

Transcription details:

Host: Bill Coppel, First Clearing Chief Client Growth Officer

Guest: Hal Gregersen, Executive Director, MIT Leadership Center & Senior Lecturer of Leadership and Innovation, MIT Sloan School of Management

Transcription results:

Intro Welcome to The Next Frontier, where we examine what the role of the financial adviser will be in a world that's being disrupted by artificial intelligence and algorithms. Our mission is to spark new conversations that create stronger connections and build greater client confidence. Join us as we look at our industry and others through a new lens and explore the opportunities emerging at the intersection of high tech and high touch. It's time for a new conversation. Are you ready?

BILL COPPEL Hi. This is Bill Coppel, and welcome to The Next Frontier. Here's a question. When you're faced with a problem or a challenge, one that, say, impacts your business, maybe your client's world, or even your personal life, what do you do? How do you approach it? This can be a paralyzing situation for many. And just getting started can cause as much, if not more anxiety as the problem itself. One way many of us deal with this kind of situation is to launch into a brainstorming session, perhaps solo or with others. Most business gurus would applaud this approach. There are dozens of books written about it. There's even Critical Thinking for Dummies if you need a kick-start, and there are equal number of variations on the brainstorming approach, but they all have one thing in common. The activity boils down to an ideation exercise with a hint of beauty pageant drama. More about that in a minute. Albeit well-intentioned, it can prove to be unproductive and even derailing, as this process brings out our biases and perspectives front and center, often fueled by our innate desire to be right or to win, à la the beauty pageant analogy. In the absence of clear thinking, we often end up hamstrung, trapped inside the walls of our own shortsightedness. So then, how do we break out and see past the end of our nose to find that invisible solution? That's the question our guest will answer today.

BILL COPPEL Hal Gregersen is the Executive Director of the MIT Leadership Center and a senior lecturer in Leadership and Innovation at the MIT Sloan School of Management. As an inspirational speaker, he has worked with such renowned organizations as Chanel, Disney, Patagonia, UNICEF, and the World Economic Forum, and has been recognized by Thinkers50 as one of the world's most innovative minds. He has authored or co-authored 10 books translated into 15 languages, including the bestseller The Innovator's DNA. Hal and his wife, Suzi Lee lived in England, France, and the UAE before landing in Boston's North Shore, where he pursues his lifelong avocation of photography, and she works as a sculptor. Hal, welcome to The Next Frontier.

HAL GREGERSEN Bill, great to be with you today. Thank you.

BILL COPPEL I want to start by reading a passage from your latest book that came out in late 2018, entitled Questions Are the Answers: A Breakthrough Approach to Your Most Vexing Problems at Work and in Life. And this passage comes from the prologue. In fact, it's the first sentence. And here it goes. "One compelling reason to write a book is because you discover things so true and important that they deserve tens of thousands of words and hours of a reader's time to explore, and you sense that most people are living unaware of how crucial these truths are." So with that as a backdrop, Hal, tell us about your journey to this spot in your life, and how you came

up with what you think is important for leaders of businesses, and almost all of us should take advantage of, specifically how the focus on questions has influenced your thinking on the topics of leadership and innovation.

HAL GREGERSEN

What's interesting, Bill, is that whether it's a group of 10 leaders or a group of 10,000 leaders, I often ask them the question, "How do you ask the better question?" Because frankly, most leaders can easily nod their head, saying, "Yep, questions are important. Yes, questions matter. Yes, I know that." And then if you were to ask them to explain to somebody in 60 seconds or less, "What would you do differently tomorrow when you wake up, so that you would ask a different question, one that would be catalytic, one that would challenge a false assumption, one that would give you energy to do something about it and make a difference?" and when I ask that question, be it a large or a small group, at best I get 5% of the hands coming up, saying, "I am highly confident in my answer." And so the really interesting thing here, Bill, is that we know intuitively, deep inside, that asking questions really matter in the work we do and in the lives we live. But we don't quite know how do we ask the better question.

