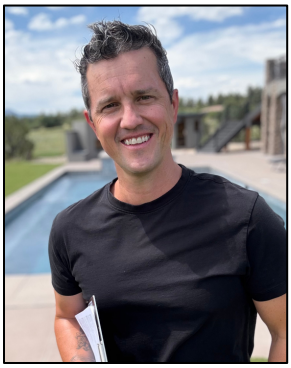
MASTERS by Winn Claybaugh, November 2026

Dwight Braswell: Conversations That Make a Leader



Dwight Braswell is the founder of Complete Leadership Academy, where he helps managers lead through clearer conversations, better coaching, and practical tools.

Interviewed by **Winn Claybaugh,** Dwight does not speak in riddles; he is very clear on how everyday leadership can look, what brings out the best in a team, and what creates true loyalty. Pay close attention as he shares his 3Cs framework and his tools for giving leaders a repeatable way to understand a situation, define what matters, and involve people in the next step.

Winn: Hey, everybody, Winn Claybaugh here with my MASTERS podcast series in my 30th year. I think you might get a little tired of me saying this but, you know, I'm pretty proud of that. The fact that the word *podcast,* I don't even think that word existed 30 years ago. And by the way, it certainly wasn't my idea to become a podcaster. It was Tony Robbins. I was following what my mentors do. What do they say? If you want to duplicate your mentor's success, well then, duplicate their work and their behavior and their efforts. And so that's what I was doing. Tony Robbins had a monthly podcast. It was mailed out on a cassette tape. And so, since he was doing it, you know what? I'll do the same thing. And here I am 30 years later, so, so grateful to have days like this. Days when I get to interview wonderful people. And today I'm sitting with Dwight Braswell. Dwight, thank you so much for doing this.

Dwight: Of course. No, it's a pleasure. I'm also not only a fan of Tony Robbins but, boy, I could say I've done the same thing: duplicated, mirrored, mimicked him, Jim Rohn, all those. So, thank you for this.

Winn: So, Dwight, I was with Tony—gosh, my daughter had to be tiny. So, she's 14 now. So maybe she was only three when I was with Tony. And he's like, he's like, “Hey, let's a video for your daughter.” And it was so cool. He's like, “Hi Sofia, you don't know who I am. Maybe one day you'll know who your Uncle Tony is.” But you know, to have that video to show it to her years, years later, when she does know who he is, that would be pretty cool.

Dwight: That is very cool. Yeah. I dreamt of like being on the same stage as Tony. So, I could imagine having a little video like that is, yeah, pretty impactful no matter how long.

Winn: Yeah.

Dwight: So, that's great.

Winn: Well, I follow my mentors and that's what he taught me that many years ago. And so, I'm just so grateful. So, let me just share with my audience who

Dwight is. He is the founder of Complete Leadership Academy and Flag Football with Coach D. Okay. What is Flag Football with Coach D?

Dwight: [*Laughs*] It's actually, you know—

Winn: I know what the Complete Leadership Academy is, but what's the Flag Football thing?

Dwight: Okay. Let's talk about it. So, now it's 12 years ago. So, you talk about 30 years. Twelve years ago, my wife signed me up. My son was five. She's like, "I want you guys to connect." I'm obviously a football fan, but I had never coached before. It's a Thursday. She says, "Hey, Dwight, just so you know, I signed you up to coach Noah's flag football team this weekend." I was like, "Wait, what? What do we—what—how?" And so, it was a Thursday. Saturday was our first practice. Sunday, our first game. I had no idea what I was doing. Freaked out. I'm one of those prep guys so I started Googling and there was nothing. At that point, same thing, 13, 12 years ago, nothing on flag football. I think there was one guy with a shirt and he had some video. Anyway. And I realized that there was a gap. There was a gap. That first season was a disaster. And I started shooting these little videos in my backyard of, "Hey parents, in between the practices with your five-, six-year-old, do some of these little drills." Put it on YouTube and who knew? And now we have thousands of parents and new coaches that we build playbooks, practices, drill packs, wristbands, equipment. So, it turned into an entire business where we serve those parents being thrown in there.

Winn: That's so cool. That's so cool.

Dwight: Giving them the confidence. Yeah, so it's been fun.

Winn: Good for you. Now, I'm glad you put it in the very first sentence of your bio. I love that. Good for you.

Dwight: [*Laughs*] It's a big one.

Winn: Okay. So, now a little bit more. So, through Dwight's manager versus leader teaching, he helps managers and business owners lead people with clearer conversations, practical coaching, and shared ownership. Obviously I'm reading this, but I just want a little shout out to people listening to this thinking, *Well, I'm not the boss. I'm not the owner. I'm not even the leader,* but yeah, I have a feeling that you want to be those things. I have a feeling that you aspire to get the raise, to make more money, to get the title, to get the power, to get the position, which is all the more reason to listen to what Dwight is going to teach us about the difference between a manager and a leader, because there absolutely is a difference. So, Dwight's background includes leadership roles at MCI, Zillow, and Trulia. Keynote speaking for McDonald's general managers. Okay, you so when McDonald's brought me in, it was in Indianapolis. And get this, the day that I was there in Indianapolis, it was the coldest spot on the entire planet.

Dwight: [*Laughs*]

Winn: I hope they took better care of you than they did of me.

Dwight: I was in, let's see, Syracuse. Syracuse, New York. And the Uber driver said, “Look, this is gonna be, this is the place that it is the coldest. It is the coldest state and city of all time.” Now, at that point, it wasn't. Thank goodness they brought me out at a good time and they took care of me. But he told me. He warned me.

Winn: Okay. You lucked out. Yeah, well, let's talk to McDonald's. Let’s share with them warmer climates.

Dwight: Let's go.

Winn: There are warmer places on the planet to hold these events. So, you have a leadership development with Rocky Mountain Ace stores and training for Army National Guard recruiters. Dwight has spent more than 12 years consulting and owns multiple businesses with teams around the world, bringing an operator's perspective to the challenges he teaches. Dwight holds an MBA in organizational leadership and focuses on what leaders can use in their next conversation. And you guys, he's gonna role play this for us. Through customized keynotes, workshops, coaching, and reinforcement tools, he helps people set expectations, give useful feedback, navigate difficult conversations—oh, those never happen—and build ownership with the people doing the work. Dwight also brings, I love this, also brings a performance background to his work. He spent years as a professional actor and musician and appeared in HBO's *The Pacific.* Today, his focus is helping leaders turn useful ideas into everyday behaviors that strengthen their teams. Once again, Dwight, I'm so grateful and we finally made this happen. You know, I get it. You know, we're busy. If both of us had nothing going on, we probably would not be interested in spending this time with each other, right?

