



## MAXIMIZE BUSINESS VALUE PODCAST - EPISODE 34 Transcript

Announcer (5s):

Welcome to the maximize business value podcast. This podcast is brought to you by mastery partners, where our mission is to equip business owners, to maximize business value so they can transition their business on their terms. Our mission was born from the lessons we've learned from over 100 business transactions, which fuels our desire to share our experiences and wisdom. So you can succeed. Now, here's your host CEO of mastery partners, Tom Bronson.

Tom Bronson (36s):

Hi, this is Tom Bronson and welcome to maximize business value. A podcast for business owners who are passionate about building long-term sustainable value in their businesses. I'm so excited. This episode I'd like to welcome. Our guest is Steve Meek. He's principal at the fulcrum group and outsourced it services firm here in North Texas. I was recently introduced to Steve by his business partner, David Johnson, who is a member of my Vistage peer group. Today. We're going to talk about information technology or it and protecting your it assets, a very important part of building and maintaining a maximum value in your business.

Tom Bronson (1m 19s):

So welcome to maximize business value. Steve, how are you today?

Steve Meek (1m 24s):

I'm fantastic. Thanks for having me here today, Tom. I appreciate it.

Tom Bronson (1m 27s):

So thrilled to have you on tell us a little bit about the fulcrum group.

Steve Meek (1m 32s):

Oh, the, the fulcrum group we provide outsourced it services, you know, back since 2002. So, and have been doing this, doing this quite a while. And you know, we've got a little over 20 people and we've got clients all throughout North Texas and, you know, cover, you know, as distinct as healthcare to local government, to, you know, all kinds of organizations, you know, as

things have evolved, you know, technology keeps getting more and more important for organizations.

Tom Bronson (2m 4s):

I, I was reading on your website this morning about the name, the fulcrum group, and I, and I love that. Do you mind kind of sharing the story of how you guys came up with the fulcrum group?

Steve Meek (2m 14s):

Sure. So, you know, I'm, I'm a nerd, so I read a lot and I happened to be reading this article. I think it was fortune magazine and it was talking about the six simple machines and you know, how there's not really any new innovation, new applications of, of things. So it just started me thinking that, you know, what we do in technology or what we should be doing in technology. It's less about what's the actual tool and more about how you apply that tool and, and likewise businesses that becomes accessible. I think the article was originally around the iPod and about how the MP3 had been out for years, but it took Apple to come up with their spin, making it easy to use and, and, and, you know, the form and function and all those kinds of things to make it apply.

Steve Meek (3m 4s):

And I just thought that that was a, that was a great story for businesses in general, that, you know, don't just be another one of the herd, but think about how you can make yourself a little bit different to appeal to those people who have the greatest need for your services.

Tom Bronson (3m 19s):

I love that. So simple tools, and it's just the application of those tools. I like it. So what is your background and why did you and David start the fall?

Steve Meek (3m 30s):

Well, my background, actually, I went to college. I started off as a journalist, oddly enough. And at some point decided to, to go the business route. So my degree is actually in business, but Dave and I were actually partners in another consulting firm. So before we joined together, we were in a consulting firm for five years and all Novell based organization, if anyone remembers that anymore. But I think the big difference is that the firm that, that we were in was by and far a, I guess what I'd consider a product based shop. They were very hardware oriented, very, you know, Hey, if it doesn't help us sell some new physical piece of product, then it's not good for the business.

Steve Meek (4m 13s):

And, you know, my, my desire, my approach was to be more services driven. And so a lot more of what we do is focused around services. So I started the fulcrum group in 2002, and David eventually left that same company as well. And so he and I started hanging out together and partnering on some stuff and we decided to get a trade show booth and you know, I'm on the

left side of the trade show booth, and David's on the right on the trade show booth. We bumped and it's only happened though, the two of us and the guy's just like, I don't get it. And we're like, well, what do you mean? He's like, I don't get it. You've got your own card. You've got your own card. Why don't you guys just one company? And so it took someone just, you know, calling us out and saying, Hey, this doesn't make sense if you guys are working together anyways, why don't you join together?

