

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, the CEO of mastery partners, Tom Bronson.

Tom Bronson (35s):

Hi, this is Tom Bronson and welcome to maximize business value podcast for business owners who are passionate about building long-term sustainable value in their business. In this episode, I'd like to welcome our guest mark Mitford who's principal at HR catalyst consulting, mark, and I have been friends for close to 20 years, maybe over 20 years at this point. And he's worked with me at some of my businesses and is a partner with us here at mastery partners. Now for our long-term listeners. I mean, really long-term listeners. You might recall that mark was the very first guest.

Tom Bronson (1m 16s):

It was episode number two, that was 123 episodes ago where he talked about building a great culture in your business, a topic that resonates today. If you haven't heard that, I invite you to go back to my early days as a podcaster and hear the difference between then and now, but great information that that mark gives. So mark, welcome back to maximize business value.

Mark Mitford (1m 44s):

Great, great, Tom. Thanks for having me again.

Tom Bronson (1m 47s):

Yeah. You've got something that I really am fascinated to talk about today, but we'll get to that in a second. Tell us about your background and HR catalyst.

Mark Mitford (1m 57s):

Okay, so great. So HR catalyst, the short version of it, corporate career about 23, 24 years in corporate America, kind of rose up the ranks of the HR world. A couple of notable companies I've worked for Erickson, Nortel, Texas instruments, PepsiCo, and then I dropped down in size to middle market, competent sized companies, anywhere between about 50 million to 500 million in revenue. And there I was the head of HR and that really was the Genesis for HR catalyst. So, so with our HR catalysts, what we do is the fancy term for it is we are a fractional strategic HR consulting firm.

Mark Mitford (2m 44s):

So in essence, we provide our services, our knowledge base with companies that are lower middle market, who typically are between 5 million to 75 million in revenue who don't have a strategic HR leader on staff. And they need help in creating and implementing a people strategy to support their business growth.

Tom Bronson (3m 6s):

I like that now fun fact, although it really frustrates me to always have to say this at one of my companies, Granbury solutions, I was Mark's second client. Now we should have been the first because I like to think that I had a little bit to do with talking him into hanging a shingle and offering services to companies like mine, but he came to me second. So

Mark Mitford (3m 33s):

Hopefully you're not holding that against me. Ah,

Tom Bronson (3m 35s):

You know, grudges, you know, are I, I hang, I keep them around, you know, like, like pets,

Mark Mitford (3m 43s):

Fair enough.

Tom Bronson (3m 44s):

So, but I'm excited really today to talk about your new product, the HR starter kit now, and something that you've talked about doing for a long time. And I'm really glad that that the product is now out. So what is an HR starter kit?

Mark Mitford (4m 1s):

You know, it, it's almost, it almost lends itself to the name itself, Tom is that there are so many businesses that are truly either startup businesses or they're a, a single brick or mortar, like a family owned restaurant bookstore. I live in gray fine. So I think of a lot of organizations, a lot of, a lot of the buildings and offices and businesses that are on main street in grapevine. So what it is is really a compilation and consolidation of, of basic tools and templates from an HR perspective that every company needs to have. And a lot of companies don't have these or they pull them down off of Google and there, you're not sure what source is going to be, but this is everything is basic as a employee offer letter to an employee offer letter for salaried employees, hourly employees.

Mark Mitford (4m 58s):

We also have a great onboarding template, which is awesome because it really helps onboarding. And I don't want to go off on this too long, but onboarding is a 90 day process. A lot of smaller businesses really think onboarding is day one. You do the paperwork, you show them the right documentation and boom, good luck. We're going to throw you in the deep end and let us know if you need help with as much more of a holistic process to it. So we actually have a template that walks you through the onboarding process. It has, it has a process around interviewing. So we have several great interviewing templates that are out there that we, that we use on a regular basis with my team.

Mark Mitford (5m 40s):

And it also has things around disciplinary action tools and templates. So in essence, when you think about the employee life cycle, everything from hiring, interviewing selection, hiring all the way to possible re departure termination of that employee, we have tools and templates to be able to support that entire life cycle of that employee with your organization.

Tom Bronson (6m 5s):

That is a massive amount of stuff and things that a lot of small businesses just don't have and don't use, I'm really astounded as you know, you know, we work with companies to help them get ready for exit, but I'm typically astounded at, at not having standard hiring documents, termination documents, you know, HR or an employee handbook, things like that, that, that this could be really great, especially for small businesses. Now, what did most companies struggle with when they have less than 10 employees? Cause I call those, you can call it main street businesses. You can call them micro businesses, but they've got less than 10 employees.

