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Sponsor: Okay, shout out to [Claritin](#) for supporting this episode and providing us with some samples. Y'all, there are a lot of seasonal allergy sufferers over here at AFD Inc. and the That Sounds Fun Network, and Claritin D really works for this crew.

I also realized a few years ago that I developed an allergy to dogs, so I'm thankful to have Claritin D on hand when I'm around my friends' dogs. Luckily, for those of us who live with the symptoms of allergies, we can live Claritin-clear with Claritin D. It's designed for serious allergy sufferers.

Claritin D has two powerful ingredients in just one pill. This double-action combination of prescription-strength allergy medicine and the best decongestant available relieves sneezing, a running nose, itchy, watery eyes, and an itchy nose and throat, and sinus congestion and pressure with ease. Amen.

Ready to live life as if you don't have allergies? It is time to live Claritin-clear. Fast and powerful relief is just a quick trip away. Ask for Claritin D at your local pharmacy counter. You don't even need a prescription, y'all. Just go to claritin.com right now for a discount so you can live Claritin-clear. Use as directed.

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Annie: Hi friends. Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today.

But as you can see on our feed, we've got our That Sounds Fun episode today and on Thursday, but all week we're also sharing with you the AFD and NYC essay episodes that released in October and November. We've put them all together back to back. We started on Saturday. They will go until Friday. And a brand new one about my Sabbath rest in the city is coming on Saturday.

So make sure you're taking a little time to listen to those this week too to catch up on my life so that then I can tell you some new things on Saturday.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors, [AG1](#). It's important to me that any supplements I take are of the highest quality, and anything you take is of the highest quality. That's why for so many years I've been drinking AG1.

Quality really is their commitment, and it's backed by their expert-led scientific research, high-quality ingredients, industry-leading manufacturing, and lots of testing.

At each step of the process, they really go above and beyond industry standards. I know I can trust what's in every scoop because they obsess over their practices and their ingredients are heavily researched.

AG1 takes care of my health by covering my nutritional bases and setting me up for success in just 60 seconds, making it so there aren't a million different pills and capsules to keep track of. Just one scoop of AG1 mixed in really cold water every day. I also love that it includes vitamin C and zinc to support my immune system.

So if you want to replace your multivitamin and more, start with AG1. Try AG1 and get a free one-year supply of vitamin D3 plus K2 and five free AG1 travel packs with your first subscription at DrinkAG1.com/soundsfun. That's DrinkAG1.com/soundsfun. Y'all check it out.

Intro: Today on the show, I get to talk with one of my business heroes, David Novak. David's an incredible business leader, and I could have talked to him for literal hours. He's the founder of David Novak Leadership, the parent organization to four nonprofits dedicated to developing leaders at every stage of life.

He's also the host of the business podcast, *How Leaders Lead*. It is so good. No matter where you're leading right now, get ready to take some notes in this episode. You know I like to warn you when it is a note-taking episode.

Here's a fun fact about David Novak. He created the Cool Ranch Dorito, you guys. Literally. He's the co-founder, the retired chairman and CEO of Yum Brands Incorporated, which is one of the world's largest restaurant companies. He has years of wisdom and insight that we get to learn from today.

He's a New York Times bestselling author. His latest book, *How Leaders Learn*, releases tomorrow. You are gonna love getting to know him. And we have so much to learn from him. So here's my conversation with my friend, David Novak.

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Annie: David Novak, it feels like such an honor to have you on That Sounds Fun. Thank you for joining me today.

David: Are you kidding me, Annie? I've been looking forward to this.

Annie: Oh, you're very kind. I mean, I need to start with the whole truth of how much I love Taco Bell. I mean, I am like... I am your core audience. As the man who used

to be the CEO of Taco Bell, I just need you to know that I am with you all the way. You created the quesadilla.

David: Oh, absolutely. Live mas, Annie. Live mas.

Annie: For our friends who... I mean, we are going to go so deep dive specific into some leadership stuff, which I think will be really fun. This episode is coming out on June 3rd. As you know, your book comes out June 4th, so it'll be available tomorrow for everybody. But will you kind of just tell us how you got into the role of CEO of Yum and just kind of give everybody an overarching picture and then we'll dive into the leadership stuff?

David: Oh my gosh, Annie. I'll try to make it short. But I have a very untraditional background. I was actually a journalism student at the University of Missouri. I started out as an advertising copywriter. Really loved doing that. But I wanted to stay in the advertising agency business and decided I wanted to go on the account side. So I then went to Pittsburgh and worked on Heinz 57 Sauce.

Then I had this big decision where I was going to try to decide... you know, I thought I had to go to New York to make it in the advertising business. And I went up there and I felt kind of like a duck out of water. It just didn't feel right for me. I was a Midwesterner and just didn't think I would get all the opportunities that I would want to have in my career there.

And out of the blue, I get this call to go be the account executive on Tostitos brand tortilla chips, okay? This was when it was being launched. This agency down in Dallas had the Frito-Lay account. So I ended up running the Frito-Lay account, which included Doritos and Lay's and Sunchips and all these great things you just love to eat.