Steve Meek (4m 57s):

So we joined back together and I've been going strong ever since

Tom Bronson (5m 3s):

Stories of businesses that get started that way. It's just the simple person who asked the question. Right.

Steve Meek (5m 8s):

It teaches you the power of the question.

Tom Bronson (5m 12s):

Yes, yes it does. Yes, it does. Well, let's, let's see, let's jump into it just to get off on the right foot. Let's talk a little bit about the definition of it, information technology. So how is it that you define it and has the definition kind of evolved over the years?

Steve Meek (5m 30s):

I wouldn't say absolutely. You know, I think that, you know, I think just the consumerization of technology that, you know, people are much closer to technology than, than we've ever been. You know, in the early days when I first got into it, you know, technology was that room that nobody went into except for a couple of people because the computer took up the whole room and, you know, that's, that's what it was. And I think even if you think back then, you know, people like us, people of that generation were scared to go into that room because you weren't sure what you were going to do and what was going to happen. But with the modern day, it's just so incredible. You know, people grow up with computers, you know, you know, you've see babies on tablets and all kinds of things.

Steve Meek (6m 12s):

And so, you know, the, the typical user, it's not even the millennials anymore that the gen Z or whatever you want to call them, they're raised on computers. They know more about some of the technology than we do. So, you know, I think as a business owner, the challenges, you know, if you're hiring a new generation, if you're trying to keep up with things that don't think about technology as just the computer or the PC or any of those kinds of things anymore, it's your data and your applications. It's all of those things that, that go into how your business operates. And, you know, one of my, one of my clients, you know, they have their own it manager. And so we consult on big projects for them. And when I asked them, what, what do you guys support?

Steve Meek (6m 53s):

And he said, well, if it plugs into power, we support it. I just thought that was a, that was a great thing that, Hey, you know, it's not, not just limiting yourself to what's a computer, but you know, the AAV and all the other stuff that go into the network that they do, it just, you know, I think it helps you understand how pervasive technology is. And in some cases we don't even think about it as being a technology anymore. Now I'm not saying we support microwaves or anything that, that plugs in like that, but, you know, for our clients and that they might have a copier or some other thing that may or may not have been provided for us by us, but by nature of our relationship, we know how to integrate that internet into the network, how to help them troubleshoot issues, how to work with their vendor to resolve things.

Steve Meek (7m 37s):

So, so we kind of have that kind of an approach to things that, you know, anything that's on the network that touches your data or applications. It's typically something that we would get involved with.

Tom Bronson (7m 47s):

It's so many times these days, anything that does plug into a wall is somehow connected to the internet, right? So

Steve Meek (7m 57s):

It is, it's actually a big, you know, one of my certifications is around security and that's one of the biggest concerns these days is, you know, the, so many things are connected to your network that you don't even realize that could potentially be threats. You know, there was a casino a couple of years ago that they got breached by a, a network attached thermometer in a fish tank. And you just wouldn't think that, you know, that that would give you the foothold into the environment, but that's typically what happens is that all it takes is a foothold in, and then to pivot into, you know, other systems,

Tom Bronson (8m 34s):

Holy cow, that is crazy. Yeah. I've heard of all kinds of things. My wife and I always joke about the fact that we may be sitting out there. We do have one of those voice units and Alexa sitting out in the, in the family room and we'll talk about something. And next thing, you know, I'm browsing my website and I'm getting ads for whatever it was. So I think she's always listening. So you would probably tell me, I need to turn that off sometimes. So I have other friends that it's an abyss.

Steve Meek (9m 5s):

Well, you know, I'm, I'm all about usability. So I would, I would say, decide where you want to put that and know that everything's being recorded. Everything you say is being saved up to the cloud. You know, all that information can be used, not necessarily against you, but to sell to you. And I think that's the, that's the challenge that, you know, the huge pervasiveness of technology

is that every time your smartphone is on and knows where you're at, what you're doing, you know, a lot of bits of information about you that can be mined and, and use to sell to you.