Tom Bronson (6m 48s):

What are they mostly struggling with?

Mark Mitford (6m 51s):

Yeah, it's a, the main thing they do there, Tom, is that they really struggle with kind of going back to the idea of the HR starter kit. They really struggle with every time they do an offer letter, depending on who the manager is doing it, there is probably going to be different. They probably continue to reinvent it every time they have a new employee start every time they have a disciplinary action, most organizations that are smaller, they never provide a lick of documentation. If an, if an employee is not performing well. And as you know, as a business owner, that is a huge liability risk.

Mark Mitford (7m 31s):

Even in states like Texas, where we're a base, their employment at will states, but you still need to have documentation to do that job legally, legally and illegally sound fashion. And also really for the benefit of the employee. Because unless you tell the employee, they're not doing a good job, guess what most of them aren't psychic. And so if you don't have some basic things that you're delivering to an employee that are in writing, then a lot of times information that employers naturally think, oh, this person understands. Cause they see that I get mad at them. Occasionally they really don't, unless you tell them.

Mark Mitford (8m 12s):

And quite often that employee can be turned around and coached to be a better employee versus possibly actually having to release that employee.

Tom Bronson (8m 22s):

Yeah. So you're, you're so right. Many times, you know, in order to cover ourselves legally against any potential future action, you've got to handle those disciplinary things correctly. You know, I, I was with a client yesterday who was preparing to, to terminate an employee and I said, and it's, and it's a performance related. I mean, certainly there are reasons why you would fire somebody on the spot. Right. And so, but it was performance related. And I said, well, have you given them a performance improvement or, or what you call in the industry PIP? And she said, oh, you know what, I really haven't done that. And I said, well, people, if they don't really know what they're doing wrong, you, you're not even giving them a chance to improve.

Tom Bronson (9m 11s):

And so I also read something the other day that now in small businesses like this, I mean under 10 people, it's likely that it's a friendly environment, right? So that the people might be friendly or friends even. And I read something the other day in a magazine that said that friendly bosses are less likely to give important feedback than, than bosses who are not friendly, which I thought was interesting. And so, I mean, do you, is that, does that make sense to you?

Mark Mitford (9m 48s):

It does. I think the, the main, and I'm just going to speculate here, but I would just say the main reason for that is people 99.9% of the population hates to have a confrontation. They do not like confrontation. They do everything in their power to avoid confrontation. And therefore, and especially if, you know, especially in these smaller companies, a lot of times these people grew up together. They're their friends, their kids grew up together. They may go to church together. They may coach softball together, whatever it is, but they are the last thing they want to do is give this person critical feedback because that may put that friendship on a really, it may create a lot of friction in that friendship.

Mark Mitford (10m 40s):

So I think that sounds naturally because psychologically, even though some people are, they're very comfortable with giving negative feedback and giving really critical feedback that most people on average do not, and they do everything in their power to avoid it until the situation gets so bad. And that's usually maybe that situation you just brought up around it's okay, I've got to terminate this person. And by then, it's too late to probably recoup the situation and recover the situation. And also without any documentation, it creates a really big liability risk. And even a small company with that makes a half a million dollars million in revenue.

Mark Mitford (11m 22s):

If that employee comes back and sues you for some sort of a termination action, it could put you out of business. And that's a really sad thing that some companies, my classic line there, Tom, as I say, some companies really never did anything wrong, but they never actually did anything. Right. So,

Tom Bronson (11m 43s):

Right, right.

Mark Mitford (11m 44s):

And that works on every, every area outside of even HR. If you don't, if you don't have your ducks in a row financially, if you don't have your ducks in a row, in a sales marketing perspective, if you continue to do things that are not right, it's probably the chance of your business growing and making it over a million dollars and so on. As you know, when you grow a business, it's really hard to get from a million dollars to \$10 million. And most companies don't do that simply because they don't have scalable processes. And that's what we're trying to do with the, with the, the HR starter kit.

Tom Bronson (12m 18s):

That's awesome. I love that. 99.9% you say are avoiding a conflict. The balance of those, then the 0.1 are the litigators of the world and me.

Mark Mitford (12m 30s):

Yeah, exactly. There you go.