HAL GREGERSEN

And so the reason why I care so deeply about this is for 30-plus years I've studied leaders in all different kinds of situations: globalization, transformation, innovation. And the best of the best in any of those states of transition, they were exceptional at asking questions other people didn't ask, both in frequency and the type and kind and uniqueness of the questions. So whether it was 20 years ago-- A.G. Lafley, who was a two-time CEO of Procter & Gamble-- 20 years ago he was not the CEO, but he was a leader dropping into different countries. A.G. just excelled at asking questions, and in fact, when I interviewed him, he asked me more questions than I asked him. And the same could be said for some of the most innovative leaders on planet Earth, ranging from Jeff Bezos at Amazon to Niklas Zennström, who founded Skype, to Diane Greene, who founded VMware, who was then at Google Cloud. And so these people, they get it. They know that questions are the key to unlocking disruptive ideas that other people just don't have.

BILL COPPEL

Well, as a thought leader, when it comes to leadership and innovation and where this notion of questioning really plays an important part, I think the points you make are extraordinarily right on. I know I face that in my own life. Let's take a step back for a moment, if you will, and help me with this notion of innovation, say, versus a solution. So when I think about innovation, I see innovation as sort of that void between a problem and the solution. How do you think about innovation in the context of solutions, and is there a real difference, or are they the same thing?

HAL GREGERSEN

Well, what's really fun is, again, in the spirit of probing people for how they look at this question, I will often ask a group of leaders, "How many of you define yourselves as innovators?" and at best in a room, I'll get 30% of the hands going up, even with senior leaders. And then I'll say, "Okay. How many of you solve problems?" and of course, every hand goes up. That's their job. That's what they do. They solve problems. And then, it's basically they know they're caught in a trap, which is if you're trying to solve a problem and you don't have a solution, what do you have to do? You have to create a solution that does not currently exist. And so for me, Bill, this is a bit of semantics. I frankly could care less whether we call it innovation or creative problem-solving. All I care about is that when we wake up in the morning, we are finding the right challenges and problems to tackle, and we're spending focused energy trying to get a better solution.

HAL GREGERSEN

Ed Catmull, the co-founder of Pixar Animation and then, for decades, president of Pixar and then Disney Animation Studios-- to Ed, creativity is problem-solving. It's

really finding and solving problems. And Jeff Bezos of Amazon grew up as a child, then a teenager, then became an adult. By the time he was in the adult world, he had a self-definition of, "I am a relentless problem-solver," and part of that is finding the right problems and then solving them. So these folks who are exceptional at innovation and doing it in a way that creates enormous value, at the very core, they pay deep and careful attention to, "What are the problems and opportunities and challenges around here that are truly worth our energy, and how might I use this questioning capacity that I have nurtured and this muscle that I've developed in order to solve those challenges and opportunities quicker, faster, and better?"

BILL COPPEL

Hal, looking at this, based on what you just said, maybe from the other end of that conversation, you identified a key responsibility of a business leader is to have the ability to recognize if and when a business requires a major change in direction. That's a pretty big thing for us to bite on. First, what do you mean by that when you say change directions, and second, why is that important? And finally, how do you develop the management muscle to actually get there?

HAL GREGERSEN

That's a great series of questions. And from my perspective, one of the, if not the most fundamental roles of a senior leader of a small or large organization is to see what's coming next before someone else does. And that's what we're talking about in terms of a change of direction. And frankly, Bill, change actually doesn't matter under two conditions, and I do not have to pay attention to how the future might be different under these conditions. And they are, "What I'm currently doing is absolutely spectacular for my existing customers or clients," and the second condition is, "The world doesn't change." And so if I'm doing something great and the world doesn't change, change doesn't matter. But those are absurd conditions, at least the second one. You and I both know the world is chock-full of change, and so because of that, we have this dual role as a leader in an organization, which is, of course, we've got to figure out how to deliver terrific results today. Yes, that matters. But if that's all we pay attention to, it's like running a factory 24/7 with no downtime and no preparation for the future, and at some point, things break down. And that's the exact same thing for a team or an organization. If the leaders aren't paying careful attention to the changes that need to happen before they must happen, then very difficult, even disastrous things will come up.

BILL COPPEL

What's interesting about what you just said is the first part of that observation of the two, which is, "Our clients are thrilled with what we're doing," and that leads me to my next question, and it has to do with the comments in the book you make around, "Breaking down the walls as a leader is important." Talk to us about what that means in the context of believing everything you're doing is thrilling your clients. It seems to me we get stuck in our status quo sometimes, and the lens we use to look at where we are may, in fact, be inappropriate.