Annie: Do we tell them now that you are the creator of the Cool Ranch Dorito?

David: That is true. That is true.

Annie: It's incredible.

David: One of my highlights. I have some lowlights, but that's one of my highlights. But anyway, maybe because of that and some other things, I kind of always took a very business approach to advertising. The president of Frito-Lay recommended me to Steven Reinemann, who was the president of Pizza Hut, who later became the CEO of PepsiCo, to run marketing.

So I went from the advertising agency business and I got into PepsiCo, which was a huge break. It's a great company. So I go run marketing at Pizza Hut. Somehow we knocked it out of the park. We had great, great results. Then I was asked to go be the head of marketing and sales at Pepsi. And then I realized I needed to get some operating experience so I could have the chance to run a company someday.

I became the chief operating officer of Pepsi and then I became the president of KFC, then the president of Pizza Hut. Then I had the opportunity to run Yum! Brands. You know, I didn't have the MBA. I was the first person ever hired from the advertising agency business into a C-suite position at PepsiCo.

Annie: Wow.

David: It was fun. I don't know how to explain how it happened, Annie. Somehow it did.

Annie: It's an incredible story. I mean, this new book that comes out tomorrow, *How Leaders Learn*, isn't your first book. When I said to your coworker, my friend Tim, this morning, I said, "I'm going to go back and read all the other books now, too, because there's just so much I want to learn from you."

But particularly with what experience you've had, I mean, I think the back flap of the book says that at one point there were over 1.5 million team members working in 135 countries. I've got five employees and I've cried twice today. Hand to heaven. So why is it important that leaders keep learning? Like, why was that the next right book for you?

David: Well, you know, I started to reflect on my career and, you know, Annie, just like you, I really want to make a difference in the world. My mission is to try to make the world a better place by developing better leaders. I have this podcast called *How Leaders Lead*, and I post one every Thursday, but I've interviewed everybody from Tom Brady in the world of sports to Jamie Dimon as a CEO, Indra Nooyi, Condoleezza Rice, just really great, great leaders. So I have all this exposure to great leaders and how they think.

The reason why I do the podcast is so I can give other people the opportunity to learn from them too. But as I've done these podcasts, I realized, you know what I love the most about it, is I get to keep learning. If I got a podcast with somebody, like I just did one with Stephen Squeri, the CEO of American Express, I got to get ready, I got to learn and I got to find out everything they've done.

When I look back on my career, my learning mentality is how I ended up not needing an MBA. How I was able to pick up skills that I otherwise would not have had. And then when I think about the great leaders, the most successful people I

know, they have a tremendous desire to learn, get better at their trade, figure out advantages that they can bring to their company by learning what other people are doing.

That was basically the reason why I decided to write the book, is that learning is such a key component of all the great leaders that I talk to. It's the habit that they've mastered. And what I want to do is help people think through how they can use learning to really grow themselves and grow their career.

I think if you do that, you're gonna just have a lot more success and you're gonna be able to fulfill your potential. That excites me.

Annie: I heard a pastor say... this is probably only two weeks ago, David. I heard a pastor randomly... it was a... you know how they throw in little side sentences that they don't think anybody's gonna care about. But it was something like, God will always be the only one that is all-knowing. We will learn forever. And I had this one of like we get to learn forever? Oh my gosh, I can't wait. We get to learn forever. I was like, that is the best, that we will never stop having the opportunity to grow in what we know.

David: And just think. If you had the mindset that you did know it all, just think what you'd be missing out on. Just think how you'd also be zapping the people that happen to work for you. I think when you have that learning mindset, it becomes contagious.

Annie, one of the things that you know, people always ask me is like, What do all these great leaders have? And I think it's that they have this uncanny combination of confidence and humility. The confidence comes from knowing your trade. The confidence comes from... you know, allows you to inspire other people. Nobody's going to follow you if you don't have that confidence. But it's the humility that is really the thing that motivates people and inspires everybody because it says, I don't know everything. I need you. I can't do it alone. What you do counts. And that to me is really key.

So being confident and being humble and that humble characteristic that you have, I think really does make you an active learner.

Annie: I've just been flipping through the book because I wanted to read your exact definition of humility is just the recognition that you can't do it by yourself and confidence... I mean, if I was a tattoo person who got sentences, I would do this. Confidence is simply the expectation that you'll find a way to win somehow. I was like, man, that...

Because so often I think confidence gets a bad rap and maybe it does more... I wouldn't really know. I'd love to hear your thoughts. I think confidence gets a worse rap for women than it does for men in business. Because confidence for women in business people assume you're a know-it-all or that a lot of other words they use to describe strong women in business. But the definition being... it's just the expectation you'll find a way to win somehow. I'm like, Oh yeah, I bet on me. I can bet on me.

David: Yeah. My daughter, she's just an incredible leader and she's a great community leader and she runs our family foundation and everything. She has confidence, but she's not cocky. She's not arrogant.

Annie: That's right.

David: I think that as long... You know, as a male, if you come off as cocky and arrogant, you turn everybody off. There's a big difference between cockiness and confidence. My daughter, I think she can go into any room and command attention through her confidence because she's humble and she's got that desire. She shows people that what they have to say matters.