Tom Bronson (9m 38s):

Wow. Wow. All right. So let's get back to business. What should business owners know about their it or their technology?

Steve Meek (9m 49s):

Well, you know, I think that, you know, every business owner, you know, I think the things that I said before, just your applications and data, you know, those are the most important parts of your business. You know, I think that, you know, every time that there's a, every time you read the paper, there's somebody, some breach and other kinds of thing. And I think we get desensitized to it, or we get overwhelmed by it, but I think it should be a very sensitive thing of every time there's an attack like that, that, you know, the business owner, you don't have to know anything, but you can take that article and go to your, it guy, your IP provider or whatever, and just go, Hey, would we have been protected against us?

Steve Meek (10m 29s):

And so, you know, I think what I said before about just knowing the power of a question, being able to go back and not feeling like you have to know all the answers or have to be an expert technology to be, to help shape where your technology is going and what it's doing for your organization and your team, you know, use that power of the question to find the right person, to ask the right question then, and get the insight that you need. And, you know, from there you decide, do I need to go left or do I need to go, right? And that's, that's all we're looking for as business owners is I just need just enough information to be able to make an informed decision. Right.

Tom Bronson (11m 4s):

Right. So, you know, to me, you mentioned about breaches and whatnot. And of course the thing that hits the, the local news media are when, when target gets breached or when home Depot gets breached. And, and I've heard many, many times from small business owners, Oh, they're not worried about me. You know, the hackers, aren't worried about me, they're going after these big targets. And I personally think that that is the wrong approach. I love what your approach is, is when you read about that to go and ask your it people, am I protected against this in case this happens to me. I mean, would you agree that that every business owner should be worried about the, their security?

Steve Meek (11m 45s):

Absolutely. You know, there's, you know, the, the, the situations that I've been involved in where there have been attacks or breaches, or someone came to us for help at the last minute, you know, in a lot of cases, that owner was like, well, I didn't realize it would impact me like this, or I didn't realize this was the danger. I didn't quite understand. And, and I think that's, that's the key there is to, to understand that, you know, there may not an attacker may not be specifically after

you, you know, in the case of target, you know, that's a great example because they may not have been targeting target, but they were targeting an HPAC contractor who happened to work for target. And so they got into this small company that got them into this big company.

Steve Meek (12m 29s):

And I think that that's a, you know, that to me, that's the lesson. There is, you know, just be aware of not just you, but who your clients are. One of the major, one of the major organizations that helps us, right. A lot of the security thinking and logic, the national Institute of standards and technologies that the government agencies, but one of the things that nest did to recently update their content is they went back and they wrote in a whole section for third party risk, you know, who are the people in my supply chain that could impact me. And so in a lot of cases, if, if I were securing, for example, the fulcrum group, I wouldn't just look at me and what was going on in our network.

Steve Meek (13m 12s):

But I would look at all my major supplier who are my main vendors, what do they do for me? Who are the people who do support on my network? What are their policies and procedures? You know, what are the tools and technologies that are used? What are the, what are the securities and vulnerabilities available in those? But because there is an interconnectedness of things that, you know, we're always on at high speed, you know, now more than ever, it's important to not just look at yourself and not, not just see yourself as an individual or your firm is kind of a, an Island unto itself, but all of us are connected in these different ways that may not be readily apparent unless you're in technology in your organization. There's so many connections that, that we don't know and, and don't understand.

Steve Meek (13m 56s):

And I think healthcare is one of those classic cases of, of where there's a lot of, there's a lot of interconnectedness between applications and vendors that talk to each other. And you know, now more than ever, you know, they're, they're having to go through an exercise a lot more diligence just to make sure that they're they're protected and likewise, their patients are protected. Are there other vendors or, you know, business associates covered entities, whatever, all of those, everybody that's part of that web or connected, protected as well.

