me.

**Mike Kearney:** Bet you still learned something from them.

**Ron Kiskis:** I absolutely learned at least...

**Mike Kearney:** I will never do that ever.

**Ron Kiskis:** ...that's not for me. Maybe that's great for them, but that's not for me. So you can learn. I don't want to get overly philosophical here, but you can learn from anything and everybody, so it'd be hard to say that it was one or a handful of particular role models.

**Mike Kearney:** So you became president of Chevron Oronite, and we're going to start to get into this because I really want to pick your brain on risk and crisis and some of the things that I'm passionate about, I know that we've had a chance to talk offline about, but for those of the folks that may not know what Oronite is, can you maybe just give a high-level overview of what the company is?

**Ron Kiskis:** Yeah, absolutely. Most people wouldn't have heard about it, nor should you. So, Chevron Oronite: Oronite is the brand name, Chevron obviously is our corporate name. Chevron Oronite is one of several, what we call, operating companies, and Chevron operating companies are P&L companies that do something, and obviously we do all sorts of different businesses, from upstream exploration, production, refining, marketing and chemicals. Oronite is a specialty chemical company, fairly good-sized. If it was a standalone company, it'd be just outside of the Fortune 500, so several thousand employees, multibillion dollar revenue, so pretty good-sized and very, very global. One of the things that I like to say with pride is we actually have more employees in France than we do in the US, so it's not a model of basically we're in the US and we've got offices.

**Mike Kearney:** That must have been a tough job traveling to France all the time.

**Ron Kiskis:** I actually got to go to some pretty nice places [other] than that. I had other jobs where I went to some places that weren't quite nearly as nice as that, but yeah. So that's what it was, and basically what it is, it developed, manufactured, and marketed these high-performance—we called them additive specialty chemicals that go into fuels and lubricants and give it the properties that it does have, so that's the role I was in. That was the last job I was in before I retired.

**Mike Kearney:** So, Ron, one of the reasons why I started this podcast, and it still kind of guides me to this day, is to try to pick the brain of kind of executives, especially in this whole area of, you know, Deloitte plays and the risk crisis and disruption. That's kind of our tagline, and I think one of the things that I love diving into is trying to understand the way an executive, president, CEO, [or] board thinks about risk. Because I oftentimes find it's different than maybe what a risk practitioner that kind of does that job on a day-to-day basis [does]. So just a very general question, what role did risk play when you were leading Oronite? And I've got some very specific questions, but I'd love to just start there.

**Ron Kiskis:** Yeah, I'll start then also at a high level. My personal view—again, this is not the Chevron view—my personal view, risk is all around us. Whether we want it to be or not, risk is there. There's a lot of times far more risk in doing nothing than

there is risk in doing something, so any notion, if anybody has it, that somehow you can get rid of risk, you can diminish risk, but get rid of risk, you can't do that. So risk is there, which then means you're going to have to address it and, again, if you make no decisions, that's just a foolhardy way of trying to avoid risk. You're probably going to escalate risk by doing nothing and miss opportunities.

So it's opportunity and risk, frankly, that are virtually synonymous. Every opportunity, everything that is an opportunity that you take on inherently has risk, and in the business world and the industry world, most people are pretty good at that, frankly. So when opportunity comes up, whether it's investment in a new plant, entering a new country, it doesn't matter what it is, one of the very first things that you would naturally do is ask yourself why am I going to do that, which would then quickly get into, okay, if I do it, how do I do that, and of the choices, what are the pros and the cons, which is inherently in the risk world. So you're dealing with risk all the time, so it's not something that you can avoid.

Having said that, I'm not sure that normally in the business world, we would think about it, frankly, in those terms because it's so embedded in what we're doing. In other words, I don't ever recall when we would literally sit down, maybe once or twice, and say, "Let's have a conversation about risk." You just don't do that unless you have some very, very specific reason for doing it, like you're going to go into a risk audit or something. It's just embedded in there and it's part of the things that you talk about and have to talk about.

**Mike Kearney:**

Right. You're hitting on something that I have learned more in the last few years than anything else, and that is there still are those meetings, those bespoke risk management meetings, and what I've experienced oftentimes is the executives that come in there say, "We just talked about this 20 minutes ago. Why are we talking about..." but only from a risk lens. So one of the kind of maxims that I've developed is, especially for risk professionals or chief risk officers, is don't think about it as being a separate activity. Figure out how you can integrate your intelligence, your tools, and things of that nature into what the executive team already does because that's going to be far more valuable to them because you are addressing it in the context in which they are making decisions and thinking about things. I don't know if you agree with that or not, but that's a takeaway that I've had.

**Ron Kiskis:**

I agree with that, and I'm going to make a comment, and for anybody that's listening is a risk professional, either close your ears or at least don't be offended by this.

**Mike Kearney:**

Actually, I want them to hear this. This is important.

**Ron Kiskis:**

I don't mean it at all to be disparaging. I have a lot of respect for people that worry about risk and help the business with risk, so I want you to hear that part.

If you walk in and that's the only room that you're using, I think to your point, it's going to fall on probably either deaf ears or not very receptive ears because again, I've just told you I have to deal with that anyway, and I'm dealing with it all the time, so what are we talking about? We're not talking about dealing with risk. We're talking about what? We're talking about a way to do projects better. What are we really talking about? And that's the way I like to think about it.

You know, the easiest thing to do, and this is a superficial comment, so if I don't want any risk at all in my operating business, the best way to do that is just to go out of business. I mean, just literally do nothing. I can just do nothing, and the risk is I don't make any money. In fact, that's a guarantee because I'm out of business, but boy, have I lowered the risk curve. Now, nobody's going to suggest that, but the reason I bring that up is if the mindset is too much around derisking, then you're also deopportunity-ing—I don't even think that's a word—at the very same time. That isn't the world that we can live in.

I'll use lawyers as another example, and I actually love lawyers as well. I've got many friends that are lawyers, and I really mean all that. The worst lawyer you can have is a lawyer that walks in and says, "Ron, okay, I hear what you're trying to do. Let me tell you all the problems. If you do that, it's going to lead to this. You need a contract on that. You could get sued, blah, blah, blah." And then I always go, and sometimes with my best lawyer friends, I go, "Fine, how about if I just do nothing and then we're both happy, right." "Oh, I wasn't saying doing nothing." I go, "Actually that is what you were saying."

**Mike Kearney:** That is what you're saying, right.

**Ron Kiskis:** What you actually need to be doing—because I need to hear all the things you just said, but I need to hear them in a different framework. You need to hear and need to understand what it is that I'm trying to accomplish, and then you need to partner with me and find the best way to accomplish all those. That's really helping me. So I bring that back to the risk world. Here's all the things I'm trying to accomplish. You need to be part of the team in helping us, not just me, go through the dialog to come up with the best answer where everything is included, including risk and reward.

**Mike Kearney:** So one of the things—and I totally agree with everything you just said, and you probably gave me about four or five more questions, but you had said—you talked about that there is risk of doing nothing. That was almost your opening statement.

**Ron Kiskis:** Absolutely.

**Mike Kearney:** One of the things that I oftentimes find, and let's just say that there's a strategy or an initiative that's on the table, and the executive team is looking at it, oftentimes what I see is that there's so much focus on what risk would that decision create for the organization versus if we don't do it, what risk would

that create. And I would say maybe 5 percent of the time do I see the opposite side of it, like, okay, we're choosing not to make it. Now what risk are we accepting because our competitor may do it or, you know, the world is changing, may require us to do it or whatever it may be? Do you agree with that, and if you do, why is it that we don't spend that time on the risk of doing nothing? The analysis that we give on the risk of doing something? If that makes sense.