Dwight: No, thanks. Absolutely. But no, I appreciate you making it happen.

Winn: I always like to start with the person's story and you know, your dad is a retired Air Force colonel and I'm sure that your dad had a lot to share with you about leadership scenarios. So, let's just start with that.

Dwight: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So, he was also a chaplain. So, I always have to share that because when I go into a room, people are like, wow, where's this energy coming from? Not only was he a chaplain, my grandfather was a preacher as well. But look, I had a front row seat to not only a master storyteller, but then as he was going through the different ranks up to becoming a colonel, he would unpack these different scenarios. So, as he would go through war college or he would have a captain come in and share. You know, he wouldn't share too personal information, but we would start to what I call a “deal review.” He would start to unpack these things with me and just ask me, you know, “What's your insight on this? How would you handle this? What type of questions would we ask?” And so, we would just have these kind of conversations and he would use these metaphors all the time. So, you know, it just gave me an appreciation for tactical, like situational awareness, like,

you know, Ken Blanchard. And so, I was gifted that from a very early age and didn't even realize that he was pouring into me these lessons. You know, I remember like the six P's: proper priority planning prevents poor performance. DIN: do it now. So, frameworks were also a part that kind of give you a starting point for not only your mindset but for how to navigate certain situations. So yeah, I still talk to him and it's pretty cool.

Winn: That's awesome. I'm just imagining a little version of Dwight running around the house repeating—what are the? How many peas are there?

Dwight: [*Laughs*] Six P's.

Winn: The six peas, the little Dwight.

Dwight: All day long. Yeah. He was Dwight senior. So, I mean, like I, he would just, "Let's go."

Winn: That's great that you had that. My mom, it was, "If it's to be, it's up to me." There are eight kids in the family and my mom would repeat that over: "If it's to be, it's up to me." I love that.

Dwight: Oh, I love that one. My mom's was always, "This too shall pass. This too shall pass." So, I saw a podcast with Tom Hanks and he was talking through that as well. And no matter what happens, you can get through it, keep going, keep moving. So, when I first started motivational and leadership training, that was kind of my go-to: Keep going, just keep pushing, keep charging. So, I've got a big passion for that, too.

Winn: That's great. Now there's so many areas that I want to touch on and navigate you through. There's what you call the three C's: curiosity, clarity, and co-creation. There's also the exercise that you do: save this, not that. And I know you have some cards and I'm going to encourage our listeners to purchase those because it's just little cue cards. Little reminders that can be so handy, You're in that situation. How do I handle this? And I like that. You also have your True North activity. And so, you know, give me an idea. What's the best thing to start with?

Dwight: So, I have this complete leader package, very similar to when I started my coaching for flag football. We have a complete coach package, but the complete leader package has several different tools, from Leadership Questions; Say This, Not That; a Leadership Skills Program, all of these things. But very early on, I had a few leaders come to me and say, "Hey, where should I start?" And so I put together a Start Here Guide. And the very first thing that I always have them do, and I'll do this in workshops, is called the True North activity.

Winn: Okay.

Dwight: And a lot of times, no matter who we are as leaders—again, I believe that leadership is not a title, it's a fire. But if I get thrown into a leadership role, a lot of times I don't know how to define how I make decisions. Who am I as a leader? Like, what's my style? All that. So, I give them these five integrity

statements that I want them to complete and think through. So: I will, I won't, I must, I believe, and I value. So, for example, I will go to bat for my people, right? No matter what, I'm going to fight for them; they are going to know that. I won't let anything hold us back, right? I talk about Marie Forleo early on. She was my Tony Robbins for years. And she has this whole philosophy of everything is figure out-able. She even has a book on it. Fantastic.

Winn: I love that. Figure out-able

Dwight: It's figure out-able, right? Everything is solution based. I have two teenagers and we always talk about instead of me telling them what to do, I want to include them, right? But figure it out, figure it out. So, I believe that that's very important. I must lead by example. If I'm going to ask somebody to do something, I'm going to show instead of just tell. So, I'm big into that. I believe in ownership over accountability. That's just a core principle. So, anytime you listen to my videos, you hear me, you come into my ecosystem, you're going to hear that a lot. I believe in ownership versus accountability. I'm watching. And then I value effort. I value you showing up every day, consistency. So, for me, every single day there's a video, manager versus leader, that is me absolutely showing that value of consistency, showing up, and effort, right? I believe if you do those things, you'll be successful. So, when I do those integrity statements, that becomes as a leader, whether you're new or you've been leading for years, that becomes kind of my True North. And then I share that with my team so they know who I am. They know when I'm making decisions, what's my judgment? What's my compass, right? And so, everything I do kind of reminds me of that. And so, it's been a nice little activity that people can do either on their own or with their team to kind of kick it off.

Winn: I believe, and I know you believe this as well, that the purpose of all education, the purpose of all training, the purpose of anybody listening to a podcast is that we change behavior. Meaning if you listen to this and then nothing changes in your life, did you learn anything? No. The whole idea is that something has to change. So, are you challenging people? Is the recommendation—because I'm sure you've been through this hundreds if not thousands of times—is you get, whether that's a brand new leader, somebody trying to learn what it means to be a leader, or maybe it's a seasoned owner, a seasoned entrepreneur who really needs to fine tune their leadership, that they walk through this activity that you call True North, where it's the five integrity statements that I will, I won't, I must, I believe, and I value. So, they have to go through each of those to come up with their statement.

Dwight: Yeah. So, actually we give time. So, as a leader, I think you reflect. When I'm a sole contributor, I get so much technical training and I spend my time on doing: doing the work, doing, doing, serving the client or, know. As a leader, I think it, it gives you an opportunity to sit back and reflect. So early on, a lot of new leaders transitioning from a sole contributor into a leadership role, they think, *Oh, let me quickly come up with the first thing that comes to mind.* No,

no, no. I want you to take a step back. So, I'll give them 20, 30 minutes, 45 minutes to sit down.