Tom Bronson (14m 27s):

So when we, when we talk about kind of the risks around technology, you know, every business owner should do things to reduce their risk. What are the things that you recommend a business owner do to protect their servers and their network and that kind of thing?

Steve Meek (14m 45s):

Well, you know, I think that, I think that being an entrepreneur, being a business owner, you know, it takes a special kind of person. You know, I think you have to be naturally curious and be able to use the power of the question, whatever business you're in. You know, we joke in, in, in our business that we're in a slightly different business, every two to three years. And I'd

venture to say that every business owner out there at some point slightly evolves their business or makes a change based on some sort of questions that they're asking. And, and I think, you know what I said before about the power of the question, the question is a powerful thing. If you're an owner and you're talking to your IT guy, you don't have to know the answer, but you can ask real open-ended questions and get some real insight into what's going on in your network.

Steve Meek (15m 29s):

And in some ways the exact same way you manage your business through KPIs, through, you know, metrics and those kinds of things. You can go to your IT guy and ask him, Hey, you know, I saw this issue out there. Is there a way to measure that as a business owner, you don't have to be the expert and know the answer to that. But by asking that question, you challenge that person to really think about, you know, what's the best way to do that. And, you know, if you're, if you're managing your sales team, you're counting, you know, you've got your, your numbers that you're following, you know, from the, from a security point of view, you can ask, Hey, is there a way we can track how many patches we have, or need and track patching percent, or how many incidents occur in our network?

Steve Meek (16m 10s):

And, you know, you can just measure number of incidents or what's your uptime is what your success of your backups are. You know, there's a lot of different things, a lot of different numbers out there. And some of it will depend on who you're, who provide your IT and, and you know, how they attract things, what tools they have, but getting some insight into those things, being able to consistently execute that, you know, that's not just good business or not just good technology, that's good business. And, you know, I think that having, having a sense of what those metrics are, you know, it doesn't matter what it's going to be from year to year, but knowing having a number, being able to measure against that number as an owner, then you can get a sense of, are we doing better?

Steve Meek (16m 50s):

Are we doing worse?

Tom Bronson (16m 53s):

Good questions. I like that. Are there some things that you wish more business owners understood about their technology? Yeah.

Steve Meek (17m 4s):

You know, honestly for me, I think it's just that people felt more comfortable with their technology. I know for all the challenges with COVID and you know, what the pandemic has brought to us, the thing that I absolutely love about the mentality is it's forced every owner to accept the impact of technology on their business and realize that by their understanding, it there's a lot more, they can get out of it by their understanding it. They can see new possibilities. And, you know, the thing that I wish owners knew was, you know, understand more

about the value of centralization. When you've got centralized technology, it gives you power to control everything, you know, from security to usability, manageability, whatever.

Steve Meek (17m 52s):

You know, I think that more, I wish more owners understood the value of standardization that when you standardize across your user base or across your technology, you lower your cost of your technology costs. So if you know that all of your, of your 50 employees, that 10 fit into this group, 10 fit into this group and 30 fit into this group, then you can make some adjustments based on let's standardize the application. Every machine has less standardized the hardware. These guys need less. These guys need more. And I think a lot of times, you know, there's so many, there's so many technology challenges for our business. It just seems like it, it steals all of your budget, but that's because we're not putting, applying granularity to it.

Steve Meek (18m 34s):

We don't know the standards. So we treat everything the same way. And it's, if every, if every little issue is a trip to the emergency room, it gets real expensive quick. And so I think the lesson is to understand how to get that granularity through establishing those standards. And then you can put a bandaid where it's deserved to go to the hospital horse deserved and go to the emergency room horse deserved because each of those has a higher, different, you know, cost, value, return, you know, whatever it happens to be. So, so for the owner, I think it's just taking a step back and, and not being afraid of the technology. It's there to help you. It's just a tool, you know, take advantage of the tool by understanding how to use it and when to use it.

