Thank you for joining the *Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast!* Pastor Mike Todd leads Transformation Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and in the last couple of years has become a “social media influencer” with 1 million followers on both Instagram and YouTube. For Mike, *influence* isn’t the same as *fame*, and influence alone isn’t *leadership*.

1. **Influence and fame are different.**

People get influence and fame confused—especially with terms like “social media influencer” bouncing around. **Influence is the ability to impact people’s opinions and actions.** **Fame is simply being widely known.**

If you’re famous, you want people to see your moves. If you have influence, you want to help people make their own moves. We don’t want to just be known; we want to help people make positive choices in their lives. So many people mistake being famous for being effective and impactful.

There is an allure that fame is going to produce results (i.e., wealth, power, happiness) for a long time. The subject matter of fame is short-lived; it lasts three days, three weeks, or three months and then ends. The type of power that lasts longer and leaves a legacy is not fame, it’s influence—when you help others make decisions and take actions that change the world.

2. **Leadership requires trust.**

As Mike took over leadership of his church from the previous pastor, he learned something. He was a different age, ethnicity, and style than the previous pastor, but people didn’t care about any of that. Mike learned that **people don’t care who a leader is as long as they can trust the leader.**

To cultivate that trust, Mike first “killed preferences and looked at the people,” meaning he was going to lead in a way that was best for the people on his staff and in his church, not lead in a way that was necessarily comfortable for him. Comfort was second priority to taking care of the people he was leading. **Kill the thing that is comfortable.**

You can also build trust by getting to know people where they are and for who they are. Differences are only surface-deep. If you don’t get past the surface, you’ll only see the differences. But, dig down and learn about the people you’re leading, and you’ll make connection points and find commonalities that build trust.

To build trust, focus on these practices:
- Be consistent
- Be stable
- Communicate often and well
• Admit you won’t be perfect and operate in humility and authenticity

“All leaders make tons of mistakes all the time. The key is to admit it quickly.” – Mike Todd

3. Growing as a leader requires work.

Some people have great ideas or natural talents, but they only want to apply them if they know the ideas or talents will get used. Mike says an aspiring or new leader must put in the work to create fully fleshed out ideas or projects before they know they’ll be used. **Being willing to put in the work without a guarantee teaches you about stamina, pride, problem-solving, communication, and resilience.**

“Even if something doesn’t work here, it’s making you better for there.” – Mike Todd

As you’re working to advance or grow in leadership, you’ll get “no” for an answer along the way. Don’t take it personally—you never know the other circumstances surrounding the decision. And don’t give up. Take that idea or new ideas back with resilience. And remember, every project is a chance to get better. Even if the project or idea never takes off, it taught you something. Everything thing you do, or task you see through is making you into the kind of leader and asset that will be useful in another situation. If something doesn’t work here, it’s making you better for there.

If you don’t view early refusals or failures as development, if you avoid putting the work in and being proactive, you won’t be ready to shine when the time comes. Single projects and ideas don’t usually result in advancement. Years of stable, consistent, proactive investment result in advancement.

Helping and contributing where you currently are—even if it doesn’t always get used—still does great things for your leadership. **Your most valuable leadership tools will be learned prior to the season when you need them.**

In a similar way, Mike shared how his season of faithfulness preceded his season of fruitfulness. For two years, his team had been faithfully posting his sermons to YouTube even though views were only a couple hundred. Then, when a video of his went viral, that two-year catalogue of videos began to produce results and yielded 140,000 YouTube followers in one month. Mike’s point here is never that you’ll always gain fame if you “stick with it” but rather being faithful in the everyday and the mundane sets you up for success as a leader later.

Not everyone will go viral, and not everyone will be a social media influencer. But, everyone has influence and everyone is a leader.


Certain practices and mindsets limit our influence and our ability to grow. **Inauthenticity is the number one killer of influence.** People want to know that the person they’re following, supporting, and trusting is a “real” person with real vision and beliefs.

Flakiness and inconsistency are more enemies of influence. If you’re constantly underperforming or disappointing people, they’ll learn that you’re not trustworthy. Try to under promise and over deliver.

**Being overly tired is another enemy of influence.** You can’t give your best if you don’t feel your best. You can’t have vision, generate ideas, and lead strong if you’re constantly tired and run down.
5. Technology allows you to connect better.

While the goal is still to create authentic connection, technology can sometimes help you make that connection better. For Mike, he uses technology like texting people, hosting Instagram Live, and YouTube to create a better, more authentic relationship with his audience. For you, technology might mean being able to scale up support, reach more people with your message faster, or allow grassroots promotion.

If you’re avoiding taking advantages of some of the newer tech capabilities, remember they’re just tools that can help you influence better. Embracing technology helps put your organization into the future of communication. Technology is your friend.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & EXERCISES

Here are exercises you can do to grow as a leader—ask yourself and your team these questions:

1. On a scale of 1–10, gauge your attitude toward investing hard work before you have a “yes.” Are you willing to work hard on something you believe in even if it ultimately doesn’t get used? Are you open to learning from the experience or do you default to grumbling?

2. Make a list of the things you excel at in person. Then try to find ways to scale and duplicate that through technology. If you’re great at leading meetings, consider opening certain meetings up via video to the entire organization. If you’re great at making ideas a reality, ask your customers or followers on social media for their biggest, best ideas and give them some tips and solutions.

3. Identify one enemy of influence—inauthenticity, tiredness, or inconsistency—that you see in yourself. What practical goals or commitments can you make to overcome those enemies?

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“Leaders become less potent when they’re mentally and emotionally tired.” –Mike Todd
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