Winn: To go through this?

Dwight: Yeah. To share, to think. And then I actually want them to bounce it off even other people, and have them share it with other leaders or, you know, and who do you see me as? You know, sometimes a mirror can help us like reflect and be like, “Oh, wait a second. Oh yeah, I am like that. I didn't think about that. Okay.” Because this is something, if you're going to communicate it to your team and this is going to course correct and help you decide who you are as a leader, at least give you a foundation at the very beginning, I think it takes a little bit of time. I think you can also switch it up a little bit as you go and navigate and it can be fluid. But then I want you to communicate it with your team and get their reaction, get their response, you know? And then you live it out. You have to live it out.

Winn: So, this is like a promise.

Dwight: Yeah.

Winn: It's like a promise that the leader makes to their team.

Dwight: Hundred percent. Hundred percent. And then, if I am making a decision outside of this, I invite people to share that. Not as pushback, but awareness. I'm okay with, you know, Kim Scott talks about, you know, if I'm going to give difficult feedback to someone, if I'm going to earn the right to share tough feedback or give candid feedback, I also want to invite them to share feedback with me. And it has to be both ways. So, it's another opportunity for people to say, “Hey, I want you to hold me to this. I want you to hold me to this. I'm going to do my best to own it. But look, if you don't see me walking this, let me know.”

Winn: Do you have any stories? ’Cause you're an entrepreneur. So, you own businesses. Do you have any stories of maybe your team pushing you back on this? “Hey, hey, Dwight, you promised this. This is your statement. This is your True North, but you're not living up to this.” Because, and by the way, maybe I should have said this in the very beginning when I introduced you. One of the reasons why I really wanted to interview you is because you have credibility. You have credibility in needing to apply this information. ’Cause you know, Dwight, I've shared the stage with very successful speakers and their whole message is on leadership. And so backstage I'm having a conversation: “Oh, tell me more about your company. How many team members do you have?” “Oh, I don't have any.”

Dwight: [*Laughs*] Uh-oh, wait a second.

Winn: So, in other words, you don't have to leave here, go back to your office and practice and really put this information to work. This is just in theory.

Dwight: Yeah.

Winn: So, you have team members, you know. So, have they pushed back on you on your True North statement?

Dwight: Yeah. I think the reason I landed on this is ’cause it is very hard for me personally to apply this whole manager versus leader. I do like to tell people what to do. And it's always been, you know, as a salesperson, I recommend strongly, I have conviction. As somebody who is, you know, an entrepreneur, you have to have a trust in yourself that you know the best way forward. You just do. And so, it's very challenging. So, for example, Sabah on my team, she handles a lot of our social media and distribution and all of that. And I'll give her ownership of something, but then I will come in and I will micromanage and then I'll even actually do some of the stuff. So, if I—let's go tactical: a thumbnail is not exactly the way that it should be. I mean, I believe that our brand is very important to who we are. It tells the story of who we are and consistency in all of that is big. And if I don't see that, and this is as recent as a month ago, she was like, “Don't come in here and try to micromanage when your whole message is ownership. Let me communicate with my team. We'll take care of it. Take the hand off the wheel and step back.” And she called me out. Like straight up and I was like, “Oh man, you're so right.”

Winn: I know. Don't you hate when your people call you out on your own stuff?

Dwight: [*Laughs*] She did. And I was like, “Okay.” So literally I stopped. Midway. I was like, “You're right. You're right.” And you know what? Look, they took care of it. So, it's a work in progress. And so not only am I teaching this to other leaders, but I work on applying it every single day. With my kids, with anybody. You know, I think this is the type of stuff that it's human to human communication. So, it doesn't matter what the senior level leadership is. It doesn't matter the, you know, you're a manufacturing company, an entrepreneur. Doesn't matter. It's human to human, so this applies across the board. Parents.

Winn: I think we need to jump into more, again, the difference between a manager and a leader. And by the way, those examples that you just gave—you know, telling people what to do, that's a manager. Micromanaging, that's a manager. And I get it. It's hard for me, too, because, Dwight, you and I get paid for our opinions. We get paid for what we think. Right? And so, for us to step back from that and assume the role of a leader, that's a bit of a challenge.

Dwight: It is.

Winn: So maybe give us some more insight on the difference between a manager and a leader so people have a really clear focus on that.

Dwight: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, earlier you talked about these Say This, Not That cards. So, a lot of times when I think about a manager versus a leader, a manager is going to tell you what to do. They're going to hold you accountable to that, almost like, “I'm watching.” I assume that there's clarity. So, I've told you what to do. You better do it. And if you don't, there's a

consequence. I'm going to write you up. I'm going to yell at you. I'm going to whatever. And a lot of times I'm also going to—I do this a lot. I'm going to label you and I'm going to put you in a box. I'm going to label you and I'm going to put you in a box. You're unprofessional, you're lazy, you're negative, whatever. And so, I come into any conversation judging and I assume that we're on the same page. There's a right way to do it, right? But a leader is going to switch that conversation completely. First of all, I'm going to take you out of the box and talk to you as a human. I'm not looking at your demographics. I'm not looking at your generational background. And look, I did a whole thesis on the difference between different generations. But again, if I walk into any conversation, that to me is a manager type of a judgment first instead of curiosity first. So, I take you out of that. And then I invite you to be part of the problem-solving process. I say that over and over and over and over and over again. I want you to think, right? We're building thinkers, not just better employees. So, for example, and this is just one of these little cards and I usually give this example. If I'm trying to turn around low performance, then it might look like this. A manager is going to say, “You're not meeting expectations.” Just come right in. And I think our tone matters as well. And this has nothing to do with your title. But when I say something like that, what it does is it attacks the person instead of identifying behaviors and causes. Now, as a leader, I believe that we can't fix people but we can fix behavior. So, I think about that SBI model from Center for Creative Leadership. I love that model because it's very simple. It's a simple way to give feedback. So, a leader is going to say, “Look, in the last two weeks, you missed both deadlines, which put extra pressure on the team.” So now I've given you a specific example. There's facts over feelings. There's impact there. So, I talk about that a lot. Love Center for Creative Leadership. And then right here, Winn, this is when I have what's called a leader conversation. And to be honest, this came from the Flag Football with Coach D where, if a kid is acting out, their behavior is kind of crazy, they're distracting, they're really emotional, whatever. What I'm going to do is I'm going to get at their level, just get right there. Calm, cool, confident, whatever. And I'm going to have a leader conversation with this person. So, in this instance, I'm going to say, “Look, I want you to succeed.” Right? People rise to the level of belief in them. That's John Wooden. And so, let's figure out what's getting in the way and how we can get you back on track. So, let's. Right? That's that partnership where a manager just tells you almost like a PIP conversation: “Here's what you better do. And if you don't do it, I don't know if you're going to be here any longer.” This is a let's. And then my favorite part is we actually ask them questions. So, *What's been the biggest obstacle on meeting deadlines?* Listen. And, *What resources would help you get back on track?* Listen. Now, another quick thing that I say when I talk about the difference between a manager and a leader is I think that your tone matters. So, as a performer, if you see me on stage, if you walk into your team and they know you as this person up here, you know, and you have your dynamics or, you know, super... But when I'm having a conversation like that, I actually sit back.