Tom Bronson (19m 15s):

Awesome. Awesome, great, great stuff. We're talking with Steve Meek, we will take a quick break. And back in 30 seconds,

Announcer (19m 22s):

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Announcer (20m 3s):

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Tom Bronson (20m 16s):



We're back with Steve Meek principal at the fulcrum group an outsourced it services firm here in North Texas. So for our listeners, this episode is being recorded during mid November, 2020. We know that that it has a, an unlimited it's an evergreen shelf life. So I wanted to give sort of some context for time when this is recording it's during of course the COVID pandemic, many businesses have sent their workers home to work. How does working from home change things in regards to it and or does it make any difference at all?

Tom Bronson (20m 54s):  
Steve?

Steve Meek (20m 57s):

Absolutely. You know, I think, you know, with, you know, with COVID there's, I guess a lot of different things that, that, that happened, but, you know, some were operational, some were structural, you know, when I think of the, when I think of the operational changes, you know, one of the, one of the, the, the hallmarks of a good technical design is plan the work, work, the plan, you know, come up with a design, make sure that it fits right. And then, you know, put everyone into the right spot as close to the data as possible. But what you had with COVID was you had a rapid change operationally of everybody of, Hey, go do this, we're putting in this tool or we're asking them to do this.

Steve Meek (21m 38s):

So you're missing out on training. You're missing out on, you know, a lot of the operational aspects of, you know, setting up a good design, a good plan for your technology, and then having everyone follow it. And then structurally, I think that, you know, the, the challenges, you know, when you work at home, you're subject to whatever the home environment is, is like, and, you know, on the network or at your business at an office, everything is behind a firewall. It's got following certain policies, you verified what's on the network, or, you know, what software is in use, but, you know, and at the home, none of that's true for the most part, I would suspect, you know, you've got, you've got PS4 is you've got Alexa, you've got, you know, home doorbells.

Steve Meek (22m 26s):

You've got all these devices that are on the network that are under secured or protected, like business class commercial devices are that could open you up to compromise. And every home office that people work from is a way to get into the network. There's a saying in security that, that you're only secure as your least secure connection. So any home user can get an infection on their machine, come back to the office, their laptops behind the firewall. And in fact, they entire network. And I think that a lot of people don't realize of how, how little control you have, because, you know, you've got unknown devices, unknown locations with no physical controls, you know, suspect, user suspect, patching, you know, all of those kinds of things.

Steve Meek (23m 12s):

It's, it's a security, you know, as a security certified practitioner that just scares the crud out of me because everything we fought for years so hard to all these protections we put in place, it

bypasses a lot of them. That being said, you know, a lot of those get bypassed. Anyway, it's just the nature of, you know, cloud and office three 65, you know, a lot of the office, three 65 things, or, you know, by being on in the cloud readily available could potentially punch holes and, you know, a lot of the security setups for your environment. Yeah. I think that COVID forces you to take a step back and reevaluate all those security things, you know, the first part of the year.

Steve Meek (23m 53s):

Absolutely. We got to get operational. If I can't take care of clients, I can't operate. But hopefully in Q3, Q4, you've been able to invest the time into going back and having your security person or security people look back through your security and say, Hey, you know, let's plug all the holes that the new holes that we created in getting, getting operational and being able to take care of clients, because there's a guarantee, there's a lot of holes that are there that you're not even aware of and not even thinking about because you've been going so fast.

Tom Bronson (24m 25s):

Well, and that's it. I think that is a solid piece of advice, you know, back in March, April timeframe, when it was, you know, we're being ordered everybody home and, and we were instead of ready aim fire. I mean, it was, it was ready, fire, fire, fire, fire, fire. And it's a great piece of advice for business owners to step back now and evaluate, okay, where are all the touch points and have your, your IT team, whether it's in-house or outsource to go out and make an evaluation of where the holes are, because that it sort of does exponentially increase the number of, of opportunities.

