Greg Stuart: [00:00:00] I don't know that there's any other industry that has changed as dramatically as it appears marketing has in the last especially ten years.

Celisa Steele: [00:00:14] I'm Celisa Steele.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:15] I'm Jeff Cobb, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:23] Marketing has arguably undergone more change in the last decade than any other field, which means learning businesses have to stay on top of their marketing game to make sure they reach the right learners and bring in the critical revenue that keeps them humming along. Greg Stuart is a marketing revolutionary and passionate about fixing marketing, where, for far too long, marketers have taken action based more on gut instinct than data. Greg currently serves as CEO of MMA Global, an international trade association for marketers focused on architecting the future of marketing. Having spent over three decades in marketing, Greg has contributed majorly to the transformation of marketing and media. He has served as CMO, CRO, or CEO at companies across the media landscape, and he turned around the Interactive Advertising Bureau when he was CEO there.

Jeff Cobb: [00:01:17] Greg also co-authored the hugely influential book *What Sticks: Why Most Advertising Fails and How to Guarantee Yours Succeeds*, published in 2013. In this episode, number 387, Celisa talks with Greg about the shift from brand-based marketing to a focus on customer experience, the lack of clarity about what marketers do and the difficulty that creates in setting a strategy, the only three go-to-market strategies, multi-touch attribution, optimizing budget allocation, personalization, and the potential impact of generative AI on marketing. Greg's experience draws on his career working with CMOs of major brands, but his analysis and perspective can be useful for learning businesses of all sizes, even those without multi-million-dollar marketing budgets. Indeed, maybe learning businesses with smaller marketing budgets need to be even more thoughtful and measured about how they spend. Celisa and Greg spoke in November 2023.

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Celisa Steele: [00:02:28] You have a long and storied career in marketing. You're the CEO of MMA Global now. You were CEO of the Interactive Advertising Bureau. You co-wrote *What Sticks*, which is a great book in the marketing field. Given your depth and breadth of experience in marketing, what's one of the most salient changes that you've seen during your career—or some of the most salient changes if you don't want to limit it to just one?

Greg Stuart: [00:02:55] I appreciate that you said "storied" rather than "sordid" history with marketing. I appreciate that. We don't always get that as marketers. Listen, here's the thing—there was always this uncomfortability that I had in the role that I was playing, either as CMO or in some role in marketing, and I knew there was an understanding that I didn't fully know what I was doing. And so the whole focus of this thing is to really set out and fix marketing, to have a better understanding of it. What we're often faced with doing is either research or thought leadership, or it can be a series of other guides or other things, to help marketers better understand how to do what they're doing much better. And the reason for that is because—back to your question—I don't know that there's any other industry that has changed as dramatically as it appears marketing has in the last especially ten years. And you could go back as far as the Internet, that kind of set the thing off, but then we brought mobile. All the channels are different. All the connections, consumers are different. The basic understanding of how marketing works is different. The technical nature of this business has become….

Greg Stuart: [00:04:08] Honestly, I'm not sure if any other industry has so dramatically changed. Energy, a little bit. Healthcare is certainly a dramatic change, but I don't know any other beyond those. And so somebody's got to lead those charges. That's what we've really set out to do. You can look at it from, oh my God, there's no limitation to the change. In fact, I'll give you a really fun one. Most CMOs today got to the job in their ability to do brand marketing. To be able to do that soft skill of how to position a business in the minds of consumers—a critically important role, no question about it. The challenge is that I know from the research we've done that the leading marketing strategy today is customer experience, which requires, obviously, a strong understanding of data, a strong understanding of customer journeys, a series of multiple channels, completely new martech stacks in order to run those businesses. And there are very few marketers that are prepared to make that transition. That's really where MMA (trade association nonprofit) steps in to try to help an industry transition itself. So I don't know. I'd ask you what hasn't changed, truthfully?

Celisa Steele: [00:05:18] All right. And you began to get into it there in your response, but I know that you have, for a long time, advocated evidence-based, data-backed approaches to

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marketing, and you've been in favor of let's call marketing less magic. Let's look at the science behind it and what's actually effective. I think, given the huge budgets that can get put against marketing, it makes a ton of sense to take this evidence-based approach. So, given the great sense that makes, what do you see as the hold-ups, to the extent that you do think there are still hold-ups, around adopting more of an evidence-based approach to marketing?

