



Mark Moses On... Make Big Happen: How to Live, Work, and Give BIG

- Steve Sanduski:** Hello everybody. Hey, we are all in for a big treat today as Mark Moses, the founding partner of CEO Coaching International is joining us to discuss his new book "Make Big Happen: How to Live, Work, and Give Big." I'm your host, Steve Sanduski, and Mark, it is great to have you back here on the show.
- Mark Moses:** Steve, I am excited to share "Make Big Happen" with you and our listeners today.
- Steve Sanduski:** Mark, let's start off with tell us what is this book about.
- Mark Moses:** "Make Big Happen" is a blueprint for living an extraordinary life. It's really about the regular person who's willing to work hard, pursue their dreams with relentless focus and discipline, it's for someone that's willing to get back up when adversity strikes, and also for those that want to achieve things that only hard work will allow. It's for the person who thinks big. It's really about how to live life to the fullest and live it big. It's how to execute at work and achieve big. It's also about giving big. I think it's really about helping people discover, like I mentioned earlier, a blueprint for living, working, and giving on your terms.
- Steve Sanduski:** As you were putting this book together, did you have a certain type of person or people in mind that you think would really benefit the most from the book?
- Mark Moses:** Steve this book is really for the entrepreneur. Having been an entrepreneur all my life and really striving to do better I thought that this book would really help my fellow entrepreneurs that are striving to achieve goals they may not have yet reached. But I also think that the c-suite guy or gal can benefit from it too and reach more than they're currently reaching today.
- I was also hoping that the aspiring entrepreneur, someone that maybe is tired of working in their corporate life, they get inspired by the book to believe that they can and venture out and start their own business. Finally, I think that this

would really benefit the CEO. I can relate to that because I've been one for the last 30 years. But I think just the best practices and methodology will really help the CEO achieve more than they're achieving today.

Steve Sanduski: Mark, one of the things that's great about you and really puts you in a position to be an author of a book like this is that you started very young as an entrepreneur. You built multiple successful businesses. You've operated as a CEO for like 30 years as you just mentioned. Take us back, for those of you out there that are listening that are not familiar with who Mark Moses is, why don't you take a minute Mark here and just tell us about your background. How did you get started from that small town in Canada to where you are today?

Mark Moses: My dad went bankrupt in my last year of high school and I needed money to go to college. I was a lifeguard at the time and it just wasn't enough for me to pay for college. I saw the sign in the career center that said be your own boss, be an entrepreneur, start your own business, earn \$5,000-15,000 in the summer. It was part of the Student Painter franchise program.

I eagerly signed up. The first summer made \$18,000 and was elated. It was plenty of money for college, even was able to get myself a new Camaro and then moved on and did it again the following summer, made \$35,000 that summer and I thought, "Wow, I really like this entrepreneur stuff," and I packed up my car, drove from Canada down to southern California and founded the Student Painter business. We went from zero to 250 locations in four years and a total of 3000 people working for the company.

I sold that business when I was 26 and then after taking a year and a half off I started another business called Platinum Capital. It was a mortgage company that grew from zero to 1.6 billion in annual business over 13 years. I sold that business in October 2006.

Steve Sanduski: Then what have you been doing since 2006?

Mark Moses: I took a couple of years off after selling that business to travel and spent time with family. Then I started doing some coaching with entrepreneurs that wanted to grow their business. For the last eight years I have coached entrepreneurs from around the world at scaling their business. Today our firm, CEO Coaching International coaches about 100 CEOs and entrepreneurs from around the world in 11 countries on scaling and growing their business.

Steve Sanduski: Mark, would you say that the book "Make Big Happen," does that contain a lot of the things that you talk about with you and your coaches with your clients?

Mark Moses: I think it showcases our methodology and I think we have a terrific simple best practice methodology that lets the regular guy, regular guy or gal, follow this methodology to achieve what their dreams are.

Steve Sanduski: Mark, I've read the book. I'm very familiar with it as you well know. It's structured around what you call the four make big happen questions. That's what I want to go into now. Let's talk about these four questions. First off all, why don't you just set the stage and say why these four questions, what is it about these four questions that you think really is a good framework for entrepreneurs and CEOs as they try and build their businesses?

Mark Moses: Let me take you through the four questions. They're really simple. The first one is, what do you want, what's your vision? The second one, what do you have to do or what action are you going to take? The third one is what could get in the way really of making that happen or anticipating what might get in the way? Number four and probably the one that ties it all together is how do you hold yourself accountable, how will you measure your success along the way?