Tom Bronson (25m 9s):

I guess there are to have phones in your, in your network. That's that is great stuff. So, so where, before we wrap up today, what else do you see in the future of technology, Steve?

Steve Meek (25m 27s):

Well, I think a lot of the innovation, you know, I harp on applications a lot, but you know, our applications, that data, you know, in the, in the old days, I used to see things in the vein of, it's gotta be a server it's going to be located here, blah, blah, blah. But I think there's just kind of a, I think it was the, the, the book upstream, you know, talk a lot about how, you know, everything's moving upstream and you know, that, you know, so many times we react to problems after they're occur, as opposed to prevent the problems before they're occurring. And you know what I'm saying, there's just a lot of efforts towards integrating apps.

Steve Meek (26m 8s):

And, you know, either through, you know, API APIs or just using more services instead of actually having a server, you know, I think office three 65 is a great example of that, you know, application programming, interfaces, API APIs, that's, that's how healthcare has their applications talk to each other and share data back and forth. But, you know, even databases, you know, in a lot of organizations that you're able to connect two applications together or share data to get more input or, or even use a technology called business intelligence to extract more

detailed out of, out of your data. You know, I think that, you know, the past, you had mentioned me about your use of Alexa.

Steve Meek (26m 51s):

And I think that's an a, that's a perfect example of how using data business intelligence, you're able to mine data use the, use the GPS on somebodies phone to see they're in a particular area, look up a search on, you know, cross-reference that with a search they just did in Google. And you can guess that somebody is at best by looking at a particular device. And Hey, I want to court that person to try and sell them my device, which is complimentary, but just the amazing power of technology and how it's able to mine data, you know, for, for a business owner, that's a large scale thing involving Google technology. But I think for the small business owner know, there's a lot of tools now that you can reference to either get your, connects your applications, to connect to each other, to mind that data, to understand where your businesses or other kinds of things, but, you know, just the, the intelligence that's out there that, you know, you don't always have to go back and look at your P and L and, you know, try and figure out what your gross profit is, or, you know, what your net profit is, or, you know, any of those things like, like it used to, because of some of the, instead of looking at that reactive data, you're able to get some more frontline upstream data that helps you understand the leading indicators of what I should be doing and where I should be going.

Tom Bronson (28m 7s):

Well, that is a great example of putting technology to use. I love the fulcrum group. Tell us what sets the fulcrum group apart from other outsourced it businesses.

Steve Meek (28m 23s):

Yeah. I think that, you know, that perspective, you know, I think that we see what we do as more of a process than a technical scale. So, you know, part of our, part of our reason that, you know, the, the way that we do things, we call it our star power. You know, how we take a step back, look at all the technology, try and get alignment. You know, we, we actually have this huge checklist that for our clients, every three months, we take our huge checklist and go out to all of our, all of our clients and kind of compare where they are relative to that checklist and arm them with the information of, Hey, here's where you are. But here's some things that other organizations are doing to improve their business or organizations in similar situations or adding competitive advantage, or are moving faster or adding mobility or whatever it happens to do.

Steve Meek (29m 14s):

But just taking that process, that checklist of all these great ideas, we're continually updating it, but we're going out to all of our clients just to remind them of, Hey, you know, it's been three months or so we've talked, but know there still isn't something you're taking advantage of, or, or this is a configuration we could modify or something that we could change. But, you know, just having a process based approach to technology, as opposed to, you know, I don't know all the organizations that are out, but I know that some organizations, C tech outsource technical support as just that just technical support. If there's a problem, I'll show up. If there's a problem,

I'll answer the phone probably possibly, but you know, within, within technology there, you know, there there's four different types of work, you know, it's more than just an unplanned work.