Greg Stuart: [00:05:58] Okay. Well, there's a lot of layers to that question. First off, I think that boards and CEOs don't firmly understand what marketers do. I think the marketers are somewhat to blame. We need to be more consistent and/or structured to help them help the leadership of the company help make better decisions. And so the challenge that you run into a little bit is that, because they're not in co-creation of what that marketing strategy should be or where they should be oriented, I don't think they incentivize properly. I'll give you an example.

Greg Stuart: [00:06:33] I had a meeting about six years ago. We were kicking off some work we've now done around marketing org, and I had some of the world's biggest CMOs at the time. It was the CMO of General Motors. T-Mobile. Chobani was in the room. Dunkin' Brands was in the room. Allstate. Big-time CMOs. And we asked them a throwaway question meant to be a ten-minute warm-up question to get to another topic. It was an hour conversation. And we said, "What's the role of marketing? What's the role of CMO?" Celisa, we never got off that first question. And, after an hour, we realized that nobody in the room agreed the role of marketing. That's a mess. How can you expect to get anybody outside of marketing to understand if we're not clear and consistent, at least in some minimal sense of frameworks? (There could be differences.) And so that was the first indication to me that there was this big a problem as there is and that we're just not clear.

Greg Stuart: [00:07:24] Now, I'm going to answer your question more foundationally, though, I think. If you ask me what are some of the challenges around it, I think there are definitely a lot of skill sets and upskilling issues that need to go on. As I said, we have to have a completely different skill set than we had before. It needs to be usually more data-driven, more customer-journey-driven, more customer-experience-driven, more like, "What are you doing in those individual experiences?" Google calls it the "Zero Moment of Truth." What do you do at each moment of opportunity with a consumer? We just don't have that. And so we've got all these skill sets. How are they going to transition? So we're not really prepared.

Greg Stuart: [00:08:01] I think, though, that where the companies go wrong is that, because we're not being clear about the role of marketing, they don't incentivize marketers properly in the right way. I don't think that the incentives are right. My guess is that bonuses and bonus

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structures are off because that's what should drive the proper behavior alignment to the corporate goals. And I think marketers have been reticent to accept growth as the main focus of what they should do, which is what the answer should be. And then they should be measured, incentivized, and paid against that growth. And they're not. And so, as a result of that, they end up with convoluted goals, and they don't really change in the way that we think they need to as aggressively as they need to.

Celisa Steele: [00:08:37] So you gave that example of that meeting where no one in the room could agree what the role of marketing is. How do you explain the role of marketing? What's your view on that?

Greg Stuart: [00:08:47] So, by the way, we have done a bunch of real work with a team of professors across the country to work specifically on that area. The first thing they needed to do is to define what are the different go-to-market strategies? There are three of them. There are only three of them, everybody. One is brand—the position in the mind of the consumer. Second one, as I mentioned, is obviously customer experience, which is the stronger of the ones against financial performance for the companies we see executing against that. How do you manage the entire journey? How do you make the acquisition of the product for the consumer and that whole journey smoother, easier, and simpler?

Greg Stuart: [00:09:29] How do we make consumers less frustrated with buying things from people and companies? Okay, I say that with the right tone there. And the third one is around direct-to-consumer. There are a lot of businesses that are just very transaction-oriented, and that can be successful. And you can have exactly the same product. Exactly. The best one is Harry's razors and Gillette razors. They're exactly the same product. Maybe they wouldn't like me to say that, but they're the same damn product. But their go-to-market strategy is completely different. One is a very transactionally-driven subscription model. The other one's in-store retail, more brand-driven.