Tom Bronson (12m 32s):

You know, because you are my HR executive on a fractional basis of my company. I was never shy about giving feedback. Yeah.

Mark Mitford (12m 42s):

And sometimes you gave me some pretty critical feedback, which was, which was needed. So

Tom Bronson (12m 48s):

I figure, you know, if, if, if you see that opportunity to give the feedback, then give it right. And so, because the other person will never know. And it, and a lot of times, if you don't give that feedback, then you build up resentment toward that person. And why haven't they figured this out? Well, because you haven't said anything to her. Right.

Mark Mitford (13m 5s):

Exactly.

Tom Bronson (13m 6s):

So, well, what kinds of, what kinds of companies would need an HR starter kit?

Mark Mitford (13m 12s):

Sure. I would say the first and foremost is a company that is probably in his first one to two years of business. It could be a highly, as I mentioned earlier, that mainstream type company who is a solid, they

could have been in comp and business for 20 years, but you know what? They have avail only have a couple people on their staff and they know that they do not need, you typically don't need an HR person on staff until you're about 50 to 70 employees. So a lot of companies will never meet that threshold. So if the business owner or the person who is the bookkeeper or receptionist, they're also wear the hat of the HR person, that would be a really good product.

Mark Mitford (13m 59s):

The starter kit would be really good for them to simply because they need to have these. It's almost like having a toolkit of HR products and tools that you can download. They're editable. You can put your own logo on there. And these are all very legally sound. So you can take them. And literally within a week you can have them all plug and play and they're, they're yours to use within the organization. So I'd really say again, a company that's a little more of a startup one to two years and companies that where you have the owner or the bookkeeper is also playing the role of the HR person. And so this person is not really an HR expert and they need to have tools and templates that are, that are, that are vetted and very sound that they can actually just drop into a system or drop into the company and take it from there.

Tom Bronson (14m 50s):

So is that sort of mirror your, your ideal client or do you have in mind, like the ideal client that should be getting one of these HR starter kits?

Mark Mitford (15m 3s):

Yeah, I would say they would be the ideal client for the starter kit. The reason we two factors there, Tom, on that question, one of them is because even in companies that are 20, \$30 million in revenue, when we start working with them, a lot of those companies don't have a lot of these tools in that toolkit. So some of them are significantly larger and then the other thing is, and so they, we would have to develop this for them over and over and over again. So finally I got to my thick head to say, why don't we just make a product and see if we can offer this product at a very reasonable price and then be able to actually bring that to clients who are not our typical client, because our typical client is going to be probably between that 5 million to 75 million.

Mark Mitford (15m 53s):

So this is actually helping a client. Who's probably not the size where they would need us on a fractional basis. And we know though, if we can do something a little bit out of Goodwill and just helping that, that business out, then there's an opportunity where they may come back and they could possibly, as they grow up, they might become, they might become more that ideal target client for us.

Tom Bronson (16m 18s):

That's awesome. So before we take a quick break we've, we've talked about lots of reasons why this is important, but could you just articulate for the audience why the HR starter kit is so important for businesses?

Mark Mitford (16m 34s):

I would say the really the key reason is that every business as you're an expert on is everybody's business needs to have scalable products and services and processes. So one of the key things is creating scalable processes in the HR function. And then the other big one is around making sure legally you don't say anything because some companies, what they do or don't put in some of the documentation that they present to employees is really scary. And so helping those companies create bringing them tools that are vetted, that are sound that we know.

Mark Mitford (17m 16s):

And these are tools that I've used for years, that these companies will help to minimize liability exposure. And also even with an offer letter, an offer letter, for an example of something basic that you should have in your offer letter is you talk about at-will employment, but a lot of companies don't. And so it's amazing that they put they in some of these offer letters are three pages long, but a lot of times they don't put any of this information in there that are just so basic and intuitive for somebody that's been in HR for 30 years, but they don't have some of the things covered off. So I'd say that's another really good reason why an HR starter kit would be it'd be advisable for any business that doesn't have those tools and tool the tools in that toolkit to, to download that and purchase it and then start using it's next week.

Tom Bronson (18m 6s):

That's awesome. Yeah. You mentioned yeah. Three page offer letter. I was just meeting with a, with a, one of my referral partners earlier today and they told me of a time when they were working for another company that their employment contract was 75 pages long. Now that's a little bit of an overkill, I think

Mark Mitford (18m 30s):

I would, I would very much agree with you.