Steve Meek (30m 2s):

There's a, there's a business driven projects, there's change management and then the technical projects. And so between those four different types of work, we're trying to spend more of your budget in the business driven projects. Hey, it's great that we update your servers. It's great that we patch. It's great that we respond to issues and that we update things, but, you know, we want to help you identify those business related projects that are going to be value add as opposed to just taking up the cost. And I think that's, that's where organizations struggle with it support or outsourced it is they spend all their time into that low value quadrant of just responding to issues when they come up and don't invest enough time or thinking or thought or effort into, Hey, what's going to add value to our business.

Steve Meek (30m 52s):

What's going to make it easier for clients to do business with us. What's going to make us able to respond quicker, understand, you know, where the client's at, be more aligned with our client, whatever it happens to be, but, you know, just investing in the wrong of the four different types of it.

Tom Bronson (31m 8s):

Yeah. So many businesses business owners that I talked to are very reactive when it comes to their, their, it, they don't have those proactive conversations. I love that about the focus group. You could take a much more proactive approach, sort of like a quarterly business review. And one thing I do know, since our listeners know that I've, I've owned a hundred businesses in my career, that someone needs to hold the CEO accountable to, and I'll know about a risk and learn about a risk, but don't take action on it and I need to be reminded of it. Right? So, so holding the, the leadership accountable for making sure that they are dealing with some of those risk areas and being more proactive, I just love the way you guys operate.

Tom Bronson (31m 52s):

So one last business question here, of course, this podcast is all about maximizing business value. Steve, if there was one thing that you could say is the most important thing that you would recommend any business owner do to build value in their business, what would that be?

Steve Meek (32m 11s):

Wow. I think it really goes back to, you know, taking control of their data. You know, the, the, of all the technology that you have in your business, you know, the only thing that's really going to separate you is that data, you know, if you're, if you're looking for, you know, merger acquisition or, or something of longer-term value, a lot of your corporate value is up. And, you know, what's near data, you know, either they're, they're buying your list of customers, they're buying your, your technical knowledge. They're buying your into all the intellectual property, your specialty designs, whatever it is, but realize if that's all your value, you've got to protect it.

Steve Meek (32m 56s):

You've got to mind that you've got to understand it. You've got to be able to control it. You gotta be able to protect it. You know, all of those kinds of things, you know, it all hinges around your data. But you know, a lot of times when I talk to owners, they, they just don't know where the data is and now I've got servers, but I don't know where my data is at, or I think I've got servers, but, you know, your data could actually be stored in the cloud, you know, on one drive or some other shared application. You know, when we, when we take on a new client, one of the things that we do is we try to find where is all your data located? And in some cases you've got, you've got like a really super, let's say, like a sales manager, someone who's using some application that's that the owner didn't even know about, but only through our questioning and, and processed, we find out that, Hey, this, this data that's really critical to the organization, their CRM isn't even on their servers.

Steve Meek (33m 50s):

It's something the sales guy is doing because there were issues and he wanted something that he could control. And, you know, he's not trying to do anything wrong, but just understanding where that data is and where it lives. You know, that's so important to the owner because as you go through your due diligence process and they try and track those, those things down, it may find out that, you know, it's not where you expect, or you don't have control, or, or maybe through the, through the M and a process, somebody leaves and you lose access to that data. You know, all of those kinds of things are things that, you know, they'll get found out the, the due diligence process, but you'd rather know that before you go through that, through that process. So knowing where your data is, where it resides, how it's protected, how it's controlled, all of those kinds of things,

Tom Bronson (34m 34s):

Get your arms around your data. That is great advice for every business owner. So our long time listeners know this is episode 34. I think that I always ask a bonus question. So here it is. And everybody's been waiting our long time listeners wait all the way to the bonus question. And so here it is, what personality trait has gotten you into the most trouble through the years?

Steve Meek (34m 59s):

Personality trait got me into trouble. I would say for me, the, the, the desire to always be right, you know, you know, as an owner, you have to be able to listen. You have to be able to interact and talk, but, you know, I just have this, you know, I'll do whatever research I'll stay up late. You know, there there's been times where I've worked, you know, 48 hours straight, you know, those kinds of things just to be able to get to, you know, to the right answer and in a, and I think that while that's a, a reliable and, you know, the wanting to be right is a great thing.