I create space and I go what I call “back of throat.” And so, you'll see, in any of my videos, you'll see my tone drops. And what that does, it's almost like deference. I'm giving them space to answer because I actually want to hear their opinion. And it's hard in the moment, cause especially like, I just want to tell you what to do and I'll ask you a question, but then I'll keep going. But this, “So what's been the biggest obstacle?” And then—*shhh.* So that's what I think. When I think of the difference between a manager and a leader, it has nothing to do with title. It's more of an approach. It's the way you see your people. It's the way that you trust your people to come up with solutions. It's coaching over telling. It's all of that.

Winn: So, I don't think our intention here is to make managers look bad. So, is there a role, a healthy, necessary role of a manager working with a leader, or—help me on that one.

Dwight: Yeah. So, I think both are important. And look, in my comments, I hear this all the time. You need both. You do. You do need both. Like we do have to get things done. We do have to navigate through challenges. We do have to manage. There is a list. I usually write the word “LIST” out on the whiteboard, right? The big whiteboard with a list. But at the same time, even if I have the checklist, even if we have to make sure that we're doing the right things, we have to get their input. So, we have to list and then I write a little “—en” right there. You have to listen. So, we have to invite them. So yes, I am going to manage results. I am going to manage people out. I am going to manage our time, I am going to manage. Yes, of course. And to be honest, here's another thing I think about. Just like the situational thing we talk about, each person needs a little something different.

Winn: Right.

Dwight: So, if I'm in a coaching conversation and someone's like, “I don't know what to do.” That's okay. Give them space. “If you did know, what would be the first thing? If our roles were reversed, what would you tell me to do?” But they can't come up with it. They just can't, and it's actually hurting progress instead of moving us forward, then I'm going to leap in and I'm going to manage. “You know what? Here, let me, I got you. I got you. Here's what I would do first.” Okay? And then what does support look like, right? So, I think you can do both, for sure. I just—the reason why I lean so heavy on manager does this, leader does that is the simple dichotomy, right? Just that simple dichotomy so that we can make that shift in the moment. That's all.

Winn: So, do you have the belief system that every person in an organization should be learning and practicing and growing into leadership behavior?

Dwight: Yeah. So, I'm again, Simon Sinek. I love love Simon Sinek's work and, you know, he says that this is a skill. It's almost like a muscle that you can exercise—

Winn: Right.

Dwight: —and you can learn. You know, we're not born with a lot of this. You know, tough conversations, the uncomfortable conversations. A lot of times we avoid it. And all that does, just like mold in the corner that you avoid and all of sudden it turns into a big problem or a leak, you know. Should everybody fix the leak in their house before? Yeah, let's address it. So, I think that every single person. And he also says, look, leadership is like looking over to the person to your right and to your left and being able to help them rise. I love stuff like that because it's true. Even if I'm in the trenches and I may not have the title, but we all know that person. We know that person of influence. That's a leader for sure. If they can help navigate some of these conversations, if they can invite people to share their opinions. So, it's not just telling. I mean, absolutely. And again, this crosses outside of work. So, whether you're trying to start a business, whether you're an entrepreneur, whether you have a family, whether you're friends, anything like that, everyone can be a leader. And so that's why I always say it, like it's not a title. It's that fire inside all of us and we can learn to ignite it. So yeah, I do.

Winn: I've seen that. I'm sure you have seen this many, many, many times where sometimes it's that brand-new person who has only been there for a couple of weeks who has basically no title, no power, maybe paid less than anybody in the whole organization. And yet they are displaying and practicing leadership qualities, better leadership qualities than the guy who owns the company. We've seen that many, many times.

Dwight: So true. So true. I was with Ace Hardware. We had 150 in the room and I literally just said, “You know who the leaders are on your team. Like you can just see it.” And it's so true. And that's why I like a Jocko Willink, who has like the extreme ownership, right? And the person who literally is just taking ownership of what they are responsible for. So, for example, my son is 17. He's now kind of an intern for my flag football business. And he has to post one video and he has to ship out all of our stuff, right? So, he—

Winn: Okay.

Dwight: The first couple of weeks, it was a struggle. He does not have a leadership role. But I talked to him about, “Look, I don't want to sit here and micromanage you. I don't want to have to like—I want you to just own it. And here's the outcome. Like, all I ask is this. And if you can take leadership, like responsibility of that, own it. And quality wise, all of that.” And we talked about what good looks like, all that great stuff. And I tell you, I've not had to have other conversations. The kid just all of a sudden just turned it on. And to me, I think that's leadership. So, you can lead. Even if you don't have a team of people, you're leading, taking care of your customer, taking care of this. I believe that's—you go into a restaurant and you see the person who is literally taking care of that table. Then they're checking up on the kitchen staff, then they go to the bar, make sure they're okay. All that. That right there is leadership in my mind. I see it every day.