Tom Bronson (18m 32s):

That's a little bit of an overkill. You are going to get a 75 page employee agreement in this HR starter kit. It's it's to the point. It's great stuff. Well, let's take a quick break. We're talking with mark Mitford, we'll be back.

Announcer (18m 48s):

Every business will eventually transition some internally to employees and managers and some externally to third party buyers, mastery partners, equips business owners to maximize business value so they can transition their businesses on their terms. Using our four step process. We start with a snapshot of where your business is today. Then we help you understand where you want to be and design a custom strategy to get you there. Next, we help you execute that strategy with the assistance of our amazing resource network. And ultimately you'll be able to transition your business on your terms. What are you waiting for more time, more revenue, if you want to maximize your business value, it takes time.

Announcer (19m 29s):

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Tom Bronson (19m 41s):

We're back. And we're talking with mark Mitford principal at HR catalyst consulting, and we're talking about their new HR starter kit. You know, it's interesting. We don't really talk about a lot of products on our, on our podcast, but this is one that I just feel like is so important. Having owned, having run so many small businesses through the years, it's the area of HR is perhaps one of the more neglected areas for kind of getting things as you, as you've mentioned, you know, processes formed and, and certain guidelines about how you do things. So I'm, I'm very excited about this product. So, so what do companies need now?

Tom Bronson (20m 23s):

I mean, let's talk about kind of the, the, the human side of it and, and, and the growth and scaling. Cause a lot of our listeners are really interested in growing their business and making it more valuable. So mark, you've been around for a long time and you're actually a business owner, right? You've got folks that work with you. What do companies need to scale and grow successfully?

Mark Mitford (20m 46s):

Yeah, I would say Tom, just like the, as I mentioned a few minutes ago in the starter kit, I would say that really when they come down to it, they need to have, they need to have very well outlined and documented processes for how they close the books, how they, how they run operations, having good metrics. I would say having really, really good metrics, having a sales process, as we know, we know several sales experts, but really having a defined sales process. What does that look like? And then making sure they have the discipline to actually repeat the processes.

Mark Mitford (21m 27s):

So it's one thing to actually create them, but very similar on the starter kit from an HR perspective, making sure that every time you do an offer letter, making sure it's the same offer letter, making sure when you onboard somebody you're using the onboarding process that we provide in the starter kit. So I would say the biggest thing for the biggest thing that hinders companies from scaling is every time they do something, they reinvent the wheel. And if you are a company, even if you're a company that has 20, 30, 50 employees, if every time you're doing something, every time you're writing up an employee for a performance issue, you're reinventing the wheel versus actually having a template that you can go in.

Mark Mitford (22m 13s):

And within five minutes, all the legal languages in there, you can go in there when within five minutes, you're ready to give, deliver a, a written warning to somebody or a, or a verbal warning to somebody. So the good

thing is that I would say scalability of processes is the biggest downfall of most organizations. They never make it to a million dollars in \$10 million, et cetera.

Tom Bronson (22m 39s):

Yeah. It's interesting. You know, one of the great people companies out there, Southwest airlines, which is, you know, been for a long time, the darling of the airline industry, Herb Keller, you know, famously said years ago when, when Wall Street was trying to demand faster growth from them. Cause they were growing at basically 15% a year. He famously said, I can only grow my business as fast as I can grow my people. And scientifically I've already proven that I can only grow my people at 15% a year. So that's all the growth you're going to get out of this business. And, and he was vilified for that. And their stock lost value until one, sometime later, a couple of years down the road, some Wall Street analysts woke up and said, wow, these guys are growing at 15% a year.

Mark Mitford (23m 29s):

Go figure. Right.

Tom Bronson (23m 30s):

Yeah. But it was all about the process, right? He understood the process and that you can, you, you can't force this, right. You it's, for him. It was all about the people running the business. And to me that's kind of where growth and scalability from is having the right people. But along with that, there are risks to not having those things in place. So what are some of the risks of not having the right HR tools and processes as you really grow or from, from startup and as you, as you kind of grow to start scaling that business?

Mark Mitford (24m 4s):

Yeah. I would say some of the biggest risk is the having, we also have a performance review document. That's a template to use, but not only giving. So one thing is going to be disciplined about giving, giving feedback to employees on a regular basis, even one of the biggest reasons employ. And we've, we all know in this, the time we're in right now, we've talked a lot about the great resignation. So now I'm really talking about, I've really kind of flipped it on its head a little bit. So I recently did my own podcast on the great retention. So how,

Tom Bronson (24m 43s):

And by the way, I, I, I was at a talk where that you were on a panel and you guys talked about the great retention and I love that. I think that's very cool. Sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt.