Steve Meek (35m 40s):

I think, you know, sometimes that gets me in trouble by, you know, pointing out that someone's wrong when it really isn't even necessary, or, you know, calling someone to the floor for

something, when, you know, it might damage the relationship or whatever. But, you know, I think I've always been challenged by always wanting to think I'm right. And, you know, being willing to commit my, you know, every fiber of my physical and mental being to go out to try and make sure that I'm right, you know, sometimes works against me.

Tom Bronson (36m 11s):

I totally get that. You know, there was very much the same way. There was a great movie back in, I think it was the late eighties or the early nineties called broadcast news, or Holly Hunter plays a, a news producer. And at some point her, her boss who is like executive vice-president of the network, looks at her and says, it must be nice to be right all the time. And she looked right back at him and says, no, not really.

Steve Meek (36m 40s):

Well, actually it's funny you say that, you know, I started off, I started college as a journalist, you know, I wrote in high school and, you know, did it, did a lot of writing. And, and so I think that that's part of that, that fact checking always wanting to have the, you know, the right bit of information was, is one of those things that is good in certain situations, but, you know, in the world of business, in the world of consulting, other kinds of things, it's, you know, some, I guess letting things slide might, might be a, a scale that I need to work on.

Tom Bronson (37m 9s):

Yeah. There you go. How can our viewers and listeners get in touch with you, Steve?

Steve Meek (37m 14s):

Well, you can always get a hold of us through the focus group. You know, our main number it's answered live eight to five. Usually, you know, people can get through to, through to me, my email, [steve@fulcrumgroup.net](mailto:steve@fulcrumgroup.net), I may not respond instantly, but, you know, through the thousands of thousands of emails that I get from having the same email for 20 years, you know, pretty much respond to every email that I get. And, you know, I've got a lot of people that I've talked with over the years. Right. You know, I don't mind answering general questions related technology via email, you know, for free, just as you know, I learned something anytime I coach mentor, train educate.

Steve Meek (37m 54s):

So, you know, I'm always like explaining things to people. And if I had a superpower, I think that's my super power. Being able to break things down and explain things to people in a way that I hope they are believe they understand better than before. So always feel free to reach out and ask that question and I'll answer as best I can. And, you know, some other kind of relationship comes out of it later. That's great. But you know, I just, and then I just love helping people.

Tom Bronson (38m 22s):

If you've got to have a super power, that is a great one to have. This has been so much fun. Thanks for being my guest today, Steve.

Steve Meek (38m 29s):

Well, thanks for having me, Tom. It's been a, you know, like I said, I, I just, I really enjoy being able to interact with and, you know, always learn something more and you know, all our clients over the years, I've said, Hey, even if I show you 10 20, 30 things, you know, and when you become a client of us, I'm going to learn one or two or three things from you. So yeah. That's why I love what I do. It's nothing better for a continual learner than continual learning.

Tom Bronson (38m 53s):

Be a lifelong learner, be a lifelong learner. I'm a huge fan of that. So you can find Steve at their website, look them up at the fulcrum group. He's on LinkedIn, of course. And as always, you can reach out to me and I will be happy to make a warm introduction to Steve meek and the fulcrum group. This is the maximize Business value podcast, where we give practical advice to business owners on, out of build long-term sustainable value in your business. Be sure to tune in each week and click the follow us button wherever you found this podcast. And finally join our community by signing up for our weekly newsletter, right on our website, [www.masterypartners.com](http://www.masterypartners.com) that's master with a Y.

Tom Bronson (39m 40s):

And so until next time, I'm Tom, Bronson reminding you to get your arms around your data in your infrastructure while you maximize business value.

Announcer (39m 54s):

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Announcer (40m 24s):

<inaudible> that was perfect. I wouldn't make any changes on that.