Winn: Yeah, you know, I remember a couple of years ago, I lost a key person in my organization. And so I was, you know, trying to look for somebody to fill in that position. And I was talking to a good friend and I was telling him what I was trying to figure out, what I was going through. And he says, “Well, I know, I know who you need to hire.” I’m like, “Tell me who.” He's like, “The person who already has the followers.” And you would think that that would have been already clear to me. Yeah, because you can give somebody the title. And by the way, I see it all the time. Somebody shows a skillset in one area of their career. Maybe they're really good in sales, they're really good in HR, they’re really good. Meaning they're really good, they shine in one area, and we assume that that skillset of what they're really good at would also automatically apply to them being the leader, being the boss. And sometimes it's not the same skill set. But I liked that advice from my friend, you know: find somebody who was already has a bunch of followers.

Dwight: That's it. That tells you exactly what you need to know. Yeah.

Winn: And I like that you brought that up. That leadership is a skill set. You know, there's some things that we think, *Well, I'm just naturally that way or I'm not. And if I'm not, there's nothing I can do about it.* Empathy. I learned that we're not born with empathy. We learn empathy. We're not born knowing how to play the piano. It's a skill set that we had to practice, practice, practice. And same thing applies to leadership as well. So, what are some of the myths and the mistakes that some entrepreneurs are making when it comes to how they apply leadership, how they're trying to lead their people? Because you must see it all the time. And again, you're paid for your opinion.

Dwight: Yeah.

Winn: So, and I doubt that, Dwight, you show up. to a company and say, “Hey, everything's perfect. Don't change a thing.” ’Cause that doesn't serve them. That doesn't help them. They basically hire you to come in and, “Let us know, what are we doing wrong?” Right?

Dwight: Yeah.

Winn: And you’ve got to be honest with them. They're paying you for this. And so, what are those situations? You know, “Help us out. We think maybe we're doing the right thing. We think that we're properly leading our people but really we're making mistakes.”

Dwight: Yeah. So I was, I had the fortune of making a very big mistake early on as a leader. I was 17, I was the top salesperson, and I was on a team of about 12 people. And my director came to me and he said, “Look, I'm going to put you into a supervisor position and I want you to increase the performance of the entire team. And now you have 12 people under you.” Now look, at 17, everybody was at least double my age. And so, I made the mistake of basically saying if they're going to be good, they have to be exactly like me.

Winn: Oh, okay.

Dwight: So, I would tell everybody to—“Here's what good looks like. If you are more energetic, if you know your script, if you do—.” And I basically unloaded what made me successful.

Winn: Right.

Dwight: And so, I looked at every single one of them through a very small lens of what success looked like. So, a lot of times when we're put into a role, it's almost like a, you know, a top quarterback or anything else goes off the field and now they have to be the coach and now they have to coach and build a team. What happens is a lot of times we look at everybody based off of who we are, whether it's feedback, whether it's recognition, whether it's what they need to increase or turn around their low performance. It's based off of our own skillset. Our own strengths, our own weaknesses. So, we come at them like that. “If you only do it this way.” And that's where I feel like a lot of us are not giving people the opportunity to start with that curiosity. *How do you see this?* What is the gap? We diagnose instead of coming in and judging. *Is it a skill gap? Is it that will gap? Is it a commitment thing? Do you have other things going on outside of work? Do you not connect to the purpose like I do?* So, I do one-on-one coaching and a lot of times people, it's almost like the exact same situation. *Well, they're just not self-motivated like I am. Like I just don't get it. Like why aren't they self-motivated, right?* And Gary V and Alex Hormozi and all these other guys will say, “Look, you cannot judge someone based off of who you are. They will never care as much. They will never be—." Right? So, I think a lot of leaders make that mistake is they look at people from their own reflection. And so, what I try to do first off is I want them to step back, start with curiosity, start to understand it from their perspective. And I think if we can understand how people get feedback, how they need recognition, how they like coaching. And then we can help them kind of fill their own gap. Based off of who they are, can they be that 1 percent better for themselves? I think that changes like almost right away how we approach coaching and leadership.

Winn: Wow. And I want to get into this more, but I have a feeling that a lot of your cards—you know, Say This, Not That—is the “say this” part of it lots and lots and lots and lots of questions and then listening?

Dwight: So actually, what it is is, first of all, giving feedback and then inviting them with questions. So, it's also—so for example, the Say This cards is more of, okay, a manager is going to kind of come in and attack and this is why it doesn't work. So, people can kind of see that. *Oh, wow. I say that all the time. Ooh, maybe I should not. Oh, okay.* So, sometimes we need that. Like, “Here's what you're doing. Reflect on it.” “Okay.” “So that's not the effective way.” “Well, I'm just direct.” “Yeah, but when you say that, this is why you have to have the same conversation over and over, because yes, if you're there, sure, they'll do it, compliance, but you got too much control. Step back.” So, what the leader side teaches is not only a simple model but then what type of questions and what kind of phrasing or words can we use? Like, let's build a plan. Let's figure out what's getting in the way. Like, let's look at what

good looks like. From your perspective, like what's getting in the way? What have you already tried? And then it gives them just specific questions that they can ask that are like, “Oh, it's my questions. That's why they're not—.” Like, *What would you do? Or how are you feeling? Or how's everything going,* right? Little things like that are not effective. That's why you're not getting the answers that you want. That's why they're not thinking. So, I think that is one of the reasons why I put these together. And then I just introduced, based off of the three C's, these Coach This, Not That cards. And what this does is it actually gives you specific questions to ask in a three-C conversation, which we'll unpack in a minute, but how do I actually invite them to share their curiosity, to get clear on the outcomes, to co-create and partner together? How do I actually do that? So, it's the how, and that's why I have these tactical tools.

Winn: So, give us an example of, mostly on the Say This, Not That, where people say, “Oh my gosh, I say that all the time.” Give us a hardcore example of what managers are saying all the time and your cards are teaching them, “Oh my gosh, that was such a huge mistake.”

Dwight: Yeah, like, “You need to communicate better.”

Winn: Oh, I shouldn't say that anymore?

Dwight: [*Laughs*] You know, we were watching, let's see, *Party Down,* I think, last night and the guy's like, “Hey, you're unprofessional. You just need to be professional. Just be professional.” That just doesn't work. You know, “You're being negative,” right? “The whole team thinks that you're being negative.” Or, “You're always—.” If I use always or never—

Winn: Right.

Dwight: Or, “You just have a bad attitude,” right? A lot of times that just creates the defensiveness that we're afraid of. The reason why these are uncomfortable is because we're like, “Uh-oh, they're gonna explode.”