Mark Mitford (24m 54s):

No, no, no. You're good. So, and a little bit of it too, and it's almost like anybody who loves a sports analogy, you know, do you always want to be playing defense? And if you're, if, if you're, if your focus psychologically is on the great resignation, that's almost like, well, shoot, what is the next person going to resign from the

company? And what am I going to do about it? I guess I'm just going to go ahead and try to fill the position. And I know that's going to be a real pain is going to take me a long time. It's going to cost a lot of money versus for innovative and really forward thinking CEOs and HR departments. Why do we equip our managers to get ahead of this?

Mark Mitford (25m 35s):

So we can actually focus on retaining our key people and making sure we're doing the right thing to retain them, versus just hiding in the corner and sitting there shaking and waiting for that next resignation letter to come over your desk. Because if that's all you're doing, then good luck with getting your company to continue to grow when your company's probably on a so slow death spiral. So I think a lot of it is going back into how do you have those regular things around performance reviews? The other thing too is around, like, I'll go back to the disciplinary process on the templates we provide. The good thing is there that a lot of managers is, as we talked about earlier, they hate conflict.

Mark Mitford (26m 19s):

But if you give them, this is not a, it's not a, I don't like you, Tom, as a person. This is, I don't like what you're doing professionally. And I don't like that. You're actually missing some of the key targets you have professionally. And therefore, that's why we're having a key discussion regarding your performance. So it's not about you as a person, as we all know, Tom Bronson is a great guy. It's about, of course, but it's about the individual's performance. It's about how they actually perform in their business and their job they're doing. And that's where that disconnect is.

Mark Mitford (26m 60s):

And that's where critical feedback needs to needs to be given. And so therefore it even helps to equip managers to be successful in delivering the process and the feedback that is necessary to create some sort of a, a change with that employee. If they take the feedback to heart and the, and the manager's there to help or leaders there to help coach them to become more successful.

Tom Bronson (27m 24s):

That's awesome. That's awesome. Now I know that, of course we had you on before and you, and I've worked together for a long time. And just to be clear with our audience, the HR starter kit, which is a wonderful product, especially for, for the customers that are the, the prospective businesses out there that kind of fit that, that right target. That's not the only thing you do at HR catalyst. So, so in what other ways does HR catalyst help their businesses?

Mark Mitford (27m 54s):

Yeah, thanks. Yeah. So a couple of ways we help is we act as first and foremost, we really act as a trusted advisor on everything people-related within the business. So we are not finance experts, but we are people experts. And so we try to create that trusted advisor. There are very blessed that there's several CEOs that I

work with, who openly telling me that I'm the only person that they tell some of the things they tell me about within their leadership team. And it takes a while to get there to that relationship. But that's so a little bit of it is because the beauty of being an outside consultant or an outsider looking in is that when I give critical feedback, it's in the spirit to help somebody it's not in the spirit to play a political mind game with them.

Mark Mitford (28m 47s):

So it's really in the spirit to help a few. If you would services, we provide, we do a, we have a 10 module program on leadership that is if I call it, I, you know, I call it leadership one on one, it's really geared towards first-time leaders and all the way up to mid mid-level leaders and a lot of organizations that are growing quickly. One of the biggest areas they're deficient with as their lack of leaders and their lack of good leadership and our leadership framework, that's successful. We do work on mergers and acquisitions, both on the due diligence side from an HR perspective and the integration side, working with two clients right now on succession planning to help them on the succession planning side, that's going to be strictly on the people side.

Mark Mitford (29m 37s):

So if that business owner does retire in three years, who is their logical successor and how do we make sure they have the leadership bench strength to be able to continue for that organization to be successful. Versus when that key leader leaves, there goes 80% of the client base with that key leader. So, so those are a couple of things. In essence, we're, we're an outsource to VP of HR. And so we do primarily focus on strategy, but we have things like the starter kit. We can help a company with an employee handbook. That's legally sound for their state. It's not in the starter kit because it is very, a lot of times there are state specific requirements.

Mark Mitford (30m 19s):

And so to put one handbook out there that would fit everything would be impossible for us. And we would actually be doing a disservice to anybody who purchased it, but that's something we can readily help them with that that said they do need a, an updated, an updated handbook.