Steve Sanduski: Now let's start going through each of these four in a little more detail. The first question is, what do you want? When you're working with a new client, do they typically know what they want or is that a process that you really have to go through to help them define what that vision is for their business?

Mark Moses: Some of them know what they want generally. Some of them don't. It's really identifying, helping them identify what it is that they really want, what is success three years from now or four years from now. Most people don't know.

Steve Sanduski: How do you help them develop that? I think you've got the crystal ball exercise that you have in the book. Is that one of the tools that you use to help them figure out what it is that they want?

Mark Moses: I love the crystal ball exercise because it takes them out a year in advance and it's like the year is over and the first question asked them my year rocked because I achieved blank. They're celebrating on January first of the following year because they achieved the following. They outline that in advance and they're specific about what those achievements are.

The next question is the hard one. It asks, what are the specific and measurable things that it will take to make that happen and achieve the goals that we had set in the first question? These are really the leading activities that are specific and measurable that will lead them to the results that they want to have. Sounds really simple and it sounds easy, but the second question is hard.

It's hard because people have trouble identifying what are the activities that will really lead them to the result that they want to have, and then being able to measure those activities that are specific along the way. Then I like ranking them in order in terms of priority because if I do this I get that and this I'll hold myself accountable along the way.

Steve Sanduski: As you're figuring out working with your clients to help them figure out what it is that they want, I know that you're also big on setting what you call them

HOTs, Huge Outrageous Targets. Tell me about that. How effective is it for people to set these really, really large goals versus setting I'll call regular size goals that maybe they have a 80% chance of hitting? What are these Huge Outrageous Targets and how do you use that in working with clients?

Mark Moses: A Huge Outrageous Target, you think about it, it's something that's big, it's huge. It's something that's really important to you to achieve. It'll have a big impact on the company.

Steve Sanduski: Mark as you talk about these Huge Outrageous Targets do you find that when people set a really large goal like that, does that help ignite their passion and is that a way for them to get reenergized about their business?

Mark Moses: I think it really ignites the passion of the leader or CEO or entrepreneur, but then it's their job to get their people aligned and excited and have the same passion that they do, and that can become a bit more of a challenge.

Steve Sanduski: I find that as well that oftentimes you might get the CEO or the entrepreneur or owner of the company really enthused about what's going on, but then to translate that down to the rest of the organization, that's where the leadership skills really come into play.

Mark Moses: Typically, the reason it breaks down is because their people don't believe it's possible. They think it's too big, it's too huge, and too outrageous. But when it's broken down into smaller bites, so let's just say the Huge Outrageous Target is a three-year goal by breaking it down into a one-year bite and then a quarterly bite and then a monthly bite and then weekly it makes it much more doable. I also think employees need to understand why it matters, like why am I doing this or why should I sign up for this? What's in it for the company? What's in it for me? Why do I care?

Steve Sanduski: Good. Then question number two here is, what do you have to do? We've gone through question one which is what do you want. Now that the entrepreneur or the CEO has a clear vision of what they're trying to accomplish now we've got to figure out what do you have to do to make that happen. Where do we go there? What's in the book as it relates to what do you have to do? How do you help people figure that out?

Mark Moses: The way I like thinking about it is asking the following questions. What do I need to do or what do we need to do to guarantee we make it happen?

Steve Sanduski: Can you give me an example there of an activity or give me an example of something that, hey, we know what we want to have, just give me a real example here if you would?

Mark Moses: When defining what it is that you want to do I like that the activities are leading activities, not lagging activities. For example, number of deals done or closed in

a single month is a lagging activity. A leading activity might be how many calls do I need to make, how many appointments do I need to set, how many demos do I need to do, how many seminars do I need to do with how many people to drive the result that I want? I think it's really important in this section, this where the rubber meets the road. Once you've defined what you really want it's determining what these leading activities are, the activity that will drive the result that we want that really helps our clients and entrepreneurs and leaders move the ball.

Steve Sanduski: Mark, I think that is a real key thing that you mentioned there, the difference here between the leading activities and the lagging activities, because oftentimes I see that entrepreneurs and CEOs focus on the metrics, more the lagging indicators but it's those leading ones. Do you have any other examples of leading indicators because I think that's just an important point for all of our listeners?