**Ron Kiskis:**

It absolutely makes sense. I agree with your proposition. I think that's typically the syndrome in business, as I've seen it, is to not focus so much on that. I mean, at times, somebody will ask that question, and I can tell you every time somebody asks that question, sort of the room goes quiet, like oh yeah, we probably better think about that. It's just not wired in most people.

If I do have a reason, and this is speculative because I'm not sure it is the reason, if you're talking about doing something, okay, so building a new plant or doing something, the people that are likely to be the most vocal or what we might call the pioneers of the entrepreneurs, they see the world of the possible, the art of the possible, and every time you talk about doing nothing, that's not part of their DNA. What do you mean talk about doing nothing? I want to grow, I want to build, and I want to do that. I want to talk about all those neat things. I don't want to talk about the opposite of that because that's not how you're wired.

And that's okay. You're probably not going to rewire that person's DNA. That's why you have a team, so you can have the whole team look at the whole thing, and each individual doesn't have to be beautifully balanced and asking every question or looking at everything through every lens.

**Mike Kearney:**

The one thing I wrote down, something we were talking about, how to make risk matter to an executive, and I think one of the things you've said is this is just their life, this is what they're thinking about every day. I'm going to lay something out there. I'd love for your response. One of the things that I'm realizing more and more, is to talk to those risk professionals that you gave some guidance to, it's to have more empathy for the executives and what their priorities are doing, what their threats are, or what opportunities they're thinking about and try to start to think about the world like an executive does, or whoever you're working with, and then try to fold whatever capabilities or programs or things that you're going to do from a risk perspective. So it goes back to empathy for the executive. Agree with that?

**Ron Kiskis:**

Absolutely agree with that. Completely. So one of my favorite sound bites, and it's not my sound bite, I stole it from somebody. Basically I steal all my sound bites from somebody, truly, and this one is connection before content. And I love that because I'll use it right in your case. So if I'm the risk professional and I'm walking in and talking to an executive, you know, I know that my role—and it's a noble role and it should be a role—is to worry about risk inherent. That is

fine. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that. That's the content. So I'm going to bring a lot of perspectives on that, I've got a lot of content, I've got a lot of advice, I can be very helpful. All that is wonderful.

If that's what I lead with, then I haven't made a connection with that person, okay, and that person is likely going to tune out, maybe not directly, but literally their brain is someplace else. They might be listening, they might be responding, but they're not really completely tuned into your content message, and yet you're passionate about delivering the content message because it's so important, it's so good. You have to make a connection first before that content gets a home and gets ingested by that person and valued.

It usually starts with asking a few questions as opposed to, "Well, let me tell you, Ron, here's some of the risks that we're going to do." So all right, yeah, so we're going to be thinking about, you know, building this plant. I get that. You know, could you back up and tell me a little bit more about that? Do we have to do that? Why do we have to do that? Where are we building it? Is it a small plant? Is it a big plant? What have we considered and all that? It gives that person time to give you some background. I hope your questions are genuine. I'm presuming they would be genuine questions, so you're getting information and already you're showing that person you have an interest in what all is going on in his or her world that you then can help them address, and then your content has a home and you can say, "Well, that's interesting. Now that I now that, let me give a piece of content." You wouldn't say here comes the content, but the content would then have a reason for being brought up at that point in time and be valuable versus just in essence let me give you all this content, it's great stuff, you're going to agree it's great stuff, and my job is now done. So you've got to make that connection in some way, and I found asking questions is always a good thing.

**Mike Kearney:** It's almost like the connection creates the context for the content. Does that...

**Ron Kiskis:** Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Mike Kearney:** What percentage of, in your experience, whether it's consultants or colleagues or whatever, what percentage do you think of people get that and do it well? Meaning rather than telling you what you should do, I'm going to actually inquire and ask some really good questions to have a little bit of empathy so that I can put my content into context. What percentage of people do you think do that well?

**Ron Kiskis:** I'll have to give you two answers. The answer I would give you if I'm dealing with what I might call generically the relationship manager, say for professional consulting firm, and in Deloitte, it's the lead client service partner. If I'm talking to a partner that has, by definition and by role, a broad perspective on my organization, on their organization, are not in the selling mode, they're not the

chief salesperson for that, generally I think those people have acquired the skills to do that pretty well. So I would say for those people, and certainly I'd say for the ones that are good and more effective, you know, well north of 50 percent of them use at least a lot of inquiry as opposed to walking in just with content.

If I'm dealing with other people that aren't in that role, that are more in the project world or specialist world, whether it's risk or, I mean, it doesn't really matter, then it would be well south of 50-50. Well south of 50-50.

**Mike Kearney:** That's a whole [other] podcast.

**Ron Kiskis:** Whole [other] podcast. Yeah, how much time we got? We can do another one.

**Mike Kearney:** So one of the things I've heard you talk about, and I'm just going to lay it out there and you can respond how you like, is that you oftentimes would use kind of the axiom of what's the worst that could happen. Can you talk a bit about that?

**Ron Kiskis:** Yeah, and again, that is something I stole from somebody. I'll have to say somebody in Chevron a lot smarter than I sort of came up with that phrase, and we adopted a lot in Chevron, but it's not unique to Chevron. Around the industry, a lot of companies use that or use that in some form. And it is incredibly powerful. You can use it, that question, and then trying to get the answer to that question in a lot of different frameworks.

So let me bring it very much to the risk world, and let's say, you know, to keep it real, you know, you're thinking about making an investment in an operating plant. I don't have one before. I talked about strategy behind that, do some pros and cons analysis, but you could literally ask that question, okay, what's the worst thing that could happen if we built that plant? What would be the worst thing that could happen if we didn't build the plant? Most people, I think, would not ask that. You might have asked one of those, but not both of them. But that really teases the brain to really think about not likely scenarios, or I can give— anybody can give you the easy pros and cons or the easy risks or whatever, but what's the worst thing that can happen? That's sort of like an absolute. I don't know that anybody truly knows what the worst thing is, but it gets your brain into a place to where you better not give the quick answer or the cheap answer. You better really think, well, how bad could it really get?

And once you get there, and let's say for sake of argument, you're lucky enough to identify what the worst thing is that can happen, then you can really begin to take action on that. Okay, I really don't want that to happen, so right away, I'm then thinking about, okay, what risk mitigation approaches do I need to put in place before I even build the plant so we don't get the worst of all worlds? I might get some bad ones, but I'm not going to get the worst one, and that might

inform some much, much better thinking at the outset about plant, plant location, plant design, sort of the whole mix of things...

**Mike Kearney:** What you can do to mitigate any issues. I oftentimes find that it's really helpful in making those tough decisions where you come up with a gazillion reasons why not to do it, but then when you ask that question, what's the worst that can happen, you go, wow, there's actually not as much downside maybe as my brain is making me think as we're going through this decision-making process.

**Ron Kiskis:** Yeah, yeah. I think that's right, and again, even if there is – even if the downside is really bad, and I agree with you, a lot of times you can't even imagine something that's as bad as your gut might tell you. But let's just say that there is. Then if you identify that early, you can do so much more to mitigate that risk than having that incident take place. Well, gosh, we could have never seen that. Nobody ever thought that this could happen or whatever, then you're in risk response. You're in incident—that's not the time to be having those questions come up. It's far too late.

**Mike Kearney:** So let's talk about the changes happening in this world, and we kind of referred to it a bit earlier, but obviously there's so much change that's happening, whether it be with regard to how people buy things, how people consume things, where people live, you know, the expectations of millennials, and I would say, you know, within the oil and gas industry, there's probably a lot of change that's impacting what you guys are doing and what you've done in the past. My question for you is how would you as a—once again, as an executive, think about this external change that's happening and things that could potentially have an impact or disrupt your business?

**Ron Kiskis:** Yeah, yeah. Well, you know, sort of two closely coupled answers to that. I mean, the world is changing really fast. It's changed even since we started this podcast, Mike, so it's...