I actually think that women have a huge advantage as it relates to what I think the most successful leaders are really good at. And that's empathy. Women are much better, I think, at being empathetic and also collaborative. Because the male ego gets in the way too much. We tend to think that we've got to show people how smart we are and that we're not as vulnerable.

But everybody's writing books now about the importance of being vulnerable and open and empathetic and collaborative. Those are the key characteristics. And I think women are actually better at that.

Annie: Do you think it is more important? You write in the book about studying wins and losses, and there's a whole chapter on you gotta study when the crisis comes, study wins, and study failures. Which is most important, to study your own wins and losses in crisis, or to pay attention and watch other leaders' wins and losses in crises?

David: Well, I think that self-awareness and the ability to reflect is really absolutely critical. So I think you always kind of got to start with yourself. But what I always try to do, Annie, is that when I'm in a particular situation I try to sort of be a know-how junkie. I kind of like, okay, where can I learn, somewhere else, about what somebody might be doing in a particular situation like that?

So when we had crises at Taco Bell, we looked at... I recalled, you know, what Johnson & Johnson did, okay? I recalled Craig Weatherup, who was the CEO of Pepsi, when someone put syringes in the Pepsi cans. And it was a big national story. But I kind of looked at those companies and those people for inspiration during that time.

I think that really helps you step up and get done what needs to get done. Finding a way to win somehow, even in your darkest moments.

Annie: We are in a real pivoting point in some places in our company and so I'm coming at this with a real... I mean, you mentioned this in the book, that everybody shows up with a pair of glasses on and how they're experiencing the world and how they're experiencing your leadership. I have some really direct questions for you to help me with leadership and we're just going to let everybody listen along.

But for me, one of the things... Did you pick up the phone and call those people? Cause I have a woman leader in my mind that has been through something similar to what I'm about to go through professionally. And I've wanted just to ask a friend for her phone number and see if I can fly to her and pay her to sit with me for an hour. Is that a move I should do?

David: Yeah. I really think that you should... Through your platform, you have a great access to lots of people who know lots of people. I would highly encourage you to find that person that knows the person that you want to talk to and have them make that introduction so that you can call them and set up a time where you can fly out there and have that conversation.

When I first became the CEO of Yum! Brands, I didn't have any investor experience.

Annie: Oh, interesting.

David: Pepsi-Cola was our number one bottler in terms of providing product to our customers, but Coca-Cola really wanted to get our business. So I called Doug Ivester at the time, who was the CEO of Coca-Cola, and said, "I know Warren Buffett is on your board. I would love to have the opportunity to go meet with him and talk to him about working with investors. So he set it up.

Annie: Wow.

David: I had a little extra going for me when I made that phone call but I didn't have any hesitation in making it. And you know what was so great about it, Annie? When I went to Warren Buffett, I learned so much about how to really talk to the

investment community. I believe I went in 1998 and I retired in 2006. I went to see him every fall.

Annie: Really?

David: We developed a great relationship and it was just amazing. He gave me really great insight. You can tell, like you, I'm really passionate about what I do, right? So I love Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, and KFC. And he goes, "David," he said, "do you ever talk about what could go wrong in any of those businesses with your investors?" And I go, "Oh, no, not really. I mean, you know, these are my babies, and I love them." He says, "Well, why don't you talk about maybe the two or three things that could potentially go wrong? And when you do that, the investors will really appreciate that and they will give you more credibility."

Annie: Wow.

David: So it kind of taught me the concept of being a sober salesman, you know, really kind of saying, absolutely, you know, be excited about what your business is but be sober enough to really identify maybe a couple things that could go wrong.

I started doing that, and I'll tell you what, most times investors would argue with me and say, Oh, that's not going to happen, but every time, it gave me more credibility. But I would never have gotten that insight as quick in my career without going to see Warren Buffett. I think you need to go meet that woman and get some great advice.

Annie: I've watched her go through a pivot like we're going to go through, and no one knew she did it, right? So publicly, no one would ever know. People just thought she went from glory to glory kind of thing, right? But because I know she had to go through a pivot, I want to also go through the pivot and publicly just go from glory to glory. So she's the one who's done it.

When you're leading teams the size you were leading from at every stop of it, there's also a personal emotion when things go right and when things go wrong. How did you learn when to express your personal emotion, your personal frustration or anger, or sadness? It's easier to do the joy of like, oh my gosh, I'm so happy about this. But when things are hard at work, how did you learn when to express your feelings?

David: I think you learn by observing and you learn by seeing the people that you've worked with or for and how they do it. And then you say, what kind of person do I want to be when that situation happens?

For me, I had seen people kind of lose their cool, and that's not the kind of person I really wanted to follow. When you're disappointed, I think the biggest thing you can do is just have people believe in you so much and have such a good relationship with you and know that you believe in them so much that you're behind them that the last thing they want to do is ever disappoint you.

I would always try to trust in positive intentions, but still raise the bar. I tried to avoid anger. There's this concept, I don't know if you ever heard about it, Annie, but it's the mood elevator.