Mark Moses: Let me give you an example as it relates to athletics. As you know I'm training for a marathon to go under three hours. As a matter of fact, I'm shooting for 2:59:59. I've hired myself the best coach in my area. If I look at the entire Huge Outrageous Target for a 51-year-old guy to go 2:59:59 that's pretty big goal. All my buddies are telling me it's not possible. What my coach has done is he's broken down the activities for me, the leading activities, how much I need to do each week, at what pace, what intervals I need to run at, or how many intervals do I need to run at, at what pace, and is easing me into it so I do the activities and I'm trusting the process that'll ultimately give me the result that I want. The same thing happened when I raced Ironman races around the world.

Steve Sanduski: Mark, you're not giving yourself a margin of safety here. 2:59:59, you don't even have a second in there for a margin of safety.

Mark Moses: Well, that's the- Thanks very much Steve. That's the goal. The goal is 2:59:59, no more than 2:59:59. I plan to give myself a margin of safety, but recognizing that's running pretty quick, that's 6.52 pace to achieve what I just described. But we're training. Our mile repeats are at 6 minute pace right now. That's what I'm doing to give me that margin of safety. I've been told that if I do the leading activities, and I know that this works, it works in business and it's worked for me in all the sports that I've done in the past, that I do the activities I'll ultimately achieve the result that I want.

Steve Sanduski: Now in terms of focusing on the important things, so you just gave a good example here of the marathon training, in the business side I know you've got a number of things that you say are the key things that entrepreneurs and CEOs need to focus on in their business in terms of the things that they need to do. What are some of those key things that CEOs should be focusing on?

Mark Moses: I believe there are five things the CEO needs to focus on in order to drive their business. Number one, which we talked about a little bit already is the vision,

where am I going. Number two is that they are ultimate responsibility for cash and ensuring that the company's got enough cash to support itself. Keep in mind that the business that's growing very quickly utilizes cash, and even though they're shown a lot of profit they could run out of cash by having increased accounts receivable, too much money and inventory, having to hire people ahead of the business being done. If you run out of cash you ultimately run out of business, so it's the CEO's responsibility to ensure they have enough cash.

Number three is having the right people in the right jobs. This one I keep learning this over and over again. My clients and my friends who perform above everybody else ensure, they go out and hire the very best people. When you hire the very best people you're going to get amazing results, as long as those people meet your culture. Number four are key relationships. The CEOs needs to spend time with the relationships, the key relationships that are most important to the company, such that if these relationships were to go away the company is in big trouble. Number five the CEO needs to be continuously learning. Now they can learn by going to industry conferences, they can learn by reading industry periodicals or reading books to push themselves, they can have a coach or mentor, they can have an advisory board or board of directors, there's a variety of ways to continue to learn and I believe the CEO ought to keep learning in order to drive their business.

Steve Sanduski: Mark, I want to go a little deeper here on one of the five here that you talked about which is people and culture. Like you I hear this so often that and I keep learning this lesson so often or I should say it continues to be reinforced over and over again, and that is how critical it is to have the right people on the team and have the right culture. What are some other things that you can tell us here about getting the right people on the team? How often do you see that as a problem for the people that you work with, that they don't have the right people on the team? Then also, maybe share with us in the early days of a company's growth you may have people that are right for that time but then what happens when the company continues to grow and maybe they're not growing along with it?

Mark Moses: Yes. You asked a couple of questions in here. One of those questions was how often do I see that people don't have the right person on the team. I see that almost always, that there's a key role in the company that isn't the right person for the job and the business may have grown. This may lead into the second question which is people that may have gotten us to where we are today, are they are the people that are going to take us to the next level of growth? I ask the question all the time. If today we're a \$20 million company, we'd like to be \$100 million company I want to hire somebody in the key roles that's already been in that role at \$100 million company and rode it up from 20 to 100 such that they've experienced it and they know the process and they know what it takes to make that happen.

There's no making it up as I go. I find people that are growing up and through a company sometimes can't keep up with the pace because they haven't been there before. In order to really drive the growth, it's finding somebody who's been there, done that. I'll give you two examples. At my client Rich Balot's firm Verizon we had two key roles we were suffering in badly. One of the roles was the head of sales. We had to replace Rich's best friend and put in a top, top performing guy in that role. We went out found one of the best guys in the country for that role and he meaningfully grew sales. We went from, he was about \$100 million company at the time and by the time we did a merger earlier this year or by the time we did a merger last year the company was over \$330 million. This guy we brought on really drove the growth.