**Mike Kearney:** I'm sure there's something on the news that we don't know about.

**Ron Kiskis:** But yeah, it's changing really, really fast, and I mean, you can argue it's changing for the better, changing for the worst. To some degree, it doesn't matter. It's changing and it's going to go on changing, and again, you can adopt the view that change is good or change is bad. You know, depends on where you sit. It can be some of both, but change is inevitable, and our job is to embrace good change, precipitate good change, and try to use it as an ally, not as an enemy.

The fundamental way that the world has changed, and I'm a dinosaur in a lot of regards, and I know that, but the information that is now available is unbelievable. I mean, just in my lifetime, it is unbelievable the amount of information that is out there. And that impacts everything, again, that you do and don't do because anything that happens in the world anyplace at any time potentially can go global in a heartbeat. That's never happened before and even

wouldn't have happened 10, 15, 20 years ago for sure. Now it happens anywhere and everywhere.

So in the business world, to bring it back to that, your scope of vision has to be unbelievable and infinite, and certainly if you think about it, either in the world of risk, things that could come into your business, and I can talk about disruption or I can talk about opportunities, the things that you need to worry about and address are so much greater than what you ever did before and you're in so much less control of things, except information can be as much as your friend as anybody else's, so in that sense, you've got more than you've ever had, but it's really, really changed.

**Mike Kearney:**

Is that a good thing or—I know it's a good thing that there's more information, but I also think it's almost like the paradox of choice. Like, there's almost so much, so how do you sift through all of that and make decisions when you may actually not even have all the information you need, but how do you make sense of all of that?

**Ron Kiskis:**

Well, I don't think that you actually can make sense of all that, and that's probably an unexpected answer. Probably even harder to make sense of all of that because a lot of the information is conflicting, even very, very credible information is very, very conflicting.

Let's go back to a time when we didn't have all that information. So let's say 30 or 40 years ago when I started my career. So did you have all the information that you needed so when you were making a decision, could you take the decision with complete confidence that I know everything that I need to know in order to take that decision? The answer is absolutely no. I couldn't ever know that, and if my goal was misguided enough to try to get all of it, by the time I got all of it, the opportunity would have passed by. Somebody else would have said, hey, I've got the major stuff, I'm 80-20, I'm going to go, you would have missed that opportunity. So I think then and now the situation's the same. When to pull the trigger, when do you have enough, and you're never going to have enough, and now the challenge is with more out there, you've got even more to sift through, but still something like the 80-20 rule, if I know enough, if I got the key things, and that then relies on process, discipline and everything to get that comfort level. I've got to move, and when I move, there's 20 percent that I don't know and I haven't addressed, and you're right out there again on the risk curve.

**Mike Kearney:**

So I've never heard anybody bring this up, but if I hear you correctly, what you're saying is there's still 20 percent—and obviously we're just estimating—of decisions that are made based on not full facts, or maybe not perfect information.

**Ron Kiskis:**

Yep.

**Mike Kearney:**

The difference back in the day is you just didn't have that information, whereas now you have so much that potentially may be conflicting that you can never, ever sift all the way through. You're still making it without perfect information, so in many respects, the rules of the game have not changed. Well—no, the rules of the game [have] not changed. Maybe the information that you're getting has.

**Ron Kiskis:**

I would agree with that, yeah. Yeah, I still think you're going to have to make decisions when you're uncomfortable enough that you don't have all the information that you would ideally like, and so then by definition, you're running some risk. But I get back to the earlier comment I made. If you're trying to live in a no-risk world, you're not going to capture any opportunities. Somebody else is going to move on 80-20, and 80 percent of the time at least or more, it's going to turn out really good and you're going to be holding the bag with nothing.

**Mike Kearney:**

So—and you know what's interesting? —I think, because I deal in the world of strategic risk, one of the things I've found is those organizations that make decisions based on not perfect information but are agile enough to change their decisions are the ones that succeed. It's the ones that make the decision and, you know, by golly, I [am not] changing it because I made that decision and this is what we're going to do are the ones that get hit.

**Ron Kiskis:**

I couldn't agree more. The analogy that I like to use in this, and I wish when I was working I was a whole lot more adept than what I'm going to sound like, but if you decide to do something, I'm going to call that Plan A. So Plan A is already pretty darn good or it wouldn't be Plan A, right, and so it's the 80-20, you've done all that. So there's a very good chance of success. You can define it, you can defend it in front of your organization, you can get support from shareholders, whatever, it's a really good plan. Nothing wrong with that with one exception. The one exception is you can get too wedded to that plan. So there's then always a Plan B and a Plan C.

So I like to use the analogy if you're on a freeway, the freeway's going very fast, you know you're going from wherever to wherever and you're going to get there. That's Plan A, and it's very, very tempting. So what are you looking at while you're on the freeway that might suggest, you know what, something's changed. The world has changed, all great decisions, but something happened that we either could have seen but we said wasn't likely, or we didn't see at all. When do you take an off ramp and when do you go to Plan B?

And I don't know the answer to that, but what I do know is if you don't—if you've never spent any time at all on Plan B, there's no Plan B, you've never talked about it. It's Plan A full steam ahead.

**Mike Kearney:**

And that's it.

**Ron Kiskis:** It's really hard to get off the freeway because it's almost admitting defeat. I was wrong in whatever. The implications getting off the freeway are really bad. Whereas if when you developed Plan A, you said you know what, there's going to be things that we can't control or can't see that might make this less than ideal. So here's the signposts, the watch points, whatever. And again, I won't see all of them, but if I see this, that's going to immediately put up a red flag. It's going to make it so much easier to get off the freeway, and not only that, I can defend my process, my ego and whatever because I already envisioned that and I already envisioned there might be a time when I need to get off the freeway, so it wasn't like I made a wrong decision on Plan A. That was probably still the best decision, but things happened that caused me to see that. That's actually a good thing.

So when I find, back to your question, problems arise is when you don't give enough respect to the world around you to where spend at least some time on Plan B, Plan C, not fully developed, but at least know when it might be time to say, you know what, we better really look at our cards again, be very careful maybe this time to take that off ramp and do something else, and organizations get in a world of hurt when they don't do that.

**Mike Kearney:** As you were talking, I was listening to another podcast last week—I love listening to them—and there was the chief business officer for Google X. They're the ones that, like, do the moonshot innovations, and he said something, and I think it's 95 percent true with what you said, but I think it's something that I've thought about a lot over the past few weeks, and I think it's pretty profound. And it was fall in love with the problem, not the solution.

**Ron Kiskis:** I like that.

**Mike Kearney:** And the reason why I love it is because I think, me in particular, like, I'll fall in love with whatever I've created, and it's then difficult to kind of change direction, but if you keep focusing on what is the problem we're trying to solve and then allow your solution to evolve over time, I loved it.

**Ron Kiskis:** Whoever my friend is in Google X, I'm going to steal that, if you don't mind, because I steal all these sound bites. I'm going to steal another one. I love that. And I think that's said much, much better than I just said it and much shorter. That's what I was trying to communicate. Yeah, so what is the problem I'm trying to solve, not what is Plan A and why is that so great?

**Mike Kearney:** Falling in love is very evocative, like I am going to figure out whatever I need to do to solve that problem or understand it. So I'm not going to say any other company names, but I think one of the things that we have seen in the news lately is the companies that have had kind of mini little crises or their brand or reputation gone bad, and literally we were joking earlier, if we probably opened up the *New York Times* or whatever, there's probably another company in there. And I think this is an emerging area, but when you were at Chevron, how

did you guys think about—because your reputation for Chevron is everything, right? And you could look at others in oil and gas where they've been tarnished. Was there anything in particular as a leader, as an executive, as a president that you thought about when it came to your brand and reputation?