Annie: No.

David: You make your worst decisions when you're at the bottom of the mood elevator, and that's when you're angry and resentful. You make your best decisions when you're at the top of the mood elevator, and that's when you have gratitude. So I would always try to get my mindset to the point where I was at least above the line, which is curious and interested, but try to work my way up into gratitude.

That's why, for me, I've always tried to have time for personal reflection in the morning, time to do my devotional, time to do my gratitudes that I write down so that I get my mood elevator moving up. And then when you have those kinds of situations, you've got your mind in the right place to where you can deal with them in a way that everybody will feel positive about moving forward.

Annie: You're coaching me so beautifully in this of like, how I start my morning is actually gonna determine how two o'clock goes.

David: Absolutely. I don't want to give you the impression I didn't get mad. At times you just can't help it. Sometimes you go, How could that happen? One of the things I always believed the best leaders do is they take accountability for all the bad things that happen, and they don't take any credit for all the great things, you know?

Annie: Yes.

David: That's the other thing I tried to do, and I clearly wasn't perfect at it. But I really tried to ask myself, what could I have done to make sure that that didn't happen? I tried to, first of all, look at myself.

Annie: That's a great question. I mean, that's a great question for our friends listening who are parenting. Like, okay, this whole trip went sideways, partly because our teenagers are acting like this, but what could I have done? Like, what's some of the responsibility? I think that is really helpful.

[00:23:54] <music>

Sponsor: Okay, you guys, can we talk about [Thrive Market](#)? Y'all, I love doing my grocery shopping with Thrive Market and picking out all my favorite things on their website, and then it just shows up at my door. It is so easy. Plus, I typically save almost 30% on every order, which is amazing.

They have some of my favorite snacks and sauces, looking at you, Primal Kitchen, and protein shakes, The OWYN brand are my current faves. Their cookies and cream, oh, y'all, it is so good.

I love that Thrive Market only allows trusted, top-quality ingredients while restricting 1,000-plus harmful ingredients like artificial flavors and high-fructose corn syrup, and more.

Whether you're looking for organic kid snacks or low-sugar alternatives or high-protein essentials, you can curate your own shopping experience with a few clicks and trust that you're getting quality products so you can shop worry-free.

And when you join Thrive Market, you are also helping a family in need with their one-for-one membership matching program. You join and they give. It's awesome.

Save time and money and shop Thrive Market today. Go to thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun for 30% off your first order plus a free \$60 gift. That's awesome. That's [Thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun](https://thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun).

Sponsor: Y'all, I never knew how much I'd love custom hair care until I tried it and now I cannot go back. [Prose](#) truly has changed my hair game. We all know your hair can sway your mood for the day. And ever since I switched to a custom hair routine with Prose, I've noticed so many benefits, healthier hair being one of them.

With Prose, it is all about personalization. You do their in-depth consultation — y'all know we love a quiz — and they come up with your made-to-order products. There are millions of possible formulas, but only one is uniquely yours or mine. Take my custom shampoo and conditioner, for example. They were formulated to make my hair shiny and hydrated. And they deliver. Y'all compliment my hair all the time, and I'm telling you, it is Prose.

Prose isn't just better for you, it's better for the planet. They're a certified B Corp, and they're cruelty-free, and they're the first and only carbon-neutral custom beauty brand. Prose is so confident that they'll bring out your best hair and skin that they're offering an exclusive trial offer of 50% off your first subscription order at

prose.com/thatsoundsfun. So you get your free consultation, then 50% off, five-zero, at prose.com/thatsoundsfun. That's prose.com/thatsoundsfun.

Sponsor: Okay, y'all, a question I get a lot, especially around our Let's Read the Gospels podcast and at live events during Q&As, is about my personal Bible. I've had it since I was a freshman in high school, a Christmas gift from my parents. It is honestly my favorite possession that I own. It's an [NIV Quest Study Bible](#).

I love the question and answers it features along the edges. It gives me so much space to be curious. And in fact, it's the only question-and-answer Bible. They highlight the top 100 questions that have been asked by readers. Isn't that cool? It legit always meets me in my curiosity, creates more curiosity in me, and it gives me some space around the edges to write other questions and other thoughts I might have to mark some dates and important moments that are helpful for me.

There are over 7,000 notes, 350 articles included in the Quest Study Bible as well. It also has reading plans, charts, timelines, maps, book introductions, a dictionary, and a concordance. I am telling y'all, it is a fun Bible.

It is available in both regular size and personal size, and there are editions for teens and kids too. If you're looking for a Bible or looking to gift a Bible this summer, this is the one. You can go to amazon.com/queststudybible, check out all the options, and then use the promo code 10soundsfun for 10% off all Quest Study Bibles on Amazon. That's amazon.com/queststudybible and use the code 10soundsfun to get 10% off all the Quest Study Bibles on Amazon.

Okay, now back to our conversation with David.