At Grasshopper that many of you folks may have heard of Grasshopper there was only one guy we kept on the entire management team and replaced the rest of the executive leadership team with a really, really strong CFO, really strong CMO, chief marketing officer, really strong chief technology officer. These three guys along with the CEO that had been brought on really were responsible for driving the growth of the company.

Steve Sanduski: Mark, I also know that culture is a very important thing to you. Tell me about the culture that you created at one of your last firms, and tell me the elephant story because that is also on the cover of your book. I think it'd be interesting for people to get the backstory on the elephant.

Mark Moses: This one year, whatever year we would do this annual state of the company where we would share the vision of where the company is going, talk about how we did the prior year, and recognize the people that really made a difference. We had just gone through some really adverse times at the business and I really wanted to get people fired up and rally around our goal. At the time we were doing about \$100 million worth of business and I wanted to do a \$1 billion. I said to my assistant, "Look, in preparing for our annual meeting this year what I'd like you to do is I'd like you to bring in a marching band, I'd like you to find me an elephant, tear a wall down in the building and I'd like to ride the elephant into the annual meeting." The message was, "If you think big and act big, you will be big. Together let's do a billion dollars." Eight years later we did do a billion dollars and by the time I sold the business we had done \$1.6 billion.

Steve Sanduski: Did your assistant think you were crazy when you first said that?

Mark Moses: She thought I was nuts. She said, "Hey, look pal, I know you've been under a lot of stress lately. The marching band, okay I get it. But an elephant? What are you nuts?" I said, "Look, can you handle the job or can you not?" She came back to me a couple of days later, says, "Okay, I got you the elephant." This is LA. She says, "I found a company called Have Trunk Will Travel." It was great fun. The coolest part about the culture though was the very next day despite all the laughing and crying and all the drama with the elephant inside the building, even having the pooper scoopers cleaning up after the elephant ...

Steve Sanduski: Too much information Mark.

Mark Moses: The employees started bringing little stuffed elephants into work, crystal elephants, ceramic elephants, and putting them on their desk. The message was, to me was, "Hey pal, we're with you."

Steve Sanduski: That's a great story Mark. Now we've got the first two questions here, what do you want, the second question, what do you have to do, and the third question is, what could get in the way. Tell me more about that.

Mark Moses: It was frustrating to me to get to the end of the year and we didn't achieve our plan. I'd rather anticipate what could get in the way of achieving the plan ahead of time by identifying all the different things that could get in the way of us achieving the plan, and then determining what it is that we could do to overcome each one of those items.

Steve Sanduski: What are some of those things? I know in the book you talk about blind spots, that CEOs, we all have blind spots. How can understanding what some of these blind spots are lead the entrepreneur and CEO to do a better job running the company?

Mark Moses: All of us have blind spots. These blind spots can derail many leaders' careers. Identifying what those blind spots are, what's going to get in the way of you achieving your goals, or what is it in your leadership, or your style or how you're being perceived, or how you are showing up that might get in the way of you achieving that, by identifying those and working on those people will trust and respect you more and you'll ultimately be able to achieve a lot more when you're aware than when you're not.

Steve Sanduski: Mark, there's also a chapter in this section about how to lead effectively in turbulent times. I think that would be an appropriate description of society today. What are some of the things that you talk about in that chapter?

Mark Moses: I've been through all kinds of adversity over the years, whether it's been a fire that we had, whether it's a key employee leaving, setting up a competing company, whether it's Wall Street collapsing, not once but twice during my tenure in the business, or whether it was a real personal story with my son's health, I've had to learn how to overcome adversity and in this chapter we talk about the 25 things I have learned, overcome in adversity.

I'll give you an example of just a few of them. Communicate often and quickly with your employees. They don't want secrets and during tough times you hiding behind a close door and not sharing with them what's really going on, the news that they come up with will be far worse than if you actually shot them straight and you told them what's going on. Employees appreciate that transparency.

I've also learned that if you need to cut and do some layoffs to not do one or two people every week. Figure out what you need to do, shoot it straight with everybody and do it once. It's really painful if you keep doing it over time. I learned that during tough times that you got to have a good attitude and look at the glass half full, not half empty. I've learned during tough times that you ought to get to the gym and work out regularly. It'll make you feel better.

Steve Sanduski: I had one person tell me about that, look at the glass half full versus half empty and then they said, "Well, always remember that you can also refill the glass."

Mark Moses: That's a good point. I don't like my glass of red wine half empty. I always prefer it at least half full.