**Ron Kiskis:**

Well, there absolutely was, and again, I'm not a company spokesman, but in this area I think I can feel very comfortable in speaking to Chevron. We had a document called The Chevron Way, and The Chevron Way talked an awful lot about basically the way we should behave as all employees, and certainly as executives, and it was a lot on values and beliefs and behaviors and ethics, etc., things you would expect.

But you know, one of the questions that we would ask ourselves commonly is, you know, the *New York Times* front page test, or what would your mother say test. So you're out there in that world, and Chevron is a very, very big target. Chevron is a very big target and not everybody is a fan of Chevron, not everybody is a fan of the oil and gas industry and whatever, so you live in a world where it's not necessarily a friendly world and people aren't necessarily going to see the world the way that you do or report it the way that you think is right or complete, but at the end of the day, we have our brand, we have our ethics and our company to defend, and we think we can defend all those very well. We think we do an awful lot of the right things very, very well-intended, but we live in a world where it's not that benevolent, so you're always on guard for those things, which means you're always trying really, really hard not only to do the right thing, to do it the right way and to communicate that, and as a leader, espouse those same behavior, beliefs and requirements throughout your organization. Nobody's exempt from anything I just said.

**Mike Kearney:**

You know what's jumping to mind? I'll throw out two terms and I'll maybe provide a bit of context. It's rules versus values or way of doing things, and what I heard you just say is that that Chevron way, I just wrote it down, that to me is, like, the beliefs that Chevron and its employees have. It's the culture. And then you can also have—and I'm sure you also had—like, a code of conduct and ethics and rules. What do you think is more important? If you had to choose the culture focused on doing the right thing or rules, what would it be? And I know they're not mutually exclusive.

**Ron Kiskis:**

Well, the culture absolutely. It's absolutely. It's sort of the same question \_\_\_\_\_ I would use if you're trying to improve your organization and have a top performing organization, a high-performance team, if you will, do you do it best by rules and requirements and you've got to do this, management by fear, that will take you only so far. That'll take you to compliance behavior. Wherever you set the bar, people will come up just above the bar so they don't get fired. If you really have a culture that's driven by values and beliefs at the core, it's I really want all those things. There isn't a bar. It's infinite. So if you drive an organization based on values, beliefs and culture, and it's really, really genuine,

then it becomes very easy for the whole organization and everybody in it to, in their heart of hearts, make the right decision.

Sometimes the right decision is to walk away from business. Say if that's the way it's going to be done, if you and I were doing business, say, "Ron, you've got to do it this way," and that violates my ethics or the company, I'm just—I'm sorry—we're going to have to talk about a different way to do that and, well, there's not a different way, I'm going to walk away, and every person I can tell you in Chevron, it's not all about Chevron. A lot of our competitors would be exactly the same. You just walk away. You just walk away. So it's far more important to do it the right way, a way that you can live with than getting a piece of business. Far more important.

**Mike Kearney:**

It almost seemed like it was a softball question because even as you're answering, I'm like, oh, of course he's going to answer culture. But also if you look at a lot of the organizations out there and a lot of the reputation hits that they've taken, a lot of times they'll say, well this is what the rules were, and our employees were following them, versus in that moment when something was happened, they decided to do it differently because that's just not the way we operate as a company. And so it seems simple but I think it's so very important.

**Ron Kiskis:**

I think the culture part of that, the culture part of the answer to what you just posed is, of course you have to have rules and regulations, policies and guidelines. I'd be the last person to say you can operate effectively with none of that. But at the end of the day, if every employee, and I'm not just talking Chevron here, if every employee in an organization feels like that they are empowered in the moment to do the right thing in their hearts, and if the organization can stand behind that and stand behind that employee, you're going to be far better off.

Now, I would grant you, because as soon as I say that, I know somebody's going to say, well yes but—yes, but here was a situation and an employee took it on themselves and they did this, and that was the wrong thing to do. I wouldn't have done it that way. Here's the reasons and whatever, so therefore, the outcome is we shouldn't allow that, and that employee's going to get punished. You're not going to ever have what you want. So sometimes you have to really screw up your courage to say thank you for doing that, I support it, and much later talk about, you know, let's think about maybe there was a different way to handle that and whatever and use that coaching moment to make it even better as opposed to coaching moment of don't ever do that again because that really wasn't according to policy.

**Mike Kearney:**

Right. So we're going to pivot to crisis and incidents, and one of the things that I've read and one of the things that you even shared with me in advance, the number of, you know, called crisis or incidents, operational incidents, has gone down significantly. I think you used tenfold. I don't know if that's data or we

could prove that, but like tenfold over the last 10 or 20 years. What's behind that?

**Ron Kiskis:**

Well, I can tell you for sure what's behind that, and I would say that that's, certainly in the oil and gas industry that I work in, those are the numbers, Mike, if you look at pretty much the whole industry, and we see all that data because it is all reported. Yeah, over the last roughly 10 years, something like that, the number of incidents, process safety incidents, you know, explosions in plants or not even that dramatic, just things that happen that rise above the threshold to be reported, those literally have gone down tenfold. And it's not by luck or anything else. It's been an incredible culture in the industry around focusing on the potential for incidents happening. And I can give you a framework for that, but looking at the potential for those happening and getting ahead of those by putting in preventative measures so they don't happen, and when they do happen, to do very, very rigorous analysis of why it happened and put in measures.

An approach that I like to think about, everybody loves a two-by-two matrix. I love a two-by-two matrix, too.

**Mike Kearney:**

We're consultants, so of course we love...

**Ron Kiskis:**

Consultants absolutely love them, so this one, fortunately, is only a two-by-two, it's not even a three-by-three. So one of the ways to think about incidents and incident prevention is to think about two axes. On one axis would be the likelihood of an incident happening. On the other axis would be the consequences.

So something that could happen—a plant explosion. I hate to even say that, but okay, something could happen that would lead to an explosion in the plant. Unmitigated, like if you just build the plant and you don't put any risk measures, I mean, the likelihood's going to be quite reasonable. We deal with some pretty, pretty inherently dangerous processes. So if you don't do something, the likelihood is going to be pretty high. So if I use the scale of 1 to 10, you know, unmitigated it might be a 9 or a 10, so pretty good likelihood. And the consequence, if you blow up a plant, consequences are pretty much up in the 9 to 10 scale.

And that's not the world we live in now and wasn't even 10 years ago, but you could take everything, then, and put it on that axis, okay, and then say, okay, for any particular possibility of something happening, you know, even a valve leaking. Doesn't have to be dramatic. What is the likelihood of that now at this day and age with all the risk mitigation ever? The likelihood of that happening versus zero chance or extremely likely, you know, we've got it down to maybe a four or five. Still not a zero, but it's not going to be likely.

And on the other axis, if it did happen, how bad is the consequence? We don't want it to happen, but if it's just a little bit of oil on the ground and it doesn't go into the environment, the consequence isn't huge. Somebody might slip on it, somebody might fall, there might be an injury, so it's not—it's certainly not zero consequence, but we're not really going to kill anybody doing that or no community effect. So one of the frameworks to think about from risk or incident management is to take a look at all – and all is a big word—of things that could potentially happen and just put them on that two-by-two matrix. It's not an exact science. It's going to be subjective. I might feel, both of us extremely knowledgeable about something, you might feel the likelihood's an eight or nine and I'm, like, aw, Mike, come on, it's really only a four or five. So it's not going to be exact right, and it doesn't need to be, you're going to get it right.

And so the point of that, not even so much as to get all the dots on there and then you're done. It's then you've got a framework to say, okay, I clearly want to put my effort into those things that are still fairly high likelihood and fairly high consequence. So then it informs a plan, so every year I'm going to have a plan, every year I'm going to try to get better, continuous improvement. My goal is to get to zero incidents. That's an aspiration. I may never get there. I hope I would, but that's what my goal is, to get to zero, and I could get there potentially if I understand all the potential risks out there and I mitigate them all effectively.