Greg Stuart: [00:09:59] Both are fine. You need to choose one and go down it. And now you can have combinations. You could be brand and customer experience. I don't think you can be all three because, listen, strategy is about making choices—what to do and what not to do—and so, at some point, somebody's got to make a decision. But you need to have alignment. The challenge too with this—and I'm going to get a little off topic here from the question, but just because I think you're going to go there next—is that the issue is then did they hire the right marketer, the right CMO, the right team to do that, to execute that particular strategy? So the CEO and the board have to make the decision, have to co-create on what strategy they have, go-

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to-market, obviously. The CMO then has got to be the right person to actually execute that. And so the work we've done around marketing org now—not to get too off point here, I'll come back to you—in this case, we created a product that will measure capability fit to strategy. And we happen to know for a fact that, when fit is aligned to strategy, sales go up. Marketing org design affects the actual revenue generation of the company. That's a blow-your-mind. That's not existed anywhere that I've ever heard of for any department within a company. But we've now figured that out.

Jeff Cobb: [00:11:14] At Tagoras, we're experts in the global business of lifelong learning, and we use our expertise to help clients better understand their markets, connect with new customers, make the right investment decisions, and grow their learning businesses. We achieve these goals through expert market assessment, strategy formulation, and platform selection services. If you're looking for a partner to help your learning business achieve greater reach, revenue, and impact, learn more at tagoras.com/services.

Celisa Steele: [00:11:45] You mentioned it around, perhaps when we were talking about the incentivization structure being off, and so that marketers aren't necessarily being measured against what matters. When I was thinking about this idea of really taking an evidence-based approach to marketing, that requires data. I'm wondering if the bigger issue is a lack of data (like organizations either aren't collecting it), or is it a bigger issue around interpretation or use of that data (like they have it, but they just don't know how to use it effectively)? Do you have any thoughts there on what the issue with data might be?

Greg Stuart: [00:12:19] Evidence is really marketing measurement. Do they have the right measurement? So the other challenge you have, when you don't have financial incentives to make sure that you're boosting the productivity of marketing, which is a lack of evidence-orientation to the world would be, or the lack of measurement, you also do have to understand the basics—understanding of both measurement and core marketing growth frameworks. We've done research and have validated that, first off, most marketers are not familiar with the core growth frameworks, of which there are three primarily in the world. We happen to have created a fourth because one of those three was wrong. So that's part of the issue, is that we don't understand the basics about how real marketing works. Marketers have a tendency to make shit up. They're generally pretty articulate in their speaking, and so they tend to create a sense of believability. I don't think we're always right. So you've got to have the right premise.

Greg Stuart: [00:13:12] But then, once you've got the right framework, that you understand what you're aiming for, then you're right, and you need to create the right measurement. But

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measurement is complicated. It's technical. It's not in line with the old thinking of brand-oriented marketing, and so most don't have good measurement. And listen, by the way, the answer is two things. It's multi-touch attribution, and it's incrementality. Those are the answers. I happen to be the co-founder, although I was kind of on the side—I was the rich patron that made multi-touch attribution happen. The guy who actually did that was a guy named Rex Briggs, who actually created that methodology. But, if you don't have that in house today, if you are not using multi-touch attribution, then I almost guarantee your incentives are probably not aligned to the growth of the company. So the problem's worse than the question you're asking.

Celisa Steele: [00:13:56] Deeper, yes.

Greg Stuart: [00:13:57] Yes. It's a deeper question. It's not that they resist evidence-based…or I probably use the word "science-based" or "data-based," that is driven by numbers. And, by the way, I want to be really clear, that's not to take away from the magic. I have seen, in my career, the magic of getting message and creative position right. It's crazy when it works—when you can get it. I'm a firm believer you can never invest enough to get the message and the creative right. Never invest enough. But, after that, you spend a lot of money trying to communicate with consumers, and how you do that, how you allocate that, and then how you measure that effectiveness and iterate upon that, I think, is understood by many but not nearly enough.

Celisa Steele: [00:14:38] All right. So go a little bit deeper on the multi-touch attribution, just for folks who aren't familiar with that or want to have a beginning understanding of what that means and looks like.