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Annie: It's challenging. I'm sure you faced this. I know you did. I read it in the book. But when the industry changes around you and you have to lead your way and lead your team through a changing industry, when that is happening, where do you go to learn? When an industry is moving into a space that is new, like, I'm thinking about the clear Pepsi story, where you're like, okay, this industry is moving. Clear is cool right now. Clear is cool and so we're going to make this thing and then it didn't exactly work. How do you lead into a changing industry where you don't know where the industry's going?

David: Well, I think you have to get started. A lot of times, it's a lot easier to be disruptive than to be disrupted. So many times people stay within their own business and their own lane, and they try to keep it that way, regardless of what's happening out in the world.

So you have to attack yourself. You have to say, OK, if I don't do this, what does somebody else do? And if you see people doing it around you and it's changing the game, you have to see the world the way it really is, not the way you want it to be.

When I was at Pepsi, we were seeing carbonated soft drinks sales just go down, down, down, and things like Clearly Canadian were growing, Waters were growing, tea was growing, Snapple, all these alternative beverages. So we said that we had to move from a carbonated soft drink company to a total beverage company.

So we did deals with Ocean Spray and Lipton, and later on we bought Gatorade. We created Aquafina, the water that's the largest water in the business. All of that was in our quest to attack ourselves. And these were all lower margin items than what we would make on soft drinks. That's why it's so hard to not get disrupted. You know, because you just want to protect what you have.

Annie: Yes, yes, yes.

David: But I think that's where you can learn. You can learn from the stories like Blackberry and Apple iPhones. You can learn from the Codex that never really moved forward. You can learn from people who tried to protect what they had and didn't go forward. Motorola, they were the leader in cell phones. They just did not change, but they had it all.

Annie: So will you tell me about the day y'all sat in a meeting and really decided, Okay, we're gonna go buy Lipton? Like what was that meeting like where things have been walking towards, "We're gonna expand, we're gonna have to because of what's happening with soft drinks." What was that day like where you went like, okay, execute, here we go.

David: I think that you have to take time to really think through your strategy. The first thing you have to do is define reality. So you really had to look at what's going on in the world and you have to define reality. And the reality was the carbonated soft drinks were all declining and these alternative beverages were all growing. And if you're gonna become a growth company, you gotta figure out, can you really grow the carbonated soft drinks? We tried like heck to do it, okay?

Annie: Yeah.

David: But it was really, really hard. The only thing that was really growing were the diet drinks, like Diet Mountain Dew, Diet Pepsi. But even Diet Pepsi was slowing down. Mountain Dew was doing really well because it was the only product that

was so different. And people were buying that for like the extra hit of the caffeine and all that. But it was a category that was in free fall when-

Annie: Were you stressed?

David: Well, absolutely, because when you're not winning, you get stressed. It's a lot more fun to win than to lose. When you're in Pepsi, you want to make plan, and we're struggling to make plan because everybody else is eating into our business. But we just said, hey guys and ladies and guys, we gotta become, we're gonna have to sell more things and figure out how to put more things on our trucks and get it done. And it was a major, major shift.

Annie: And in that shift, how do you get everybody to buy in as far as employees?

David: Well, it's very hard. You have to share what you know. And then by defining reality, you share what you know. Then I think a very powerful question is what would you do? I think when you ask that question, when everybody has the same facts, you'll find that more often than not, people will agree with what your opinion is.

Annie: Interesting.

David: There's one real law in leadership that I believe in, which is no involvement no commitment. When you think about this pivot that you're trying to make with your team and the people that you work with, it's very important to get them involved and show this is the reality that you see today. And then ask everybody, do you see it the same way?

Annie: Oh, interesting.

David: And everybody has a chance to really chime in on that. Then from that point, then you ask that question, okay, now that we all agree on what the reality is, what would you do?

Annie: What would you do?

David: That takes a lot of confidence, because somebody on your team may want to do something that you don't really want to do. But the good news is you can hear that perspective. And you can always come back as the leader and make the decision of where you're going to go. But you've certainly given that person a chance to express their opinion. And that opinion leads to commitment.

Annie: Wow.

David: Even if they don't agree, even if they don't agree with your direction, because at least they had a chance to communicate what they saw.

Annie: Hopefully, if I'm leading that well, when we come back together and the decision is made, they say, Well, I understand why she did that because we talked it all through.

David: Yeah, absolutely. I call it team together, team apart. Get your team together. This is what you see. Define reality. Get everybody's opinions out. Sometimes everybody will agree with exactly what needs to be done. Sometimes you might have to make the tough decision. But when the team's together, you get people aligned.

Then once that decision is made, you're a team apart. Everybody goes out that room and they don't say, "Oh, I can't believe Andy wants to do that," or, "you know, can you believe?" No, you go execute that to the best of your ability until you find out that maybe there's a different direction that you might want to take. And that's what I call the team together, team apart.

Annie: That's amazing.

David: You really want to try to get to that.

Annie: I need you to know that I just keep thinking, I need to listen to this again and take notes. I'm going to come back and listen to you again and actually be able to take notes because I'm trying to stay with you and also learn. So I'm doing everything at once. You're my new favorite teacher.