Winn: Even on a personal level, when somebody says to me, “You seem like you're really pissy today.” I'm like—

Dwight: [*Laughs*] What?

Winn: Like, how do I respond to that? “I'm not.” For them to say it that way, rather than, “Hey, how are you? What's going on? Everything okay?” “You seem really pissy today.”

Dwight: Yeah.

Winn: I'm like, what?

Dwight: Yeah. So if I see a pattern of someone being late all the time—“You're always late. You're never on time. You're not reliable,” right? “So, help me understand like what's going on. There's obviously been a pattern here that's starting to develop. I want to make sure that we get ahead of it.” Tone drops, right? And I actually invite them to share from their perspective. What's going

on? And you'll see this in all my videos. I literally just drop it and I want to understand what's going on because now it's a pattern. And as a pattern, that creates frustration or I can sit back. Yesterday we talked about emotions and if I go into a conversation too early and I don't have specific examples, I haven't thought through this, then a lot of times we come at it with emotion and that immediately just sets the tone for defensiveness.

Winn: Right.

Dwight: I have to defend myself, et cetera. So, if I can understand like, okay, this person has an entire world going on behind what I can see. Like I have no idea what's going on behind the scenes here. So, what is it? Like maybe the daycare is literally like shutting down and they are now 10 minutes late on pickup, right? We just don't know.

Winn: Right.

Dwight: So, I want to give them the benefit of the doubt. And Brené Brown and all these others, they talk about intention versus impact, right? And I believe that people come into the world or into our ecosystem with good intentions. So, I start there. So, let's address the pattern. And then we do have to talk about like the expectations.

Winn: Right.

Dwight: Like, “So when you're late, what's the expectation?” “Well, I mean, they're covering for—”. “So, every time, Winn is having to cover for you, how do you think that feels for Winn?” “Oh, I had—oh shoot, wait a second. You mean he's having to come in early because of me? I had no idea.” And a lot of times it's that self-awareness that's like, okay. And then the co-creation part is, “Okay, so what can we do? Like starting today, what would be different? What can we do? Whether it's the childcare or whatever else or coverage, what can we do?” So instead of me telling, we come up with that together and I give them space to come up with that solution. And what that does is that creates the ownership piece. And then it's like, ”Okay, so what's the next step then? Who are you going to talk to?” “Okay, well—” And this is what you want. So right here, and I talk about this all the time, this is what you want your people to do. It's just natural for us to go, if you're challenging me to think, then I have to go like this, “Um, uh.” Let them. It's not the whole Let Them theory from Mel Robbins but it's let them struggle through it. “Okay, so I got to talk to, so, okay, well, let me talk to Winn.” And I'm not going to, as the leader, as the manager, the boss, I'm not going to talk to Winn. “You got to take care of this. What are you going to do?” So, all of a sudden, instead of me telling and holding them accountable and you better not do this and making them feel guilty and all of that, all of a sudden it's like, “Wow, I need to turn that around. That's not fair.”

Winn: Right.

Dwight: “Yeah, let me figure that out. I didn't realize that that was happening. Okay.” And then my favorite part, Winn, to be honest, is a lot of managers, a lot of

bosses, we feel like we have to come up with the follow through and the follow up. So, I was in a workshop not long ago and LaShawn, front row, she says, “I really struggle with coming up with a follow up for my people.” And I said, like, “Tell me what that looks like.” She's like, “Well, I always have to.” And I said, “Why don't you just allow them to own that? Allow them to come up with what the follow up looks like and then have them own the follow through, have them own, *When are you going to come back and share what the progress is and how will we know that we're on the right track?*” And then all of sudden they come to you, let's say within 24 hours, and they're like, “Hey, I talked to Winn. I talked to the childcare as well and here's what's going to happen. So, I'm going to try to do this, this, and this. I'm going to be on time. I'm actually going to be about five minutes early from now on, okay?” So now they're coming to you instead of you—so, if you're chasing, that means you're probably managing. If all of a sudden they're coming to you, you've empowered them with that autonomy to be able to solve it. And then they take ownership and commit to the team and to the outcome. It's pretty cool.

Winn: I love that. So, from start to finish, you're asking them or including them, inviting them to co-create what this looks like from start to finish. By the way, did you just walk us through the three C's? Did you just like speak that in there before I even asked the question?

Dwight: [*Laughs*] Yeah, it starts to become part of, you know, what you do and how you approach these situations. So yes, it's just like, you know, adult learning is all about like the unconscious incompetence. You don't know what you don't know. And then all the way through to brushing your teeth where you have this, you know, consciousness and then you're like unconscious competence.

Winn: Right. Love that.

Dwight: Now it's just part of I am. So that's where, yeah, these little tools, just like in the gym, I need kind of a workout routine. And then all of sudden after a while it's like, *Oh, wait a second. I kind of got this. Oh, wow. Oh, I'm seeing results. Okay, this is kind of who I am now.* So that's—so yes, I did.

Winn: Okay so, listeners, what Dwight did, he was really sneaky behind our backs. He walked us through curiosity, clarity, and co-creation.

Dwight: Yeah, 100 percent.

Winn: Good job. Good job. You know, by the way, I love that you bring theater and your acting, performing. musician experience to all of this because that's kind how I like to define customer service in a salon. I'm in the salon business, in the hair business, in the beauty business, and it's theatrics. That's the best way I know how to explain it. Because if we're talking about dress code, well, if you go to see a Broadway show, gosh, they're all in costume. You know, they don't say, “You know what? I don't want that costume tonight. I'm just going to go out in my jeans tonight. I don't really need to dress like Phantom of the Opera tonight. I'm just going to be in my jeans. And by the way, I'm not

going to follow the script. I'm just going to wing it tonight on the stage. I don't, and we don't need the perfect lighting. We don't need the set design. We don't need—" No! Everything, everything from the dialogue to the dress code, to the scripting, to what we say, to what we don't say, it's all a performance. It's all a performance. So.

Dwight: I love that. I love that. I studied musical theater and I always ask—and this is sales training, leadership training, especially with cards or something. People are like, "What, am I supposed to bring the cards into the conversation?" Oh no, no, no, no, no. What's your favorite movie? And I like to do stuff like this. So, what's your favorite movie? And we go around, "Oh, my favorite movie is this." Okay. So, when the first cast came out, they came together. What do you think they did? Right at the very beginning, what did that look like?