Greg Stuart: [00:14:47] Yes. I'm constantly horrified when people in marketing don't understand what that is. The stats are today that 52 percent of marketers—large-scale, enterprise marketers, the people that we work with—have multi-touch attribution systems in-house, measurement tools to be able to do that kind of thing. Fifty-two percent was pretty low when that was created 20 years ago. That's what led to the book. The book is really the story of Rex and I helping the industry to completely change marketing forever. The book was called *What Sticks*. So what multi-touch attribution is—the other one that a lot of people use is media mix modeling. That's top-down. MTA is bottoms-up. What, in essence, MTA is doing—this is the best explanation of it—you're basically aggregating an individual's media habits, what ads they're exposed to. To the best of your ability, you're measuring what ads they're exposed to, and you're tying that either to their change in brand awareness, not recall but brand awareness, or actual sales data.

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And when you combine those at the individual level, then you're able to aggregate that up to get a view of what channels and/or messages are really having the most impact on consumers.

Greg Stuart: [00:15:59] This is the most powerful thing that I've seen. What you're looking for is that you've got the right mix of media channels, marketing channels to consumers because there's an optimization across that based on different people's habits of watching media. You can't say generally. You have to measure. You wouldn't be able to guess that kind of stuff. But you're also looking for pots of gold in there, I like to say—or veins of gold. And what that means is that you're looking for where there's a market where you're arbitraged in the market sometimes. Let me give a very specific example of that. So we did a study for Wendy's a number of years ago, and the guy who was running that, Brandon Rhoten, was amazing. He had made a decision that targeting consumers who both like coupons—and Wendy's, at the time, was doing an offer-oriented pitch to the marketplace. Buy one, get two free. Or buy two, get free, one free. I don't even remember. It doesn't matter. But it was very promotional. He was also targeting people who drove by Wendy's on a regular basis.

Greg Stuart: [00:17:05] Now, at some level, that would be obvious. Of course you should do that. But you need to know how valuable that is. So here's the thing. Each one of those two segments, to target those people, was worth five x anything else in the plan. It produced five times the sales of anything else in the plan. Now, what made that really powerful is that he was able to spend, or Wendy's was able to spend five percent of the total budget against each one of those. So ten percent of that budget was worth five x what anything else was. That's what drove the sales of that company. But, if you're not able to identify that particular vein of gold—you could have guessed that those were valuable, and, sure, you should have put a couple of percentage points of the total budget against that. Any idiot would be able to figure it out. But to know that the optimized level was near five percent, very hard to do. And nobody probably would have made that kind of commitment at that level, and yet that was transformational to the business. You got to know where the real power in this thing is, and that requires science and, as you pointed out, evidence. You got to know it.

Celisa Steele: [00:18:05] You brought up *What Sticks* when you were talking about multi-touch attribution. One of the themes that comes through clearly in *What Sticks* is this foundational need to get the customer's motivation right. Are there any generic tips that you can offer to listeners around what it actually looks like to get those customer motivations right? Tactics they can take or ways to validate that they aren't just making an assumption about what learning their customers need to do, for example?

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Greg Stuart: [00:18:40] Boy, that's a complicated question. Listen, I don't know that motivation is the only thing, but it was an important element that we didn't see. I don't know—there were so many things we saw that we got wrong, that marketers got wrong in doing that work. So where that work came from is that I was running, at the time, the Interactive Advertising Bureau, which was focused on online advertising and trying to promote and develop online advertising as an industry. At that point, it was an eight-billion-dollar category. Today it's, I don't know, 100 billion, or whatever it is. Big. Two hundred billion, maybe. And so I was trying to find a way for marketers to understand what the value of the Internet was, and MMM didn't do it. Other measurement techs didn't do it, and that's why Rex Briggs then showed me the technique he was developing at the time called multi-touch attribution and sort of got us down that path. We did, in total, about two dozen what ultimately were public studies with major marketers. We spent about five to seven million dollars doing those studies for marketers to understand what was the percentage of budget that should be allocated to Internet in the marketing mix? That was the idea before mobile. But what we found…it's the same thing…I'm trying to reflect on this.