David: But you know, Annie, you got to think about this too. You learn from the wins. and look at the success of your business. I mean, look what's happened. I mean, look how you've grown your business. See, that gives you so much to... it's like it's a highlight reel that you can go back to. It gives you the confidence you're going to be able to find that way to win.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. Somehow. I will find a way to win somehow. And you're right. I mean, you say this in the book that every time you succeed, you're actually collecting new evidence to remind yourself you can succeed. Like, you can do this every single time. You can collect this new evidence. So you're almost building a case for yourself that you can do the thing again.

David: Absolutely. I think every person needs to create their own kind of highlight reel.

Annie: Wow.

David: You want to have your own memory bank. You want to write those things down. As I mentioned, I do gratitudes. Someone else told me the other day they tried to write down three things that really went well that day, you know, just to build that little highlight reel, you know?

Annie: Yeah.

David: Because there are always things that do go wrong, and that's what we have a tendency to focus on, not only with ourselves, but sometimes with people. And that's why I think it's so important that you take the time to appreciate first what you've been able to accomplish, and then say, Okay, how can I even be more effective?

Annie: I'm not married yet. I don't have kids. And we have a good amount of people that listen to the show that are not married yet. And everything you're saying also goes great with dating. Like, you've got to build yourself a success reel. You need a highlight reel of how good you can be at dating so that you get back out there and do it again. It works in all the ways.

One of the things you mention in the book that I thought was really interesting, in a book about learning, you do a real important section on there's a reason it's important to love what you do.

David: Oh, yeah.

Annie: Especially when it comes to learning. Will you talk about that? Because so many of our friends listening are doing a thousand different jobs. Our stats tell us that 90% of our listeners work outside of the home, and so they are out there doing things. Why does it matter that we love what we do?

David: Well, I'll tell you what. I've never met too many people that are really good at something unless they love what they do. You know, usually people... you know, if you love what you do, you're really pretty good at it. Because we don't like to do things we're not good at.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

David: The other thing is, is that when you love something, you can't get enough of it. I mean, you just want more and more of it. And when that's the case, you want to get better and better at it. And that really makes you a learner. You never really stop. But if you're stuck and you're working in an environment where you're not doing what you really love, I'll tell you what, you better get out of there because you're going to... life's too short, you know.

I always encourage people to write down all the joy-blockers they have in their life. What are the things that take away their joy? And then write down all the joy builders. What are the things that really give you joy? And then think about, how your life is, how much of your life is being spent over there in that joy blocker lane versus the joy builders. Try to take your life and shape it so that you can get into the joy-builder lane.

David: Like for me, when I retired, I was not gonna retire, Annie. I was gonna refire, okay?

Annie: Yeah.

David: So to me, I looked at what really gave me joy. And what gives me joy is my family, leadership development, which is why I do my podcast and write books and all that kind of good stuff. And then I love golf. I try to organize my whole life around those three things. And I'm pretty happy. But I think if I thought for some reason that I needed to go into all these private equity businesses and do... I think I'd be... I don't want that stress now. What I want to do is help other people grow.

Like you, when you're other directed, you have a tendency to be a lot happier than when you're just focused on just the inner side of life.

Annie: Yes, yes. In the book you talk it's a whole lot easier to find our joy blockers than our joy builders. And so when we're making that list, like if somebody sits down and does that at some point this week, you know, or use that as a summer homework assignment, like, okay, I'm going to list everything that blocks joy and everything that builds joy, how long are those lists? Do we need to find 20 things in each or do we just let it go and see how long they end up?

David: I don't know what the answer is to that. Only you know that, okay? But you have to find that time to have the reflection. That reflection is really, really important. You might have 10 things or 15 things or four things that really block your joy. But when you're aware of it, that'll help you, you know, figure out, Okay, I got these things happening right now that just are zapping me. Okay, what am I going to do? How can I alter that? How can I shape that? Or even if I'm in a company and I'm working with a group of people who maybe do not motivate me or whatever, that company may have some other opportunities where I can move and I can take advantage of that, you know. Because when I look at what gives me joy, that's where I might be able to go.

Annie: Oh, wow.

David: But it's a self-diagnosis, you know? We have to do that. I think that's essential to growth.

[00:42:13] <music>

Annie: And now back to finish up our conversation with David.

[00:42:25] <music>

Annie: Speaking of employees inside a company, I had one of our teammates come to me this week and say, Hey, I'd love for us to build a place where we can celebrate each other on our Slack channel. Like, I'd love for us to have a channel where we just celebrate each other. And she said, I'm afraid I'm going to forget before staff meeting on Monday the good thing this other teammate did. So can we have a place for that?

Well, as far as I was blown away, I was like, Yes, we will celebrate... I mean, we keep confetti here all the time. We love celebrating. So yes, I'd love that. But will you talk for just a minute to the people that are listening that are leaders, but they aren't the top of the company? How do you affect culture? How do you become a leader who learns if you aren't the one who is at the very top?

David: I think we all work our way into that.

Annie: That's right.

David: It doesn't happen overnight. It takes time and grade to really get there. I always said to people, You need to own your piece of yum, whatever that is, okay? And you know what our behaviors are that we're trying to drive in our company. You need to really make that happen in your piece of yum. And if you do, and everybody else does, the company's going to do fantastically well. But you need to take ownership of what happens in your piece of yum.