Winn: Mhmm, right.

Dwight: And we talk about the table read. And what they do is they go around and they start to read. They start to read and they literally just start reading and they read. They're not winging it. They're not improv-ing. They're not just kind of like, "Ah, this is not good. This is not, ah." They just read. Form first. And then over time they start to develop and make it their own and create the character and situations and learn how to connect with each other. And all of a sudden, from that table read to your favorite scene ever, it was a process. Didn't happen overnight, but I can tell you they spent time.

Winn: Right.

Dwight: Not on set, not in rehearsals, probably outside. And it took time for them to develop that. And now it's become your favorite. So, if you're trying to get to that, don't judge yourself on the final scene. Judge it from the table read. And that's where you're starting. Yeah, we like to play with that. So, I love your thought on that. It's good.

Winn: I just saw a couple of weeks ago, just, I went to New York and I saw *The Outsiders* on Broadway. Have you seen it?

Dwight: Yes.

Winn: The musical?

Dwight: Yes.

Winn: You saw it? Okay, there's one scene that I don't—I mean, there's lots of fight scenes, but this was the fight scene. My gosh, when it was over, it's like, I wanted to stand up and say, "Stop! Just redo that whole scene one more time. I want to see that scene one more time." And my thought the rest of the night was like, how much time and energy and choreography and regrouping and re— went into that one scene? It was just so magical.

Dwight: It is, it is. And that's what we get.

Winn: Right.

Dwight: And I say this. Your people—so we can talk. 'Cause I have so much passion for theater and my daughter is now like focusing on theater and she was just Plankton and SpongeBob and—

Winn: Oh, that's great.

Dwight: I like to bring it back. I like to bring it back to leadership. And I think about our people are that audience. They deserve our best. They absolutely deserve our best. What if—I always say this—your people are waiting for you to be the leader that you were meant to be. Right? And that means I'm going to take time. You took so much time learning the technical, tactical skills to get you to where you are. Why wouldn't you take the time so that when you're in that moment where it's a tough conversation or a coaching moment or whatever, you're able to navigate that, right? You're able to navigate it with ease and put that other person in the best position to win. So, I think about that a lot.

Winn: Right. And on top of that, why would we assume that we just automatically have those skills?

Dwight: Come on.

Winn: It's not automatic.

Dwight: [*Laughs*] It's not.

Winn: It's not automatic. It's training and it's mentoring and it's practice and it's falling down a lot. And it's like, "Oh my gosh, I made a mistake. I need to go and clean that up. I'm so sorry." It's a lot.

Dwight: You know, I have another, Vinh Giang, one of my favorite communication experts on social media, is fantastic. He says, you know, a lot of times you consume and you track your progress by consumption. *I've watched every podcast. I've watched, you know, I've listened to this. I've read every book.* He says, "Stop listening and start applying." It's the application. And that's why in every single workshop, I'm like, we are getting to work, just so you know. Here are the scenarios, here's the framework, let's build the conversation. So, whether you're listening to this or anything else, stop just consuming, stop saving videos, and apply. Like apply it right now. Even if it's one little thing" "I'm just going to do this one thing next week. By the end of the week, I'll have it kind of somewhat mastered." That's it. But just choose one thing. So, I always say that leaders need to make a decision on what they're going to do outside of every chapter they read, every event they go to, every keynote. Make one decision. And that goes back to a Tony Robbins. Make a decision on what you're gonna do with that. That's that change behavior for sure. So that's hard, but once you create that kind of habit and it becomes part of who you are, all of a sudden you're like, wow, little by little. And that's that whole like 1 percent better every day, James Clear. So, yeah. We're all a work in progress.

Winn: You know, we've already been talking for almost an hour or more.

Dwight: That's so crazy.

Winn: I have a couple of questions I really wanted to ask as we start to wrap this up.

Dwight: Yeah.

Winn: So, what does it mean to lead by example and show up every day? What does that look like and mean for you? I mean, I know what it means for me and it's something that it's trial and error. “Oh, I thought if I showed up this way, I would get a better reaction or a better response from my team and I was clearly wrong. So, let's approach it a different way.” So, it's trial and error and you figure it out.

Dwight: For me, again, consistency is probably my greatest—like if I was to share with the next generation, what do I want them to take away? Two things: consistency and being able to adjust. So, what do I do? Every single day—I don't care if I'm traveling, I don't care if I'm in Hawaii for a vacation, I don't care what it is—there will be a video every single day that gives every bit of my energy. Not dialing it in, not some halfway, not with a bunch of errors and typos and, ”Oh I couldn't.” I will show up every single day. So, for two years, that's exactly what I've done. So, when I ask my team, “Hey, look, I'm asking for consistency here. I'm asking for the little things we need to adjust here.” They can see that I live that day in and day out. When I ask my son, “Hey, look, we are going to show up every single day. There will be a drill video.” I don't care what he has to do. It's going to happen. Not because I told him to, it's because there's an example. There's now a foundation of that. So, for me, I live that. Definitely not perfect. There's definitely other ways where I'm falling way short. But those two things. Yeah. I live that every day.

Winn: That's awesome. That's awesome. I recently heard—and who knows, maybe I heard it from you, watching all of your videos because you do put out great content on a regular basis and you're telling me it's daily, right?

Dwight: Every day.

Winn: That's quite a commitment. I've been the type of person that, if I'm looking at my agenda, my schedule for the day or for the week or for the month or for whatever, I'm thinking, “Oh, there's a lot of holes of nothing happening, of empty time. I just need to fill that up.” And the mentoring, and again, maybe it came from you. What I heard was, “No. As a leader, you should not be filling it all up. You need to have the flexibility of maybe not always having something going on so that you do have the flexibility to be able to be with your people and practice, use your skillset, Say This, Not That. Coach This, Not That, so that you have these conversations to empower your people. So, if that came from you, and if not, you can just pretend that it did but I have a feeling it might have, But I've written it down before we started and I wanted to thank you for that.