Greg Stuart: [00:19:52] It's the same thing I'm saying now. It's probably the reason I'm doing the MMA, is that we started to understand marketers, they were just making too much stuff up. It may have sounded good, but it wasn't right. We were able to prove it through the research that it was factually wrong. And motivation was one of the many elements they get wrong. That was basic core strategy. I was earlier talking about all the allocation of channels—I was treating it as an investment orientation, portfolio kind of thing. But you're right—you've got to make sure that strategy is right. And, if you don't do that, we'd run into situations like you'd see it show up in the ad testing. And I remember we'd go to marketers and say, "Well, are you testing your ads?" And they go, "Well, no." I remember one marketer—I won't name names on this one. I may have named them in the book, but I forget. I said, "Well, why aren't you testing your ads? Why aren't you pre-testing the ads before you start spending tens of millions of dollars?" And they said, "Well, we don't have any time." We said, "Well, walk us through your process."

Greg Stuart: [00:20:51] Well, here's what they were doing. For Internet ads, they were getting nine people in the company to sign off on the ad, to approve the ad before it went public. And we said, "Do any of those people have any background in online advertising?" They said, "Well, no." "Well, then, how would they evaluate the ad?" They don't know what the hell they're looking at. Second thing was, we said, "Have you shown them the actual strategy, the underlying strategy so they're evaluating the ad against the actual strategy?" You got to make sure you're aiming for—this is similar to motivation. But they were saying, "No." "So why don't you stop asking those nine people and just go pre-test the ads?" That's going to tell you

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more about its effectiveness, how it's going to work, and if that motivation is both appreciated and understood by consumers. And then, the second part, have you communicated it properly to them? Then you've got to get to the optimization thing. So, yes, I don't know—it feels like every time I turn around, every time we kick over a rock, we just find more mess. The stuff isn't totally understood. And then, let's look at what's about to happen. We're about to enter the age of AI. So the foundation is not good, and we're about to bring a whole new technology orientation to the world. I don't know—it concerns me.

Celisa Steele: [00:22:06] Let's talk a little bit then about AI because I know that that's a focus where you're giving some time and attention. Let's ask a big-picture question of what do you see as the role of AI in marketing? And what should we be thinking about as we're thinking about marketing our products and services, given what AI is now doing to our world?

Greg Stuart: [00:22:31] I think most people that I speak to, broadly in business, believe that sales and marketing will be the two areas—or a singular area, they're somewhat similar—they will be most affected by AI. I don't know if that's fact, but I feel like I've heard that enough that we'll go with wisdom of the crowd for the moment. And I do think that marketing is a grossly inefficient business. We do way too much by hand. We don't have good measurement. If we had good quality measurement, then machines, at some level, could run big portions of it. But, when you say only 52 percent do MTA, then clearly we don't. And MTA is the only way you can do real-time, near-immediate measurement. MMM is more long-term. I talked to a big-time CMO, one of the CMOs on my board the other day. We were going through a conversation, and I asked her what she thinks marketers need. The context is I have a podcast now called Building Better CMOs. It's really asking marketers what do you think we don't get right, and what do you think we should do to get it right? Because that's my job as the head of a trade association. I'm supposed to go fix stuff. And so I said, "What do you see?" She said, "I don't think that marketers fully understand the complexity of operations today for marketing."

Greg Stuart: [00:23:44] I go, "Explain." She goes, "I have a campaign going that has 5,000 creative assets." That's not a magic job. That's not a magic job. That's an operations job. She's right. So how do we know? Do we have the systems, the processes, the technology in order to do that? So that's already how complex it is. My guess, with AI, we do finally have the opportunity to start serving more personalized messages to consumers, to really be relevant, to stop, frankly, annoying the shit out of consumers because that's what the business has been, the business to the dawn. Print didn't do this. TV totally did this. It was just bludgeoning consumers with ads, and they were untargeted, irrelevant. It was, in essence, teaching consumers to ignore ads. That's why people don't…. Advertisement is not a bad business. It can

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be a very helpful business. It's meant to be helpful. It's just information. But we're not respectful of people's time sometimes in the way that we operate. It's getting so much better. CTV is going to change all that, and the digitalization of the business is making it better. And, certainly, Internet's a little bit better. But hopefully AI allows us to both create more value for our companies especially but also better respect consumers.