Tom Bronson (30m 35s):

Awesome. So how, how much does the, the HR starter kit cost and where can, where can our audience purchase it?

Mark Mitford (30m 44s):

The HR starter kit is offered for \$895.

Tom Bronson (30m 49s):

That's

Mark Mitford (30m 49s):

About, we wanted to price it under a thousand and the, where you can find it is on. So on our website. So HR catalyst consulting.com. If you go under what we do tab, and it's actually right under that tab under HR starter kit.

Tom Bronson (31m 5s):

Awesome. We are also going to have a link on our website this week and we'll send it out in our newsletter this week. If you're getting this podcast, it's very likely that you're subscribed to our newsletter, but we'll have a link in our newsletter to how you can go and purchase on a, just strongly suggested for those small businesses. Well, what, what, just one last question, before we get into the normal wrap-up questions that we always ask, and that is what sets eight, our HR catalyst apart from other HR firms.

Mark Mitford (31m 38s):

Yeah. That's, it's kind of one of those things. If I could have a do over town, I refer to the company. I think we all would love do overs, Move over many things. It would be that the, and the way we actually project ourselves. So even business cards are our website. So we are not. When you think about consulting or consultants, everybody on the HR catalyst team are we, we are not consultants. We are actually HR professionals who grew up in the trenches of HR. And we actually then later in our careers for myself, nine years ago, we actually then migrated over to the consulting world.

Mark Mitford (32m 22s):

So we didn't, we didn't grow up with the Accentures, the Deloitte, the KPMGs, and again, great companies, but we didn't grow up in the consulting world with a great MBA from a great school, but we had no practical experience. All of us, even myself on a regular basis. I roll up my sleeves and get my hands dirty. So I love to be in the trenches with my clients. And we're the ones we don't tell you just how to do it. We also actually help you do it. So that's one of the biggest differentiators for us.

Tom Bronson (32m 51s):

I love that. I like a lot like you I've same thing thing. You know, I, I've not been a lifelong consultant. You know, I, I, you know, have sat in the business owner seat for most of my career and now I help other business owners kind of achieve same thing. And I can vouch for HR a catalyst, because as I said, I was a client of Mark's and he did great, great things for us to help mitigate some of that risk. And always was the guy on my team that was not afraid to give me direct feedback on, on something that I've done. Cause you know, throughout my career, I have been drug into the HR office more than once because I've said something wrong or did something wrong.

Tom Bronson (33m 37s):

And so, so, and he does that in a gentle way. And so I can tell you, because I've been on the receiving end of it. Well, one last business question, mark, you're a business owner. And of course this podcast is all about

maximizing business value. What is the one most important thing that you would recommend business owners do to maximize the value of their business?

Mark Mitford (34m 0s):

I would really say there Tom it's, every business owner needs to have a strong culture. They need to have a defined culture within their business. So I'll go back to the podcast. I did quite a while ago with you and because the culture and that includes a mission or purpose statement set of core values and actually just not every company has a culture. And if the culture is not driven by the leadership team and the executive team, then it's driven by the employees. And occasionally then it's, it's, it's, it's the old analogy of the prisons. The prisoners are running the prison. So I'm making sure have a well-defined and intentional culture and make sure you reinforce that continuously, even though some of the leaders may get sick and tired of talking about the core values and things like that, that is what that is the only differentiator you have in your business.

Mark Mitford (34m 56s):

Everyone else could replicate what you do. And that's amazing. And I've worked in, I don't know, I've lost count of how many industries I've worked in, but if you don't have a defined and strong culture, anyone else can replicate, they can replicate your products. And so that's actually, what's going to separate you and differentiate you from the pack.

Tom Bronson (35m 15s):

That is, that is so important, so important. And I would encourage folks to go back and listen to that a second podcast of our podcasts. Number two, it's right on our website or anywhere where you found this podcast on any of the podcasting stations, apple and Google and YouTube and all that. You can find it right there and go back and do, and just want to emphasize something you said, and it may have been something that you said to me a long time ago, or it may have been somebody else. I can't remember. You know, my rule is when I hear something, I give the person credit the first time and then it's mine after that. So, so you burnt out in the one who said this, if you are not intentional and define your co corporate culture, someone else is,

Mark Mitford (36m 2s):

And that's very true, Tom.