HAL GREGERSEN

No, absolutely. And Walt Bettinger, the current CEO of Charles Schwab, told me-- when I asked him, "What's your biggest challenge?" his instant response was, "Isolation." And this is the challenge I-- he said, "This challenge happened the moment I became the leader of a small team at the bottom of the organization, and isolation became ever more difficult the higher I became in the organization." And the challenge of isolation is people stop telling you what they think you don't want to hear, and they start telling you what they think you do want to hear. And when that starts happening, we are in a marvelously walled-in world. It could be the office we're a part of. It could be the building we're in. But however you look at it, isolation is a bunch of walls around us. And so the issue becomes how do I get beyond that dangerous disconnect with these walls that are keeping information from coming at me that I need. And coming back to the prior question, Bill, it's that passive

information. It's the data that isn't coming actively through the system and the normal routines of information that get to me. It's that passive data just sitting out there on the edge of the organization or the edge of the team. That's the stuff that defines the future. That's the stuff that creates the new ways of doing things that are better than the past.

HAL GREGERSEN

And so isolation is, "I have behaved or done things in a way that people no longer are giving me the bad news, the frustrating difficult news." And so then the issue becomes-- if you're someone like Walt Bettinger at Charles Schwab, it's like, "Man, I need to do something about this." And so he's very active in order to get beyond those walls, ranging from having his direct reports twice a month, giving him a bad news report. "These are the things that are going wrong in my part of the team or organization." It's talking with people. Whoever he's talking with-- whomever he's talking with-- asking them, "My biggest challenge is isolation. Can you help me with it?" Or he may, with pretty much everyone he interacts with, including financial analysts on analyst calls-- it's basically asking them, "If you were in my job, what would you do differently?" And what Walt is doing is actively seeking passive data that could help him see things that otherwise would blindside him, and he's not alone.

HAL GREGERSEN

Mark Benioff at Salesforce.com-- it's a sales sort of thing. It's the same deal. For the first 10 years of his life, selling enterprise-level software at Oracle, he was, as a salesperson, on the edge of the system, constantly getting this information that was saying, "Here's what's good about Oracle, and here's what sucks or is bad about Oracle," and he's constantly being told he's wrong about something, and he has to deal with it and try to figure it out. And then he goes off and builds on those conversations to talk with hundreds of other people about how might large enterprise software actually be usable by small and medium-sized enterprises that leads him to this question. All these conversations and all this passive data leads him to a question of, "What if we sold enterprise-level software like Amazon sells books?" which 20 years ago was absurd. People thought he was nuts. No self-respecting organization would put their data into the internet. But he came to that question and the ultimate solution through hundreds of interactions with the world that told him, "Mark, you're not seeing things quite right, and even though it might be uncomfortable, it's important to pay attention to this, so listen up. Be quiet." And to this day, Mark-- you bump into him at any major meeting around the world. He does not have a ring of steel advisers around him, chiefs of staff, and other people protecting him. He wants to get the raw data, the raw stuff because he knows that's the only way he can create a different future.

BILL COPPEL

So walking the factory floor and actually talking to clients and the people that make a difference in the lives of the families and customers that you serve is extremely important, based on what you're saying, and I think the examples you gave are outstanding. In our business, in the financial services business today, we believe, here at The Next Frontier, that money management is better served with algorithms and artificial intelligence and the technology that exists today, and that the role of that adviser is quickly becoming obsolete, based on the old status quo approach. And when you talk about this notion of isolation and breaking down the walls, you use a term that I want to kind of explore with you, around this strategy called unusually uncomfortable. Talk to us about how that plays into this strategy of breaking down those walls.