Steve Sanduski: We've talked about what do you want, what do you have to do, what could get in the way. The fourth question is, how do you hold yourself accountable? Now this of course is also a critical part of the whole process that it's one thing to know what you want, know what you have to do, what could get in the way, but ultimately we've got to follow through and we've got hold our self accountable. Tell me more about this particular section of the book.

Mark Moses: I think it's way easier to run the business when you're measuring the key ... Like let's go back to the leading activities. If you're measuring those activities along the way and have broken them down into small size bytes like daily and weekly, I know that if you achieve your daily goal you'll ultimately achieve your weekly goal. If you achieve your weekly, you'll ultimately achieve your monthly goal and so on. Things that get measured get done. I also know that if you can't define it, you can't measure it. If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. By keeping score of the leading activities that you said you would do or your team said you would do or anybody in the company said they would do and keeping a scoreboard, that will enable you to achieve what you really want.

Steve Sanduski: Can you give us a sense for what the annual planning process looks like? I think you talk about having a daily meeting, a weekly meeting, monthly meeting. What does that calendar of meetings look like?

Mark Moses: I like thinking about it the annual state of the company that takes place after you've had a two-day annual planning session with your executive team determining what your Huge Outrageous Targets are for the year and what the activities are or initiatives are that will drive each one of those goals and assign accountability on each one of us. That's the annual piece.

Then every quarter I suggest doing the same thing for one day with your executive team again. Based on what we said we would do at the annual, what do we want to get done this coming quarter, and go through a process of what went right this quarter, what went wrong this quarter, what have we learned this quarter, how did we do compared to how we said we would do, where do we want to be by the end of the next quarter, what are the key activities that

will lead us to the result that we'd like to have, what's going to get in the way, how do we overcome what's getting in the way, who owns it, and then set up

Then monthly I believe it's up to you the leader to give an update to the company on the progress the company is making. Weekly I suggest that the executive team gets together every week to discuss their progress on the quarterly goals. I want to make this point. Don't get distracted by the loudest most urgent noise or customer that might be screaming or employee that might be leaving in these weekly meetings. Spend your time on the activities that we said would drive the goal we wanted to achieve that quarter. If we got outside noise take it at a separate meeting and you probably don't need your entire executive team to participate in that.

Then I also believe in daily huddles. Daily huddles can be done with the executive team. They could be done in different departments around the company. These are 10-minute standing meetings to get people focused and ready to tackle what's in front of them that day.

Steve Sanduski: By standing I think that'll ensure that they go pretty quickly.

Mark Moses: A standing meeting will be done in 10 minutes. Don't get too comfortable in a chair. Just quick updates and move on.

Steve Sanduski: Mark, you've gone through the four questions here. In your ideal world someone reads this book. There's an incredible amount of great information, great wisdom, great insight in there. What do you want readers to do after they finish reading this book?

Mark Moses: I suggest people should go through and really attempt to do the exercises that are in the book. It walks them through the process. I try to make it really simple that anyone could follow and share some of the concepts that you want to do with family and friends. Hopefully they can help inspire you or hold you accountable. Speaking of accountability, it'd be good to find somebody like a coach or a mentor to help hold you accountable and be disciplined with you and not let you off the hook in the process of making it happen.

Steve Sanduski: Mark, I think "Make Big Happen" is essentially a step-by-step blueprint for people that want to be more successful, not just in business but also in life and also in giving back. I just am very appreciative and grateful for what you've put together here. I think it's a book that's going to be a great resource for folks for many, many years to come. Mark, as we wrap up here today are there any final thoughts that you want to share with our listeners?

Mark Moses: Steve, you don't need to have gone to Harvard or an Ivy League school. You don't need to have the best network or the sexiest new upstart tech company. You just need to be committed to the steps in the book. If you are you can make big happen in your life, in your work, and how you choose to give back.

Steve Sanduski: Mark, what is the best way for people to get their hands on a copy of “Make Big Happen”?

Mark Moses: People can pick up the book at either amazon.com. It will be available in Kindle version. It’ll be available in audio. They could also pick it up from our website at makebighappen.com.

Steve Sanduski: Mark, this has been fantastic. I really appreciate you taking some time here to share some of your insights from your new book, “Make Big Happen.” As I mentioned, I’ve read the book. I think it’s phenomenal. I encourage all folks listening to this to pick up a copy. Check out the website makebighappen.com. While you're there check out ceochoachinginternational.com as well. We’ve got some great articles and some great podcast there too. Mark, as always, it’s a real pleasure to chat with you on the show.

Mark Moses: Thank you Steve.

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