I think you might not be the CEO, but obviously you've got job accountabilities, and you've got to build your track record in terms of getting results. But your job is to build a fired-up, motivated team that comes to work every day, excited to attack the business. And they can't wait to work with you to make that happen.

If you're a really good leader, people want to help you achieve everything that you can. That's ownership. What you can't do is wait around and wait for somebody to tell you what to do, okay? You can't be a victim and say, Hey, you know, my boss is not doing it right. You can't be a victim. You've got to control what you can control.

And then, by the way, try to help your boss understand that they need to maybe alter some of their behavior. And that's not easy to do. But you know what? I think the people that really move up the ladder in any kind of business, they have a tendency to make their boss better.

Annie: Yeah, that's true.

David: I don't like the word boss, I like the word coach. But if a guy or woman is acting like a boss, if you can help them become a coach by giving them some good input. Because a lot of times your coaches need input too.

Annie: That's exactly right.

David: They need something that gives them, they need feedback that gives them the fodder that will help them become a better leader. And a lot of times they don't ask because they're insecure. They're insecure and they want to act like they know things and they don't have that learning mentality.

Annie: And a lot of times I find myself, we're moving so fast that I haven't asked how everyone's doing for a week. So I have one staff member who is so good at reminding me, like, hey, let's check in on everybody. I'm like, Thank you. Yes, please say that to me. Help me be the kind of leader I want to be because my brain doesn't naturally think of it all the time.

David: But, you know, obviously you have a great desire to celebrate people. You got the confetti in the office, you know. I was a big believer in recognition. I think that was probably the key behavior that drove the success that I had, whatever success I had, was I celebrated the achievements of others and had fun doing it.

I always tell people, please don't wait for the annual meeting. Please don't wait for the monthly team meeting. When you see recognition, be spontaneous. Let people know that you appreciate what they did. Like you and me, we have a lot in common. I'd get on that same treadmill too. But I tried to get myself into that mindset of looking, looking for people doing good things.

Annie: Yeah, will you tell the floppy chicken story? That is so great. Do you have time to tell us that one?

David: Yeah. Let me tell you the origin of it, okay?

Annie: Okay.

David: Because I think this is important. When I was running operations for Pepsi, I used to go out and I would meet with the route salesmen and the people in the bottling plants. And one time I'm in St. Louis and I'm meeting with like 10 route salesmen and I'm talking to them about merchandising and asking them what's working, what's not working.

And everybody started raving about this person, Bob, who's right across the table from me. And they were saying, "Oh, Bob showed me more in two days. And I learned my first four years, oh, Bob's so great with customers, etc." And I looked over at Bob and he's crying. And I said, "Bob, why are you crying?" And he said, "I've been in this company for 47 years and I'm retiring in two weeks and I didn't know people felt this way about me."

Annie: Wow.

David: So that hit me in the gut. And I said to myself, from that point on, whatever I did, the biggest behavior that I was going to really try to drive in whatever team I had the privilege of leading was going to be recognition. So I got the opportunity to become president of the KFC. So I go to KFC, and I'm thinking, I want to make recognition our number one behavior. How can I do this? And I wanted to have fun doing it. And I wanted to show everybody I wasn't going to be like the typical president. I was going to work hard, but I wasn't going to take myself too seriously. But we're going to take the business seriously.

So I was looking for a recognition award that I could give out to people who did great things. And I heard about this guy in IT who gave away this rubber chicken. And he did it at his monthly meetings. And I went to him, I said, "I really am looking for a great recognition award. Could I use your floppy chicken as my recognition award?" And he said, "Fine."

So I took that. And then what I did is I started recognizing people every time I saw them exhibiting the behaviors that I knew were going to drive results, like, let's say, customer focus or quality. I would take that floppy chicken in and I'd say, let's say, Annie, I'd say, boy, you're a great original recipe cook. I can't believe. How long you been in this company? 17 years? Oh, great. I mean, this chicken's so good. I go out, I get my rubber chicken, I come back and say, "You know what? I'm gonna give you this floppy chicken here. And then I'd number it and then I'd write on it, what you did, Annie. Quality's number one. Thank you for everything that you do. And I would give it to someone. And then I would say, "I'm gonna take a picture of you," and I take the picture and I said, "I'm going to send you a framed picture of us together. You can toss it in the trash if you want, but I'm going to put your picture in my office because you're what makes our business tick. And then I would give him or her a hundred dollars because you can't eat a rubber chicken.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. That's right.

David: And I could do that because I was president. I basically did that and I started filling up my office with pictures of people I recognized. Then I went to Pizza Hut and I gave away cheese heads. Then when I became CEO of Yum, I gave these Walk the Talk teeth away.

What happened is in business and in leadership, people cast a shadow, people do what the leader does. And people saw the impact of what I was doing and then my team, they all developed their own individual awards. And then their teams did it and recognition became the number one, it just cascaded all around the world. It worked everywhere. I mean, it was a sensational thing to see happen.