HAL GREGERSEN

Well, the idea of asking the better question-- and these are the kinds that-- as I mentioned earlier, I call them catalytic questions. They challenge an assumption we're holding that's fundamentally wrong, and at least for me, Bill, when that happens in

my life, it's uncomfortable. It's like, "Ouch. I didn't know. I was believing that, and, in fact, it's dead wrong." And then the issue of the discomfort is, do we run from it, or do we create enough quiet and solitude in our life to actually let it settle in in a way that gives us energy to do something about it? And so often these unusually uncomfortable moments, again, don't happen in an isolated office space. They usually happen out there, on the edge of the organizations. And so Scott Cook, who founded Intuit, and Brad Smith, who was one of the CEOs until recently, they both do this same thing, which is they will spend hundreds of hours every year, literally watching Quicken and QuickBooks clients using the software, interacting with them, and trying to get data that would signal, "We're doing something wrong here, and we better do something about it. And even though it's uncomfortable, we're not going to run from it," and that happens when they're out there in that sort of space.

HAL GREGERSEN

And so you're right. With this increasing fintech and AI and so much of the financial world being driven by those technologies, the role of the adviser becomes even more crucial as a bridge between the fintech and the AI and the real person that's sitting across the table from you. And so that's where I think, in that advisory role, asking questions and asking new, productive questions is probably one of the most crucial skills for the future. Just recently, I was re-interviewing an amazing leader of a cybersecurity firm called Cybereason, Lior Div, and I was talking to Lior about the algorithm creators in the cybersecurity world who are trying to create these algorithms that outsmart the bad folks. And what he basically explained to me was those folks, their questioning is accelerating.

HAL GREGERSEN

The big data sets, the AI, the technology is forcing these algorithm creators to ask faster and faster, more and more questions, and they're getting more and more simple and more and more difficult to answer. So instead of a simple question like, "Is this computer talking to that computer," it moves up to, "Is this a cyberattack?" and "Is it espionage above that?" and "What's the intent above that?" And so what we're discovering, even in that world of cybersecurity, is the most value is created by these people who are right next to the AI machine-learning, deep-learning world, but they're also trying to figure out what's the human side of what's going on right here. And to me, that feels just like the role of the financial adviser, which is, "I've got to bridge this gap between what all of this technology is now making possible, that maybe never was before, and what's the human reality, the emotional reality, of this person next to me that I am trying to help them build a better future?"

BILL COPPEL

And believe me, that is a great definition of uncomfortable, when you think about it, because at the end of the day, the adviser's role of managing money is no longer at the centerpiece of what clients value. The fact of the matter is the adviser, to your point, has got to shift and bridge that gap, to not focus on how to get a better rate of return, but helping clients discover what matters.

HAL GREGERSEN

Well, and I'd love to share an example around that, Bill, which is--

BILL COPPEL

Please. Please.

HAL GREGERSEN

--a good friend and colleague of mine, Mark Widmer, and some other colleagues, they basically work with a financial advisory firm for high-net-worth individuals. And what Mark and his team's job is-- instead of the firm trying to simply answer the question, "How can we best transfer the wealth of these wealthy individuals to the next generation?" which is a pure finance kind of question, they've realized that the better question to be asking is, "What are the values that we want that next generation of our children and grandchildren to hold onto, so that when they get this

wealth, they will use it in ways for themselves and others that would be the most productive?" And so Mark and his team-- Mark has a long history of doing, initially, outdoor survival with youth who are in difficult addiction-sort-of-related challenges, and then, for the last 15 to 20 years, he's been doing the same sort of change programs with outdoor environments - these are ropes courses and other kinds of intense activities - to try to help people see who they really are and what they deeply value. So what Mark and his team do is, they work with these high-net-worth individuals to get underneath the surface about what are the most fundamental values of your family that you would like the future generations to carry and hold on to, going forward. And then Mark and his team put the family in these unusually uncomfortable situations, intently and expressly, so that they will understand, acquire, and explore these values, such that when the wealth comes their way, they will use it in incredibly productive ways.

BILL COPPEL

That's an incredible story. And more importantly, it really redefines the value that the adviser is actually creating for their client. Another important dimension of what you're talking about here is really captured in a Donald Rumsfeld quote that you use in your book, and it's a quote from 2002 when he was US defense secretary under Bush 43. And so what I want to do for our listeners to set the stage for this conversation, is to kind of read the quote, and then I'd like you to reflect on it and tie it back to it's impact on business. Rumsfeld explains, "There are known knowns. There are those things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns. That's to say that we know there are things we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. The ones we don't know we don't know. And it's the latter category that tends to be the difficult one." So obviously this is in the context of national security. But let's kind of turn the tables on it a bit and talk about it as it relates to the impact on business.