Greg Stuart: [00:24:56] I think that's really the big opportunity that gets me excited for us to lean into it. You asked me, though, a question. So where is the opportunity in AI? I don't have a good framework on that yet. I don't have what I think is validated or proven. My sense is, and where I'm leaning towards, there are two things. One is that it's efficient. It's creation of efficiency. It's solving some of these operational complexities at some level. That would be good. But I think also, too, that there's an opportunity to really improve the productivity, the value of marketing, the real intensity of it at a level we've never seen. And I'm not saying that like I'm making that up. We have been running a series of studies now—it's called Consortium for AI Personalization—and what we're doing is figuring out how to personalize ads in a limited way—not a full-on generative AI, but how we personalize ads in a limited way using simply contextual signal. In other words, I don't have to know who somebody is. I don't have to have a database on people. I could just use contextual. The performance gains on that…. And, by the way, I have nothing to sell here; I'm just a trade association. I don't have a product. I couldn't offer you anything. I wouldn't run this for you. That's not what I do. I'm just trying to find truth and facts.

Greg Stuart: [00:26:08] The performance gains of personalizing ads appear to be somewhere around two to three x. I might ask you, for your business—I know for mine, if you came to me as a CEO of this organization, which I am, and you said I can improve 10 percent of your business two to three x, I would clear my calendar for the rest of the week. I would stop production of everything else we were doing. We would focus just on that. But, Celisa, you know what's really bad? Not every marketer I know is working against that. WTF. Really, that's insane. It goes back to your point about evidence and measurement. And I think too, if I go back to the thrust of the podcast here, where's our learning? Why do marketers think that we have to have all the answers? Why don't we operate from a standpoint of "Okay, how do I better understand? How do I accept the fact that maybe I'm not great at what I do?" Which is a hard thing for anybody to digest. I get that. But what are you really doing to grow and be better and to learn against the future? That's why I'm excited. I think we have that opportunity. It'll be interesting whether or not the industry goes far enough to do it.

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Celisa Steele: [00:27:12] Back to the earlier question about motivation and then thinking about what you just said around personalization and AI there, do you think that AI is going to play a role in helping us get that customer motivation right? Or is that still something foundational that we have to then bring to our use of AI?

Greg Stuart: [00:27:29] Listen, there's always going to be positioning of a product in some common, consensus way. We can't make the product completely different for everybody. I think that would just create confusion in the world. But I do think that people make different decisions for different reasons. And I don't know all your exposure to marketing, but for years we based it on demographics. We would say we're buying men or women 18 to 49 or something. There's nothing the same about men or women 18 to 49. It's just ridiculous. We did demographics. That always looked stupid to me, but it was the best we could do. By the way, I'll give you an example. So the study—this one study we did for Kroger. I can name the name on that because they've been public about it. They got plus 259 percent over their best efforts, their best thinking, the best performing orientation they had. AI was able to improve plus 259 percent—that's plus three to four x. Astonishing. Crazy. And it wasn't personalizing motivation. It was really just personalizing the visuals on the thing, which somehow appealed to people differently. We don't know enough at this point to know why.

Greg Stuart: [00:28:35] Maybe my researcher would know, but I've not heard. And so you're right, when we start to tweak the motivation a little bit to get satisfying better somebody's individual needs, I can only imagine it could just go up from here. Listen, I want to throw one more thing though here. You didn't ask this, but I think it's important to an earlier one, just to connect the dots here. Here's what makes AI though, I think, a really big deal. Tell me one thing in a business, one thing that you can work against that dramatically improves the performance of business, as I've said, to as high as even almost four x? Three hundred percent would be four x. Tell me anything you can do to do that that then costs less. Doesn't happen. Well, I don't think so. I'd love for your listeners or somebody to feedback to me and give me other examples. That'd be great. But I've not seen anything that can boost productivity and value creation that aggressively and also lower the cost and become more efficient. That's why I think AI is a big deal.

Celisa Steele: [00:29:43] We do always like to ask guests who come on the Leading Learning Podcast about their own lifelong learning. So when you think about how you continue to grow professionally, personally too if you want, what are some of the approaches, sources, or ways that you think about your own lifelong learning?