Dwight: Yeah, it's a big one. Yeah, when you're a leader, it's very easy to decide, “What am I going to move and what am I going to cancel and what am I gonna—” right? “What is something I can get rid of on my calendar?” Spending time with your people is absolutely the number one thing that we

need to be doing. It is the foundation of everything. I do another activity where we—and I learned this a long time ago—where we do a simple, like, “Hey, why do you love being a leader?” And I have them partner up and they just share with each other, two leaders, why they love that. And within two to three minutes, they build this incredible, like, connection just by talking. And then we do the same thing again. And this time I want them to be completely distracted when the other person is sharing something important. And all of a sudden they realize like building a connection takes minutes. Building a connection, getting to know someone, building that trust, but it also takes seconds for you to lose it. So, whether it's that you're on your phone, whether it's you canceled your one-on-one, whether you're too busy because you're filled up with this meeting or that meeting and you can't talk to your people, spending time with your people is literally the foundation of everything. You could have the perfect Say This, Not That. But if you have canceled, if you have your phone out, if you have all this going on, it does not matter. So, building a connection, building that trust, that's where it starts. Yeah, 100 percent, you need to spend time with your people.

Winn: So, Dwight, I was telling you before we started recording that we just completed a four-day training with my leadership from all of my locations from around the country. And again, we've been doing this for 25 years and I have brought in the best speakers to include like Tony Robbins and Kathy Buckley and I mean, incredible list of people. And we've also had incredible content that we've delivered. So, get this. So, we just end this four-day training and everybody—I can't tell you how I heard this probably from every turn. “Hey, Winn, my favorite part of the last four days—” you know what it was Dwight?

Dwight: Hit me.

Winn: Myself. John Paul DeJoria, who is the founder of Paul Mitchell products. The president of Paul Mitchell products, his name is Jason. And then the leader of my organization, his name is Ryan. The four of us. So, me, John Paul, Jason, and Ryan got there super, super early before everybody arrived. And we at seven o'clock in the morning flipped pancakes for everybody.

Dwight: No. [*Laughs*]

Winn: That's all we did. We flipped pancakes. We didn't give them a lecture. We didn't put the best, most expensive speaker on the stage. And they just thought that that was the coolest part of the entire conference of what they got out of that, because we showed up just to show up and be there and do something silly and flip pancakes.

Dwight: You know, so I call that leadership in action and you see this everywhere. And I was at the—first of all, I love that. That is what we should be doing, right? Whether it's serving our people, but you see it everywhere. So, I was at Elway’s at the Denver airport and I'm just, you know, sitting there getting ready for my flight. And I see this gentleman walk in and all of a sudden the entire restaurant, all of the—whether it's the bartender, the wait staff, the busboy, it did not matter their age, their any—the entire restaurant, you could

just feel the energy just elevate and just—there was this, "*Ahhh."* And I was like, "Who is this guy? Like, who is this guy?" And I overheard him. He was asking about, oh, Halloween. And he took out his phone: "Here's what my kids are doing for Halloween." And he's talking to a waitress and then he spends about five, ten minutes with this other waitress. Then he goes to the bartender, she's hugging him. And I, after he left, I was like, "Who is that?" "He used to be our GM years ago. Now he's the GM of all United clubs and he comes by every once in a while, just to check in, just to check up on us, and we just love him." And I was like, wow. And for five seconds, a tiny little thing, I saw exactly how he leads and why he is loved. Years later, when he walks in there, everybody can't wait for him to be there. It's because he cares. He just cares. He doesn't talk about the list. He listens. And it was, it was cool to see it. You see it everywhere, leadership in action. So very cool that you guys do that.

Winn: So, to wrap things up, what is one conversation our listeners can approach differently this week?

Dwight: Yeah, I think it's, first of all, shifting the way that you see that person. We all have that person that we've been avoiding the conversation with. You have them in a box. And as Simon Sinek says, if you label someone, let's say it's "low performer," they don't even have a chance. They don't have a chance. I want you to take them out of the box. I want you to stop thinking of how can I fix this person and I want you to think of behavior instead. And I want you to create awareness for this person, right? Whether it's the SBI model, whether you want to use the three C's model, but go in there curious. Start with curiosity. How do you see this situation? Whether it's they're bringing you their problems all the time, they never solve it, or it's a toxic top performer. Whatever it is, give them the benefit of the doubt. Start with curiosity, see it from their perspective. Make sure you align on what good looks like. That's clarity. Don't assume it. Start to build it with them, so you calibrate. And then invite them to be part of the problem-solving process, which is just ask questions. *What's your plan here? What can we do differently, starting today? What's one thing that you can do today or tomorrow to take ownership of this? And then how can I support you as you go through it?* And you see my tone changes as well. So, if we do this, all of a sudden we start to see that shift and then they're like, "What's going on with you?" "That's okay. I'm working on my own leadership. And so, you could start there. Take them out of the box, give them the benefit, and invite them to be part of the problem-solving process.

Winn: Beautiful. So how can people learn more about you and get their hands on some of these incredible tools that you have? And by the way, I am huge on scripting. I am huge on little cheat cards. I am. I think that they're wonderful to be able to have just, you know, sitting next to my desk or wherever I'm sitting, to cheat. If you want to call it "cheat sheet," whatever that looks like.

Dwight: That's okay. That's okay.

Winn: Yeah. So how can people find out more about this information?

Dwight: Yeah, of course. Obviously there'll be links everywhere. Feel free to click the links in all my videos. I always say, you know, “Go to the link in my bio,” but you can go to completeleadershipacademy.com. Completeleadershipacademy.com. It says right there, “leadership tools.” And that most popular Leadership Tools page will help you navigate exactly what you need. “What tools should I start with? What box of cards should I get?” And then you can always chat us anytime. We're available. DMs, I'm kind of like a Gary V, right? I want to answer any questions that you have. So, if you do DM us, that can go right to me. So, if you do have a specific situation or question, feel free to reach out. But we're on all the platforms, so we'd love for you to be part of the community.

Winn: Perfect. I knew it would be this good. It was worth the wait.

Dwight: [*Laughs*] That was a lot of fun!

Winn: Thank you, Dwight. I appreciate it a lot.

Dwight: You’re great. Yeah, it was a lot of fun. Thank you.

Winn: Thanks for listening, everybody. And Dwight—truly, truly, I'm very grateful. Thank you.

Dwight: We'll see you out there. Thanks for your leadership, everyone.