HAL GREGERSEN

Just this morning, I'm in the middle of the beginning of David McCullough's new book, *The Pioneers*, about the late 1700s and Americans going from the Northeast, where I live, in Boston, to the Ohio, which was the far West at that point. And like Rumsfeld, they were just dealing with non-stop unknown unknowns. They had no map of the territory, no sense of what was beyond the next turn in the road, and they had to be actively figuring out what they didn't know they didn't know, before it was too late. And this is the challenge for business, as well. About 15 years ago, we lived in London, in the UK, and there was this paper-based London maps called *The A to Z Map Book*. And then, a year or two later, we moved to Paris, and we had no more need for this paper-based book. And at that point, there were these marvelous things called Garmin and TomTom suction-cupped navigation systems that you stuck to your windshield. And then at some point, about five or six years later, we moved to Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates, and they put those suction-cup sort of systems away, and we had Google Maps. And then, about seven years ago, we moved to Boston, and frankly, with Uber and Lyft, there was no need for Google Maps.

HAL GREGERSEN

So I just went through 20, 25 years of business in that particular industry, where each one of those transitions I just described-- the leaders of the A to Z Maps needed to be figuring out, "What's going to happen 10 years from now when we have online systems?" So the leaders of Garmin and TomTom, "What's going to happen when Google Maps takes over what we're doing?" Garmin made a good pivot. TomTom didn't. What's going to happen in the future? 15 years ago in the transportation industry-- I've asked a lot of people in that industry, "Did you ever really use the word mobility?" and the answer is no. And in today's world of the transportation industry, it's actually redefined as the mobility industry because it's so different than simply

selling a car today, with ride sharing and everything else that's going on, autonomous vehicles, etc., etc.

HAL GREGERSEN

So what I'm trying to set up and frame here, Bill, is that in any industry - it's not just transportation - the world is a-changing, and the changes that disrupt and matter are probably 5 to 10 years down the road. And the challenge becomes, as a leader of a small or large organization, "What am I actively doing today to figure out what I don't know I don't know? Because if I don't have a strategy for that, I will get blindsided, and we will get blindsided." I mean, think about it. Personally, professionally, every time we get blindsided, the kinds of things that really disrupt our world, it comes from that area of knowledge. It's the stuff we don't know we don't know. And that's where I, again, asked leaders all over the world, "What's your strategy? What are you going to do differently tomorrow that will help you start to chip away at what you don't know you don't know, before it's too late?"

BILL COPPEL

And I think that that really underscores what you're talking about in terms of a strategy to get there, to really begin to unearth those unknown unknowns through the process of questioning. I want to turn to this because I think that it's really about the art of question formulation. Let me start with this observation. We often ask questions to show the world how smart we are, rather than being open to being wrong or looking uninformed. I'd love you to share with our listeners-- and it's a story that you talk about in the book, relative to something you learned from Adrian Wooldridge, who's a columnist with The Economist, and how he went about observing the work of Bob Woodward to teach himself how to become better at really unpacking stories to discover the unknown unknown, or perhaps, said another way, what he didn't realize he was looking for.

HAL GREGERSEN

Well, Adrian is an amazing writer, incredibly thoughtful. And a few years ago, I happened to be on a panel where he was in the same conference I was, and we had a wonderful hour-and-a-half, two-hour conversation afterwards, one-on-one, about how does he get to these great insights. And effectively, he said-- part of what he explained to me was, "It's the questions I ask, Hal. They may all the difference." And then my question was, "Well, how did you learn how to do that, Adrian? How did you learn how to ask these questions that other people aren't?" And he said, "When I was a young--" he told me, "When I was a young reporter, I looked around, and I'm like, 'Who's really good at this work of reporting?'" and the person he identified was Bob Woodward. And he watched Bob carefully, in all sorts of settings, press conferences, and other venues, and he noticed that over and over and over, Bob would ask the most simple questions, ones that would cause the audience or group to laugh at him. And Bob would have no problem with that laughter because what he was doing with these simple questions-- he was probing the edges of the system to figure out what's working and what's not. And that's the way in which he uncovered Watergate, and that's the way in which he's been able to surface stories about things going on that other people miss. It's actually through these entirely simple, straightforward, fundamental questions.