But even today, when I go speak to young people and have the opportunity to talk to them about our company and how it was founded and all that, people say that recognition is by far and away the number one behavior we have at Yum! Brands.

And I think that's the reason why we achieved the success because you can't get anything done without people believing that they count. Everybody's got to believe that what they do really does matter. But that floppy chicken was fun.

And then everybody personalized their own awards. Like if somebody was in construction, they might give away a shovel. If someone was in PR and handled crisis management, they might give away a fasten your seatbelt award. But everybody had their own little award and we had fun doing it. When you can make recognition personal, it really does make a difference.

And that floppy chicken, I will tell you this, I gave one to Chuck Grant, who was an engineer at KFC, and unfortunately he passed away with cancer. But when I went to his memorial service, his wife told me that the one thing he wanted in his casket was his rubber chicken.

Annie: No, wow.

David: I mean, but that shows you... you know, I know that people go a lot of times, like, oh, are you kidding me? But it shows how much recognition really does matter. I mean, even that Bob story I told you, I mean, it matters.

Annie: It was just words, yeah.

David: But when you're a leader, you've got to recognize that you have the privilege of leadership, and recognizing people is important. You have to recognize both the good and the bad behavior, but it's important to do both.

Annie: Yes. Gosh, David, I could just talk to you for so much longer. I thank God that you have books and your podcast, really, because you're such a gift to all of us that are trying to lead somewhere. So I know you have an app, even. My friend Luke Fleener helps work on your app, and Luke showed it to me the other day at breakfast. So I'm going all in on David Novak's teaching me how to lead. So I am diving head in.

Is there anything we didn't talk about that you want to make sure we cover?

David: No, I probably talked too much, but I certainly enjoyed it.

Annie: No, not at all. Oh, I enjoyed it so much. It truly is such a gift, especially today for me, to be able to sit under your leadership. It is an advantage. I do not deserve to get to talk to you. I cannot wait for everybody to get to read *How Leaders Learn*.

The last question we always ask, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, we've got to know, tell me what you do for fun.

David: Well, I love to write country songs.

Annie: Really? Oh yeah, you wrote one for your wife. I read about that.

David: Yeah, I've written... I have six now.

Annie: Wow!

David: I'm trying to do an album and it's basically, you know, living the American dream is the idea. So I have a number of songs. One's on the Star Spangled Banner, then the other is on my mother when she passed away, you know, called Mama. And then I wrote one about my wife. I got Wendy. And then, you know, I've got one called There's Nothing Wrong With Drinking, There's Something Wrong With Me.

Annie: That sounds like a country song right there. Well done.

David: That was when I was in the advertising agency business. I listened to somebody from a rehabilitation center. It was an account we had and the person said that. I said, "That's a country song." And then I wrote KFC and country goes together like you and me because it's all part of my career.

So those are all things that I have fun. I had somebody that I collaborated to do that stuff with but it sounds like fun to me. But I don't know.

Annie: Are you singing them in private? Are you recording or singing them?

David: No. I always sing them in private. Now I might answer and I say, I want to go on That Sounds Fun podcast. That'd be fun.

Annie: Oh, come on. Listen, when that album comes out, we have musicians come all the time, so you just come on back to the show. Thank you for making time for me today and for making time for this interview. I'm really, really grateful.

David: I'm grateful to you. Thank you very much.

[00:55:26] <music>

Outro: You guys, isn't he brilliant? As you can hear in the show, we are really working through some things here at AFD Inc. and That Sounds Fun Network. And it has been so helpful getting to talk to David, but also to read *How Leaders Learn* that comes out tomorrow.

Make sure you grab a copy of that for yourself, for your favorite leader in your life. Go follow him on social time. Thanks for being on the show. And I cannot recommend his podcast enough. It is called How Leaders Lead.

Speaking of, if you enjoyed this conversation, I think you're also going to love some of the other episodes we've done with leaders. I'm thinking of my friend Christy Wright or our Build Your Board conversation with my business partner, Kelly Haywood, and our business coach, Chris Weinberg. Those are all linked for you in the show notes below.

And if you have any questions from this episode, you can drop them in the Q&A box on your Spotify app if you're a Spotify listener like me, or send them to us on the Instagram @thatsoundsfunpodcast. We'll try to answer them there.

Hey, listen, make sure you are following That Sounds Fun podcast this month, particularly this month and next month. July is a lot of your favorite month on the podcast that you don't want to miss what's coming on That Sounds Fun podcast, on socials as well.

But also June is the month that I take some time off and all the information about our podcasts that are still going to be brand new and incredible is going to be @thatsoundsfunpodcast. So make sure you're following there.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find this week. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. Anywhere you may need me, that's where you can find me. And in New York City, as you are listening and seeing on socials and hearing in our AFD and NYC.

I think that's it for me today, friends. So go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you, and I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me is getting my little New York apartment ready for some of my family to get here for a couple of days this weekend. I'm really excited.

Y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday. Y'all get ready for Thursday. If you have ever, ever, ever thought about writing a book, Thursday is your day. Writing coach and author, Allie Fallon, is here with some great information and some great resources. So this is the summary. You write your book, my friend. We'll see you back here on Thursday.