So every year, your plan from a continuous improvement standpoint, is in essence looking at the matrix. Okay, I've still got things in as a four or five, so we're going to go after – we can't go after everything, and I'm not going to go after the ones and twos, at least not this year. I'm going to still go after the ones that are the highest risk and the highest consequence now and find further ways to mitigate those, whatever that is, and next year maybe I'm down to the threes and fours and maybe the next year I'm down to the twos and threes. So it really informs a pathway as opposed to an absolute. That's one way to do it.

**Mike Kearney:**

I was going to ask you, a lot of the things you just talked about, I'm guessing were around 10 years before. Was there anything that pushed it beyond that, like regulations or improved training? Like, what changed in the last 10 years? Or maybe if we were sitting here 10 years ago, you would have said, hey, it's improved 10 times, and maybe in the next 10 years it will improve 10 times and it's just a cycle of continuous improvement. Or did something noticeable happen in the last 10 years beyond the process, I guess is what I'm getting at?

**Ron Kiskis:**

Yeah, that's a great question. At least as it regards the oil and gas industry, there weren't—it wasn't regulatory driven per se. Per se, it wasn't regulatory driven. The government didn't come and basically dictate you have to reduce the incidents by tenfold. That's what happened, but that wasn't driven by regulations. I mean, the roles of government here are certainly to encourage the

right behaviors, and I applaud that. Roles of government is when there is a big enough incident, to come in and do their own independent incident investigation, report out on that and share the findings.

So, you know, governments and regulations play a key role, but that wasn't what drove this. It was really much more by the industry themselves and basically some very, very good leaders basically asking the question, like, you know, we're still hurting people, we're still having incidents in the plant, we're still having impact on communities. Does anybody think that is good? And of course the answer is no, so can't we do better than that, and the answer is yes. Well, then why don't we do better on that and what are the barriers? It really comes down to leadership, and we had some very strong leaders in my company. I'm very, very proud of that, that really drove process safety and personal safety, but it wasn't a huge hard sell because that's all the way that we felt also running our businesses. We didn't want to hurt people, we didn't want to impact the community, we didn't want to have air regulations problems or spills or anything else, so easy sell but hard to do.

It's not easy to do these things. It's not easy to get a tenfold improvement, and it's a lot of work. A lot of it is around culture. We used that word, so a safety culture. What does that mean? Safety culture is, "Mike, I want you to go home at the end of the day just the way you showed up." And you want the same thing for me. So everybody in the organization has to want that. You look out for your buddies, you look out for the organization, you don't want people to get hurt.

Once you instill that culture, then it's not driven by rules and regulations; it's driven by values and beliefs, and I want this to be a safe environment for you, for me, for my family, for the community. That's the challenge to get to, to get that mindset, and then the rest becomes, like I said, methodology and continuous improvement and you can always do better, and you truly can get to zero incidents. We had many parts of Chevron, large parts of Chevron that operated for years, for years with absolutely zero incidents, personal safety or process safety. So the notion, well, accidents happen or it's inevitable, I don't buy into that. I think most people don't buy into that, and heaven help the people that somehow live in the world that accidents are inevitable because they're not inevitable.

**Mike Kearney:**

Funny anecdote, and tell me if this is true or not, but I had a friend that still works at Chevron, and he would say before every single meeting, you would have a safety moment. Did I get that right? Can you just describe that really quickly? Because it just shows—from an outsider's perspective, people may not know the amount of time and attention and care that a Chevron, for example, puts into the importance of safety.

**Ron Kiskis:**

Yeah, yeah. Again, I think a lot of companies now do this. I wish all did, but yeah, we would start every meeting, and have for years, every meeting we would start with what we called a safety moment and somebody would report out something. It didn't need to be something longwinded, it didn't need to be a huge story. It was really meant to be a moment of something, and sometimes it was just simply a reminder of something. It wasn't new information or new data. Maybe somebody had an observation of something that happened today that they saw that still says we've got a ways to go, but it was always just intended before we start into content, and I already used that—before we get into content of the meeting, let's just have a reminder about what we're doing in the context or doing, and we want to be safe and here's just one more reinforcement of that.

**Mike Kearney:**

Right. Well, and you shared something with me before that was fascinating, something that I quite frankly haven't thought about, and it goes along this whole safety issue and the incidents of issues going down, and that is one of the challenges is, as incidents go down, you're going to have a new generation of leaders that come in who have never experienced that plant incident. I'll just keep it at that. And so they could get comfortable that it may not happen on their watch, and so they may not be as rigorous at identifying what those very unlikely but high impact events are. Can you comment on that a bit?

**Ron Kiskis:**

Well, yeah. We did talk about that, and I think if anybody would think for a moment, they would probably agree with this statement, but I'll leave it to you. So the good news is all these incidents have come down tenfold. The bad news is you learn an awful lot when an incident does happen and you incorporate that not only into your own operations but you share that usually quite broadly within the industry. We love to compete with our competitors. I don't want anybody to misinterpret that, but you don't want your competitors to have safety issues either. That's not the competition game here. So you all want to get better in that regard.

So as the number of incidents go down, the number of learning opportunities goes down as well, so I do worry a little bit because the numbers would back it up and, again, I'm a data guy. So with fewer of those, if you're now a young leader, and let's say you've never experienced any of that, it's way too easy if you haven't experienced it to diminish that and way too easy to get into well yes, but that certainly hasn't happened. That happened a long time ago, hasn't happened during our watch, we've mitigated all that, you more or less discount it because you don't have any personal experience with it. That's probably extreme that you would completely discount it, but it's not extreme that that's not your world. It's not the world that you have lived in, so you're not inherently going to have that fear of consequences as much, and you might take a little bit too lightly those things that could happen.

We are all a product, the way that we are wired, of our own experiences or the experiences of others that we believe are credible. So those experiences go down, our learnings go down, our sensitivity goes down, and that is something that worries me as we get better, that sort of the demographics, if you will, of that are working against us.

**Mike Kearney:**

So what guidance would you have for that young leader that may have succeeded you or somebody else that may not have had this great life experience?

**Ron Kiskis:**

Beyond lecturing to them like I fear I just did on that, yeah, I would encourage them, particularly as they're doing these types of risk analysis, to even more broadly include—be very inclusive with others. So just for example, as I was talking about that two-by-two matrix, okay, I can fill that out myself, you could, my successor could, but again, we know what we know. With these incidents going down, I would highly encourage, and I hope it isn't preaching, that before you even pretend that that matrix is filled out, you get the perspectives of an awful lot of people, more people than you probably ever would have in terms of numbers to gather up more of these experiences because there are fewer but there, and really put more weight on different people's experiences that you haven't had.

That, I think, is the only anecdote to do that. That takes more time, more effort, you're dealing with people that probably you wouldn't have before, that maybe you don't necessarily have that connection with, relationship and trust, but you better cast a wider net or, again, you're doing that at your own peril.

**Mike Kearney:**

One of the things I've oftentimes—or at least I provide guidance to my clients—is you don't necessarily just need to look within your organization. Go find those individuals outside of the organization. There's a lot of people that maybe have been retired or on boards or whatever that can provide great input, so go outside the organization. You're shaking your head, so I'm guessing you're agreeing.

**Ron Kiskis:**

Absolutely. Yeah. And that would include regulatory agencies, so yeah, I mean, you could easily think, you know, regulatory agencies are your enemy and they only show up when something bad has happened. That's a very inaccurate and very unfortunate and misguided viewpoint. Regulatory agencies have got a wealth of knowledge, probably more than any one company has. Their goal in life is to help industry reduce—they don't want incidents to happen. They don't want to do an investigation. They don't want to—that's not their goal in life. Their goal in life is much more noble than that, so you can certainly approach the agencies when you're thinking about doing something or whatever. They can be your friend in terms of offering up data, perspectives and whatever. I'm not sure that we tap into that wealth nearly as much as we would, should, or could.