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Greg Stuart: [00:29:59] I heard somebody say not too long ago that, "Life is just about work and relationships. And, by the way, work is just about relationships." I thought that was a very funny way to put it. And so I think that the learning…. Do I learn operationally about how the business works? Yes. Do I need to understand more about financials? Sure. Should I constantly be educating myself? Absolutely. I'm very lucky in the roles I have. I get to talk to some of the biggest business leaders in the world. I don't just have the big companies in my industry. I have the biggest companies in the world on my board, at extremely senior levels. Facebook—or Meta, I should say—Google. Snap.

Greg Stuart: [00:30:39] Everybody sits there with us, along with the CMOs of AT&T, Major League Baseball, Visa, Verizon, and the list goes on and on and on. Major marketers that are working at GM. A bunch of them that are working with us. So that's fortunate for me to get to learn from those people I think are amazing, those relationships, and so on. I think, though, if I was to give…. I might be twisting your question a little bit. Learning is about trying to be better at some level. I think the more important thing I've done is that I have had a coach for over 30 years. It's teaching me how to have relationships and how to have conversations and to appropriately handle things. So I've had a personal coach for 30 years—most important person in my life.

Greg Stuart: [00:31:25] Well, now running the MMA, which has been a little over ten years for that period, I have had a psychologist on retainer at this company. He's a PhD, Harvard, serious business. This is the real deal, this guy. And he is available to me and the other members of the team to help figure out…. I'm using him often to say, "Well, am I looking at this in the right way? Is there pathology that I have that is getting in the way of me hearing the situation, understanding the situation, or making the right decision around it?" It's what you would ask a coach to do. "Do I twist a little this way to run faster? Do I jump higher by springing?" That's what you ask a coach to do. I block the tackle. That's what a coach is supposed to do to help you tweak the system to get a little bit more right. You still can lose the game, but it's about getting a little bit better all the time. And I think, if you're serious about your career, if you're really out there, to have fun trying to be the best I can do in the short life that I have, you got to have people there that can really help you do that.

Greg Stuart: [00:32:33] Now, sometimes you could do it through mentors. It's a different relationship, though, I think, a little bit. Mentors are good, and I applaud and appreciate, and I've had a series of people that have been really helpful to me in my career. But I think that long-standing expertise applied to becoming a little bit better every day. I think everybody would know, at some level, Tiger Woods's story. I'm not an expert. I certainly don't know

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Tiger. But he's been through a series of injuries. He had to change his game. He had to shift his game. The game was different. And he played the game different at this age. The game is different than the game he could play before. It's like all those little tweaks are all, to me, I think…the point I'm getting to is that I think that's the important learning you need to have. I do think you got to pick up capabilities, and you got to be smart. You got to learn PowerPoint, Excel—you got to know all that stuff. Again, you want to be really good at those things. You want to be good at the tools of your job, and you want to understand operationally, and you want to get experience on how to make those decisions. But I think it's that idea of having somebody that can help you make good decisions, better decisions, remove the pathology from your decisions, the stuff that's dysfunctional, that gets in the way of making good decisions or having good relationships is so critically important to me.

Jeff Cobb: [00:33:49] For over three decades, Greg Stuart has contributed majorly to the transformation of marketing and media. Greg Stuart is CEO of MMA Global, an international trade association for marketers, and author of *What Sticks: Why Most Advertising Fails and How to Guarantee Yours Succeeds*. In the show notes for this episode at leadinglearning.com/episode387, you'll find a link to the MMA Global Web site and to Greg's profiles on social media.

Celisa Steele: [00:34:16] Jeff and I would be grateful if you would rate the Leading Learning Podcast on whatever platform you use to listen, especially if you find the show valuable, because your ratings help us show up when people search for content on leading a learning business.

Jeff Cobb: [00:34:29] And please spread the word about Leading Learning, whether in a one-on-one conversation with a colleague, a personal e-mail, or on social media. In the show notes at leadinglearning.com/episode387, you'll find links to connect with us on X, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

Celisa Steele: [00:34:45] Thanks for listening, and see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.

[music for this episode by DanoSongs, www.danosongs.com]

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