

## LEADERS in Action

Jason Womack interviews JOSH TAYLOR



**Josh Taylor is a groundbreaking social entrepreneur who collaborates with influential business leaders, creates dynamic opportunities and coaches clients on social impact in business. Acknowledged by The Huffington Post as one of '15 Young People Changing the World', Taylor is a co-founding partner of Hunter Grange Investments, which purchases and manages commercial properties and agricultural land to incubate social ventures and benefit the local community in Tywardreath, Cornwall.**

## Q&amp;A

**Jason Womack:** *Do you have a simple way to think about how leaders get better?*

**Josh Taylor:** First, listen. Listen to individuals from different generations and different industries, listen to those with less *and* more experience than you.

Second, have internal conversations with yourself. Ask, "How did I deal with this particular challenge? How else could I have dealt with it? How did others seem to deal with it?"

**JW:** *What was your Defining Moment as a leader?*

**JT:** When I was 15 years old, playing cricket, waiting for my turn at bat, I began talking with the owner of a local business. He needed a video made, and knew I was in media studies, so he asked if I could help him. I made a video for his organization, and I also created a website. People found out what I was doing. After I'd attached a video camera to a balloon and sent it into near space (nearly 118,000 feet), I began sharing my ideas locally.

I didn't come out of college knowing what an entrepreneur was. I was focused on graduating from university and getting a job. During my journey, I met a mentor who'd been an entrepreneur all her life, and she encouraged me to think about using my way of thinking to help small businesses think through their problems in new ways. Today, we are partners of Hunter Grange Investments, and our goal is to help people grow.

**JW:** *What will leaders increasingly need to include that up until now they may not have had to study in great detail?*

**JT:** Communication. We need to make our communication simple, effective and ensure that it translates completely. I prefer to make big decisions by sitting down and breaking bread with someone before we start working together. With the increasing use of social media, information can easily be misconstrued. We need to be very careful how our emotions and meaning is conveyed to others.

Continued

## Q&amp;A with Josh Taylor

Josh Taylor is the socially minded and connected leader who embraces challenges as opportunities.

He experiments, a lot. Taylor's social enterprise activities have given thousands of hours of free coaching support and start-up loans to local people, of all ages, to start and grow all kinds of micro ventures.

**JW:** *What do you think are the most important questions effective leaders need to ask of themselves?*

**JT:** *“How can I be firm and confident without being negative or hard-hearted?”* This question allows leaders to keep the end goal in sight and work together to accomplish that goal.

*“What do I need feedback on next?”* Stop, often, and consider the results you’re producing. Ask where feedback could or should come from, listen to the answer and seek that feedback out. It’s one of the best ways to change our perspective and do what we do better.

**JW:** *What are some of your own habits or routines as an effective leader?*

**JT:** I’m comfortable taking a risk — it’s my nature to be curious. As a kid, I spent time outside and to entertain ourselves, we made things without a lot of resources, without money. I think that the more leaders can look at challenges and see opportunities, the better they will be at creating and experimenting.

I ask for a lot of feedback. My mentor enables me to reassess situations. Oftentimes she’ll ask me to look at something that I thought went well (but could have been better!) and I always get value from that.

Maybe it’s naiveté, but I’m willing to step into an experience without always knowing what’s going to happen. If you’re a leader just starting out, find someone different than you who will help you think — make you think — differently.

**JW:** *How do you listen — and what do you listen for — so you hear more than what is just being said by those you lead?*

**JT:** I’ve found that every new idea comes from listening to what people are talking about — often, what they wish was different. If I can hear that, I know what to work on next.

I believe in learning by doing, creating a way of looking at business and community building in new and creative ways. That’s what keeps me going and engaged.

**JW:** *How would you define your self in just one sentence?*

**JT:** I think a leader is someone who identifies and nurtures talent in others so that they flourish and achieve common goals. It’s what I aspire to be... and do.

-