**Mike Kearney:** One of the things I wrote down, just kind of tying a bow on this conversation, or at least this piece, was a quote I think you and I came up with when we were prepping for this, and that was—and I've never thought of this before—but paranoia needs to go up when incidents go down, meaning you should be paranoid. If you have a great track record, that's the time to be paranoid because something could happen.

**Ron Kiskis:** Exactly right. It's like rolling the dice. Sooner or later, something's going to come up that you didn't expect.

**Mike Kearney:** And the reason I like paranoia is it's a very evocative word, and if you're paranoid, you're going to do things that you otherwise wouldn't in the normal course of business.

**Ron Kiskis:** Yeah, paranoid and what's the worst thing that can happen are maybe synonymous. So yeah, paranoia's not necessarily the most flattering thing, but being paranoid like some really bad things could happen is very, very healthy.

**Mike Kearney:** So one of the things we've seen with some leading companies, and I know Chevron did this so I'd love you to touch on this, is just getting ready for that incident or crisis, and you guys took that very seriously based on our conversation, and you would do simulations. Can you share what Chevron did? We've heard different kind of flavors of this, but I'd love to hear kind of what you guys would do on a periodic basis.

**Ron Kiskis:** Yeah, again, what I think we did, frankly, is no different to what was done on a pretty standard basis within the industry, and that was until we get to that aspirational world where there is, in fact, zero incidents, which means there is something that is going to happen, and again, I don't say that because it's inevitable, but until we're zero, something will happen, and when it does, you absolutely want to be well-prepared for it. So we used incident command. A lot of that is very—if you're familiar at all with the military, and I'm not a military guy, it would be very much that approach. So you've absolutely got to have approach, you've got to have a boss in that, you've got to have a structure, you've got to have very clear decision making process in that. It's got to be unequivocal, it's got to be in the moment, it's got to be very purposeful and it has to be very, very decisive. All of those things, incident command, and I could flesh that out more, but you've got to have that in place. You can't just come up with that when you've got an incident.

So we have already predefined, depending on the incident level and what the implications are, that incident command structure, not only the structure, but down to the individual. So if we had this type of thing happen at this location, who would be the incident commander? That is already picked out in advance. There's no picking around like it's you, me...

**Mike Kearney:** Can I ask a—on the incident commander, can anybody do it or do you have to be very selective? Meaning, like, you could have an executive who you'd normally think would be the right person to take the lead, but maybe they don't have the temperament?

**Ron Kiskis:** I mean, in the broadest sense, it could be anybody, and I think probably embedded in that, you wouldn't necessarily follow the organization chart when you did that.

**Mike Kearney:** That's what I'm trying to get at. Is there a certain temperament or skill set that you would put in that incident commander role?

**Ron Kiskis:** Well, there would be, but there would also be somebody that's close enough to it to understand what's going on, and I was an executive and I'll tell you that I didn't understand everything that was going on in my organization, nor could somebody do it. I might have not been the best incident commander, even though I was the commander of that organization on the organization chart. So you have to pick out somebody that's close enough to it.

So for example, if we had a problem in a plant, it would very likely be the plant manager or maybe the operations manager that would be the incident commander because they're close enough to it, they understand all of it. You want somebody that's close enough to it, that understands all of it but still distanced enough from it to where they do see on a daily basis a broad enough picture to where they can manage that incident within a broad context, not just within a one dimension.

So it was a very thoughtful decision, I think to your question, about who that person would be and what the role would be. That person would be trained absolutely to do that, and that probably gets to your skill set and whatever, that hey, in that role, you need to be like this, you need to be behaving like this. You're the commander, but that doesn't mean you do everything. You need to rely on the team. Here's what that looks like. Here's what the team already looks like, predefined, people on the team. So an awful lot of that is done well in advance, and then we regularly drill on that. Those are both what you might call a desktop drill on paper, or an awful lot of them are real drills where we're out in the plant and we simulate as best we can some incident that happened, and we go through the drill as if it was real life. We put on the coveralls, the masks, whatever. At times we call in agencies. They know it's a drill, but they come and the firefighters come and whatever. These are very, very real looking, and oftentimes we inform the community in advance we're going to be doing a drill because it's going to look—you're going to be scared to death that something has happened because they're intended to be that real, and we do that.

And I can assure you that when we do have an incident—so let me use an example that is, you know, sort of Mother Nature. You know, a lot of—in the

US, at least, a lot of operating plants are in the Gulf Coast area. Hurricanes are there, they're going to be inevitable, so like I said, live in a world that's zero risk or—we're going to have hurricanes whether we like it or not, so that isn't the issue. The issue is how do you prepare for those and how do you respond. So we would absolutely use incident command when those happen.

And then when they happen, you know, when all is done and the dust has settled and the water's receded and we get back to business as usual months later, we will do a very, very rigorous deep dive looking at everything that happened from a learning experience, what could we have done better, and we do that every time that there is a real hurricane, and every year for sure we do that, and we've gotten better and better at it, but I can assure you, every time we go through one of those debriefs and learnings, we find things that we could have done better and we incorporate that into the plan, and then the next time we're even better prepared. I am a huge fan of continuous improvement versus trying to get it perfect. I don't even know what perfect looks like, but I certainly now what continuous improvement looks like.

**Mike Kearney:** That was one of the questions I was going to ask is, you know, when you went through these simulations or real life responses, did you find things, and I think one of the things I've heard from you over and over is yes, hell yes we found stuff and we were always figuring out ways that we could do it better.

**Ron Kiskis:** Yep, absolutely. You always do, and you have to be very, very open to those learnings. Fortunately, a lot of times we didn't find huge things, but sometimes it's not the huge things that can really bite you in an incident. It's some smaller things that you didn't necessarily anticipate that can really be a problem.

**Mike Kearney:** Ron, I want you to... we're now moving on from risk to crisis now to, like, some fun stuff. The reflection on your career. No, I'm teasing, but my question is, in all sincerity, this is actually by far and away my favorite part of these conversations, which is you've had a lot of experiences. You've been the president of a very big organization, but you're consulting a lot now with folks outside of Chevron, and I'd love to just ask a few questions that bring to life some of your learnings of your career.

The first one that I have—I wasn't going to go here initially, but I wrote this down as you were talking. If there's somebody that is an up and comer, somebody that is—well, I don't even want to use age because that doesn't necessarily, but there's somebody that has—you know, that's a high potential, what advice would you have for that up and comer? And you can take it wherever you want.

**Ron Kiskis:** So, yeah, that question could go anywhere, so I'll try not to just go anywhere and everywhere. The couple things, the advice I would give if somebody ever asks for my advice...

**Mike Kearney:**

Which we are... we want your advice.

**Ron Kiskis:**

...and wanted to hear it, I guess I'd say two things more important than anything, and that would be to work really hard—and I'm not suggesting that I think people don't work hard. I think people work incredibly hard, maybe even too hard in terms of hours of the day, but absolutely work really hard. And when I say that, it's work really hard in the interest of the company or the firm that you're working in. I mean, absolutely take that to heart.

The other advice that I would give is—and try to find out as best you can, some of it's written down, some of it's less than written down, try to find out the things that are really, really important to that company and that firm. What is the sweet spot? What are the key areas that that company really, really cares about? And if you can, try to get involved in those areas because they're the ones that move the needle. That isn't always possible for everybody in an organization. Everybody can't be working on the number one thing because in a company you've got 10 things or a hundred things you have to do, but if you can get closer to the things that really, really matter, that would be ideal if you can. And certainly you can work really, really hard.