Tom Bronson (36m 4s):

And so I think you may have told me that or somebody through the years. All right. Well, we're down to the bonus question. You know, I've asked you this question before, and we're not going to go back and compare the answers, but anybody who goes back and listens can do that. What is the personality trait that has gotten you into the most trouble through the years?

Mark Mitford (36m 24s):

Yeah, it's, there's several probably curiosity.

Tom Bronson (36m 30s):

Crilley

Mark Mitford (36m 31s):

Yeah. I would say curiosity because sometime, and even though I've been a career HR person, I have been known to say or ask questions that are perhaps a little bit, I'm not politically correct. So, and

Tom Bronson (36m 45s):

Guy is the worst offender.

Mark Mitford (36m 47s):

Yeah. That we typically are. And I know several who fall right in that category. So I'd say, you know, and you could say it's in the spirit of, it was just intellectual curiosity, but perhaps curiosity was one of those things that occasionally in hindsight is like, shoot, I wish I didn't ask that question to that individual because I don't, I'm the type to that. I, I love to find out about a person. And even at, even the first time I meet them at a lunch or coffee or networking event, sometimes I'll, I'll ask them questions, which are probably a little bit pushing the envelope. And there's, they're, they're not done in any, any, in any ill will whatsoever, but occasionally it's like, I can see that person's face.

Mark Mitford (37m 28s):

And I'm like, whoops, I guess I shouldn't have asked that question to that individual.

Tom Bronson (37m 31s):

Yeah. Right, right. Exactly. That's fun. Well, how can our viewers and listeners get in touch with you?

Mark Mitford (37m 37s):

Yeah. The, the listeners, we actually have a podcast series ourselves. So our podcast is on all the major channels of Stitcher and apple, YouTube. So HR problem solver is our podcast and we actually go through there. So that's one channel. We go through individual really vignettes of different problems around if it could be around employee engagement employee on boarding. We actually do that in a, in a bite size, like 10 minutes. And under, usually that goes through different modular key things on facets of HR, HR catalyst consulting.com is our website. You can find us on LinkedIn and also our YouTube channel.

Mark Mitford (38m 17s):

And there's a lot of good material out there. And we're going to be coming out with our first ebook here in the next couple of weeks also.

Tom Bronson (38m 23s):

Yay. We just, we just released a, anybody. In fact, last week we released a new e-book on succession planning. And so, so cool. You know, you've been on my podcast twice. You've never invited me to be on yours. Yeah.

Mark Mitford (38m 41s):

Yeah. Well, ours have all been good or bad as they've all been. It's all been self narrated.

Tom Bronson (38m 46s):

Oh. So you're just ranting on your own podcast.

Mark Mitford (38m 50s):

I'm just ranting on my own time, but I will guarantee you if we go down that if we, we, we, we jump in the deep end, you'll be the first guest that I invite to be on my podcast.

Tom Bronson (39m 1s):

Well, that, that means that you'll never do that because I know that I would scare you.

Mark Mitford (39m 6s):

I doubt it. I think I know you too well.

Tom Bronson (39m 8s):

Yeah. Yes you do. Yes, you do. Mark. This has been a great conversation. I'm so excited about this HR starter kit and I can't wait for our folks to go out there and get their own copy. Thank you for being our guest today.

Mark Mitford (39m 20s):

Great. Thanks so much, Tom, for it. Thanks for having me.

Tom Bronson (39m 23s):

You can find [mark.midford@hrcatalystconsulting.com](mailto:mark.midford@hrcatalystconsulting.com), which is also where you can get the HR starter kit. And of course, we'll have a link to that this week on our website and in our newsletter, you can find them there on LinkedIn. And of course, as always, you can reach out to me and I'll be happy to make a warm introduction to my good friend of, I think more than 20 years, this is the maximize business value podcast, where we give practical advice to business owners on how to build long-term sustainable value in your business. Be sure to tune in each week and subscribe to our channel so that you'll never miss a single episode.

Tom Bronson (40m 4s):

So until next time, I'm Tom Bronson reminding you to go right now to [HR catalyst consulting.com](https://www.hrcatalystconsulting.com) and get

your HR starter kit and use it while you maximize business.

Announcer (40m 21s):

If you're tuning into the maximize business value podcast with Tom Brunson, 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 on their terms on how to build long-term sustainable business value and get free value building tools by visiting our website, [www.masterypartners.com](http://www.masterypartners.com) that's master with a Y mastery partners.com. Check it out.

Tom Bronson (41m 6s):

That was perfect. I wouldn't make any changes.