If you put your personal ambition aside, you'll do a whole lot better than if your personal ambition is competing with the things I just said. That's hard to do. A lot of people are ambitious, and there's nothing inherently wrong with ambition, there's nothing inherently wrong with wanting to have a good career and get ahead, but if you ever get that to be job one and not the other things that I mentioned, which is working hard in the company's interest, it's probably going to derail at some point along the way.

And I'd make one other comment about working hard in the company's interest. And we talked about values and beliefs and culture before. You really want to be working in a company, a firm or whatever to where you really do truly align personally with the values, the beliefs, the culture of that company. If you don't, it's going to be a really hard slog. You can't pretend. You can behave in a way as if you do, but in your heart, if you don't, at the end of the day, you're not going to be very successful there. Even if you're a consultant where you're just moving in to do some work or whatever and then moving out, if you can't come to grips with the values, the beliefs, the culture of that company, you're probably not going to be very successful. The flip side, if you can truly align with those, you're probably in the right place.

**Mike Kearney:**

I've often—first of all, amen. I couldn't agree with you more. I've been on some projects that have been just horrific hard projects, right, but when they're with a team that I love or a company that I love, I much would prefer that than for it to be the opposite, great project, bad company to work with, because you could

get through anything if you have a strong values system and if you have a team that you love working with.

**Ron Kiskis:** Yeah, and you can sleep well at night and hold your head high.

**Mike Kearney:** Sleeping well is important. What about—and you may have already answered this, but we talked about kind of an up-and-coming leader, and obviously kids coming out of college are very different today, but is there any advice that you would have for that kid that maybe is 22 years old, is graduating from UC-Berkeley, what is the one piece of advice you'd give to them? And maybe it's everything that you just talked about, so you don't need to embellish if there's nothing else, but anything that you would share—we get a lot of kids listening to this. That's why I want to...

**Ron Kiskis:** Well, I have a couple kids that are Millennials also.

**Mike Kearney:** So reflect on last Saturday's talk.

**Ron Kiskis:** I've been down that pathway before. It wouldn't be wildly different than what I've said before, but you know, relationships are absolutely at the key, so don't ever take relationships for granted. Invest very heavily in relationships inside the firm, outside the firm. It takes time to do that. I can just tell you full stop, and I think I probably already did. I probably didn't appreciate the value of relationships as much early on as I should have or as maybe I thought I was, but they're absolutely invaluable, both within the firm and outside the firm. It takes time to do that, but you really need to do that.

The kids—and I hate to use that word, but I guess I've just used it.

**Mike Kearney:** I did, so it's okay.

**Ron Kiskis:** I worry about—and I do worry, I literally do worry. That is the right word. I do worry about the world of social media and instant connections. I don't think that's bad. I think that's really good, but it's only good if it's an add-onto, not a replacement for human-to-human connection. I actually am more benevolent on that now that \_\_\_\_\_ than a lot of people are. I actually find Millennials network really, really good on a social basis. They get together a lot and they do a lot of that, so I think it is very misguided to suggest because you have your face in your iPhone all the time, that that means de facto you're not connecting on a personal basis. I think that is the wrong interpretation. I think people are, but there's a huge but in that.

You still only have 24 hours of the day, so every hour you have invested in a text or an email is an hour you could have had a personal connection. You can't have a personal connection with everybody. You have to rely in this day and age on those things, so it's at least questioning yourself all the time, and I guess I think to answer your question, am I getting the right balance or am I defaulting to

something that's too easy? Is it easier to send Mike a text? Yeah, absolutely. I'm not sure where he is. I'll just send him a text.

Or is it easier to pick up the phone? I know in your emails, you've always got at the end, if it's urgent, human connection is better. Please call me or something to that—I don't see that too much, but I know it's sincere and I know if I really do need to reach you, I'm going to pick up the phone for sure and do that. That's the part I think I'm missing. It's really just more challenging ourselves, you know, should I be making the connection, and if I do, I just guarantee it's going to be more fruitful for both of us than just, you know, a back and forth with text messaging.

**Mike Kearney:**

I'm glad somebody actually read my signature, so that makes me feel good. The one thing that just keeps coming back in my mind is, irrespective of how you create the relationships, and obviously the mode of the way people are engaging is different, but it's authentic relationships, and I get the sense sometimes people think, oh, I've got to create relationships so that I can elevate my role or move my career in a certain direction, and what I've found is the more sincere you are about those relationships, like, it actually extends maybe beyond business. Who would have thought, you know, and give maybe more than you expect, that those are the best relationships. You're nodding again, so I'm guessing you're \_\_\_\_\_ so that's good.

**Ron Kiskis:**

I'm nodding again. I think that's not new news, and I'll use the example, yeah, I had a party this weekend and I invited 1,000 of my closest best friends, and everybody laughs at that because you can't have 1,000. You couldn't then and you can't now. Now, can you have 1,000 friends or acquaintances? Absolutely and, again, I would applaud that, but you know, relationships are not everybody you know and all your LinkedIn network. It's the people that you want to invest in and that you want them to invest in you, and I won't put a number on that. It's probably more than two or three, but it's not 1,000 on that. But again, you have to be the judge of that.

Where do you want to invest your time in those relationships, and investing your time really means—and I wish I understood it a lot earlier on than what I do now—it means if I'm investing in the relationship, I'm actually investing more in you than I'm expecting you to invest in me because I want to do that. At the end of that, if you really see that and sense that, you're going to invest a heck of a lot more in me. So again, that's preaching to the choir. We probably all would have known that, but did we all action that? Probably not.

**Mike Kearney:**

It's doing it. It's like cognitively knowing it and doing it sometimes are two different things.

**Ron Kiskis:**

See, you used the word genuine. That is genuine. If I'm building a relationship with you and my goal is to help you and understand you and help make your life

better and assist you in any way I can, that's very genuine. And again, I sleep well at night because I know that's my intentions. If I do that well, you can absolutely see that and sense that, and you want to more than return that. It's got to be genuine. If not, then it's just checking the box, and why do it?

**Mike Kearney:**

So this is—I'm going to chalk this next question up to the most unfair question, but I have to ask it. So what's the one question that you've never been asked that you would love to be asked and provide an answer to? And I say it's unfair because it's oftentimes really difficult to answer, but I always love coming back to that, and I'm going to maybe just talk a little more so you can think about it, but I love to try to get in people's mind like, you know, if only Mike asked me this, or if only my son asked me this or whatever.

**Ron Kiskis:**

That is really a hard one because I have been asked a lot of questions, as any executive has, about what would you have done different, whatever. I don't really know the question that—and, I mean, I put my ego aside when I say I really don't know the question that somebody could ask...

**Mike Kearney:**

Or what's one of your favorite questions people do ask you?

**Ron Kiskis:**

I'll tell you a question. I was actually going to go there, so somebody actually did ask this, and it really surprised me because it was so far—it was so much not me and it was so unexpected. I was close to retirement, when I retired from Chevron. I would like to pretend that I was a nonegotistical guy, nonarrogant, and I was all in about the organization. At least I would like to pretend that. That's where my...

**Mike Kearney:**

The fact that you're saying that, you probably were.

**Ron Kiskis:**

I tried really hard, and it was in one of the town halls I did, actually. Went around the world because this is a global company and did town halls, basically introduced my successor and do farewells, and I got a question someplace, and the question was very polite and very well-intended. Mr. Kiskis, so what legacy would you like to leave behind in Chevron Oronite?

**Mike Kearney:**

Why was that surprising? That seems like a question...

**Ron Kiskis:**

It seems like a very fair question on the surface, and I'll just tell you my reaction to that, in all honesty, I didn't say this, and I hope my body language didn't divulge this, I was actually offended by the question.

**Mike Kearney:**

Why? I'm glad I didn't ask you that question.

**Ron Kiskis:**

Yeah, I'm glad you didn't either. I was actually offended by the question, and the reason I was offended is because that I never thought once about my legacy. There was never anything that I was doing that was about my legacy or leaving a legacy or whatever I do, gosh, I hope somebody remembers Ron did this, because all of those things are serving one and only one purpose, and that's puffing up my ego. My ego is well served on many—I get a lot of praise and a lot

of commendations and a lot of—my ego is very, very well-served. I don't need to have my ego served by having a legacy. I really don't. So therefore, just the fact that somebody asked that suggested to them that they didn't intend...

**Mike Kearney:** That they thought that that was your persona.

**Ron Kiskis:** ...that they thought that somehow I must need that because that's a very natural thing. So basically the answer I gave was, actually I've never had that question before. Because I hadn't. I had actually given it any thought, but I'll just tell you my brain doesn't work that way. So I don't have an answer to that. I'm not going to give you an answer to that, and I'm actually not even going to think about that.

**Mike Kearney:** I didn't ask the question. I asked a different question, so you don't need to. I think the irony is you've already answered it.

**Ron Kiskis:** I think I've already answered it. I can tell you one thing that completely isn't your question, but I'll tell you one thing that I love. I love this. I love when somebody asks me a question. That one I didn't particularly like, but I love when somebody asks me a question that I absolutely didn't anticipate. I absolutely love that. And why do I love that? That's just my nature, but why do I love that? Because by definition, that's going to take me and us to a place that I haven't been before. I don't know if it's a good place or a bad place or useful or not useful, but it has the chance of continuous improvement, taking the risk out of something, helping forming a plan, all the things I've talked about, you bring and go, gosh, I've never thought about that, and now you've given me a gift. Now we can think about something that I hadn't thought about before, and that doesn't suggest for a moment that I think I've thought about everything. I know I haven't, but when you bring up something that I haven't \_\_\_\_\_ about my business that I've thought a lot about and I go, wow, I never thought about...

**Mike Kearney:** Did I get any of those in this conversation?

**Ron Kiskis:** That's a gift.

**Mike Kearney:** Did I ask any questions you didn't think of? No, I'm teasing.

**Ron Kiskis:** Those are wonderful, and I think for a lot of executives, that really is wonderful because you're giving that person a gift. I think too many times, and I won't accuse Deloitte of this or not, but I think too many times, consultants, professional services firms that come in are hesitant to ask those kind of questions. I don't really know why, but I get the sense that you're hesitant because maybe you don't have the relationship with that person. Maybe that person will be offended because you asked that because they don't know the answer. It's inherently risky to ask an unexpected question because by definition, as soon as you've done that, you've lost control. You have no idea what the answer's going to be, if there is even an answer. So I think we're all

tempted to not do that, but I can just tell you from a personal standpoint, I love it.

**Mike Kearney:** So the one thing I was going to say on questions, I don't know where I read this, but they said – I forget because I wish I could cite the article, but they say, like, the new intelligence isn't the information you get; it's the questions you ask. And I love that. And that actually has made me start to think about what—not necessarily what more intelligent questions, but what questions do I really care about. Because if I really care about them and I show a certain level of genuineness, that means they're probably decent questions.

**Ron Kiskis:** I agree with that. One of my other favorite quotes is questions, good questions obviously, really breathe life into a conversation. I really believe that, and so particularly if it's an unexpected question, then by definition, we're going to have a conversation that we didn't expect to have. It exposes both of us. So if neither one of us can deal with being exposed or vulnerable or not in control, that's probably not a good scenario, but that's not the scenario I'm living in. I'm living in a scenario to where that is good. We can find out something we didn't find out before, and it's fun, it's entertaining, and so by definition—so if you ask a question and I give an answer or I ask a question back and you don't know, is that the end of your world, particularly if you're a professional services provider where a lot of times we hire you because you do have the—is that the end of the world to say, you know, in all honesty, I actually don't know the answer to that. And I go, well, thanks a lot for your time, Mike. You're out of here, you know, I expect you to have the answer. Nobody's going to say that.

**Mike Kearney:** Nobody has the answer to everything.

**Ron Kiskis:** Nobody has the answer to everything. Why am I going to expect you to have the answer to everything, particularly if it's something we had no idea that was even going to come up?

**Mike Kearney:** Final question. The podcast is called Resilient. Tell me what you think the attributes of a resilient leader are.

**Ron Kiskis:** The attributes of a resilient leader...

**Mike Kearney:** Like, when you think of somebody that is just resilient, and it doesn't even need to be leaders. Shoot, we've actually had people that I think actually define—, we had a Paralympic swimmer, I actually just talked to her today, on a couple months ago, and if there's one person that is the most resilient person I think I've ever met, it's her, so it doesn't even need to be a business leader, but a resilient person.

**Ron Kiskis:** I guess I would use some of the things we talked about to answer that. Ego is a wonderful thing. We all have to have an ego. If you don't have an ego, this world is going to chew you up and spit you out, so I'd be the last person to suggest you don't need an ego. It's how much ego you have and what your goal

in life is. If your goal in life is to protect your ego 24-7, that's what you're going to do. So getting to the word resilient, I find people that are resilient, they have a very low ego. That isn't self-esteem. They probably have a very high self-esteem, but they have a very low ego. Their ego is not invested at all in something, so the world goes wrong, they made a decision that didn't pan out, something happens, they could have anticipated not, the definition in my world of resilience is something's happened and I can recover, I'll say, beautifully. Beautifully may not be perfect, but that's happened, here's where we are, and here's where we're going. My ego isn't in play here. You can criticize me all you want. Have a field day. When you're all done with that, we're still going to make this better, and here's how we're going to go forward. So I find ego is sort of the antithesis of resilience.

**Mike Kearney:** I love that. And you know what? These podcasts actually happen in the real world and, Ron, you've got to get to your flight, so I'm going to let you go. I appreciate you spending all this time with us. This was fantastic.

**Ron Kiskis:** Yeah, Mike, it's been my pleasure. Thanks for all that. I really enjoyed it, so good luck. And these podcasts are great. I really like them.

**Mike Kearney:** I appreciate that.

**Ron Kiskis:** Take care, buddy.

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**Mike Kearney:** What an incredible conversation! I really want to thank Ron Kiskis for spending, you know, the better part of an hour and a half just sitting down with me. I loved everything that he shared. So, Ron, thank you very much.

And thank you to everybody that is listening to [Resilient](#), a Deloitte podcast, produced by our friends at Rivet Radio – and when I say our friends at Rivet Radio, I could not do this without them. They're unbelievable at just helping record the podcast and putting it together on the backend. So, thank you, Jeanine, and all of my friends out at Rivet Radio.

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We are now in our second year – I cannot believe the fact that we are now in our second year of recording *Resilient* and now we are in the 20s! I can't believe how many guests I've had on! And you know what, this podcast is not about me; it never has been, it's about the guests. So, if you have somebody that you think should be on *Resilient*, let me know! Hit me up on LinkedIn or Twitter. Or maybe you're listening and you've got a story about crisis, risk, and disruption that you want to share. If you do, reach out to me.

And I'd ask you, if you like these conversations, I would be most appreciative if you would share them with your friends, or any of your colleges at work, or with anybody that you think would get some value out of this. And then one request that I would have is if you could spend just one minute sharing your thoughts on the quality of this podcast – just go onto anyone one of those podcatchers and provide a rating. Ratings play such a large role in getting the word out on this podcast. And finally, if you have any comments or questions, hit me up on LinkedIn or Twitter. On Twitter, I'm @mkearney33. On LinkedIn, I'm just Michael Kearney, spelled K-E-A-R-N-E-Y. And just provide any feedback that you have. It's a gift; I'll tell you. Feedback on questions that we should be asking in the future; as I indicated, people that we should be bringing on. Or just any recommendations that you have whatsoever. Or anything that stood out, anything that you really liked. Just hit me up. It's just a gift.

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