BILL COPPEL

I thought that was extraordinarily insightful.

HAL GREGERSEN

Well, and one of the other leaders I have met, one of the co-founders of Mphasis told me that, "When somebody comes to me with a complex, long question, either they don't know what they're talking about, or they're trying to trick me [laughter]." And so it's basically trying to formulate shorter, sharper, tougher, probing questions.

BILL COPPEL

Well, at the heart of your approach is what you refer to as the Question Burst process. I think our listeners would really benefit from understanding how this works. And then it would be interesting for you to kind of tie that back into use by, say, a

financial adviser. Not so much with them working with their team, but perhaps, how could you use that technique to actually help clients discover and articulate what really matters to them?

HAL GREGERSEN

No. Absolutely. So here's the deal. We all have challenges. We all get stuck. Every day, there's something that we haven't figured out. And 20 years ago I was working with a group of leaders around an issue of gender diversity and creating more gender parity within the organization. This was 20 years ago. We were stuck. The negative energy in the room-- and we weren't moving forward. And I had this moment of insight, which was, "Stop. Let's stop trying to solve these things, and let's just ask nothing but questions about the issue." And this was days of blackboards and chalk. We literally filled up three big, huge blackboards in the room, basically, with nothing but questions. And the rules were the following. Nobody is going to answer any of the questions, and no one will explain why they're asking the question. So imagine you've got this transcript in front of you, and you've got a question sitting there, very simple, like, "What is fintech?" and if you were looking through the transcript, in the case of a Question Burst, there's no explanation before that question as to why you're asking it, and after that simple question, "What is fintech?" there's no answer to it. And what I discovered is, is that when you strip out explanations before questions and answers after them, you create this quiet, dead space. And when we do that, it actually frees us from the constraints we have at looking at that issue.

HAL GREGERSEN

And so that's why these rules are there. It's a specific period of time. It can be done in as short as a four-minute period. It could be done alone. It could be done with other people. But it's like, "Here's my issue. I'm stuck. I'm going to generate as many questions as I can. No answers. No explanations. And at the end of that four-minute period, I'll get about 15 to 20 questions if I follow those two rules." And 80% of the time, I will feel better about my challenge, which makes a difference because I'm more likely to get a creative new solution. 85% of the time, I'm going to have reframed the way I'm looking at the challenge. And 85% of the time, I will have at least one new idea I didn't have before. And so this simple investment, by changing the rules by the way we talk about or think about a challenge - and the rules being no answers, no explanations, nothing but questions for a short, defined period of time - actually, that question-only approach unlocks a viewpoint and a series of answers that otherwise would not have come.

BILL COPPEL

And that could become a very effective way to engage, even with a client.

HAL GREGERSEN

Oh, absolutely. And it could range-- I use this at personal-level issues. I use it at professional-level issues. I use it in my coaching that I am doing with people. And advisory work is basically coaching, and the best coaches are actually great at asking the best questions. And one way of creating that more vulnerable, open-understanding-of-where-you're-coming-from situation, is literally saying-- your client is stuck, perhaps, and you're the adviser. And it's essentially saying, "One way of getting unstuck here and maybe seeing it differently is doing this Question Burst process. You willing to try it with me? Here's what we do. Four minutes, let's set a timer. Nothing but questions. No answers. No explanations." I did this with someone who had difficulty saying no when the role they had in the organization demanded that they said no like 80% of the time, and that makes for a very difficult moment.

HAL GREGERSEN

And so we sat down, did this exercise, and some amazing questions surfaced out of that, like, "What hurts inside of you when you have to say no?" and, "Where does that hurt come from?" and, "What is the best experience you've had saying no?" "How important is it that hurt goes away, and how quickly does it go away?" "What's really stopping you from saying yes, and what are the resources could help you say

yes?" "Who else is good at saying no and why? What could you learn from them?" "Are yes and no the only options?" "Do you understand why it hurts so much to say no?" and "What are the deepest yeses that could give you the courage to say no?" Well, I just spilled out, Bill, 15 or so questions, and at the end of that process, that person had reframed the way in which they saw themselves as a leader and how they saw themselves in terms of how they could say yes and no more effectively. It's that fast. It's that quick. And it systematically, actually works.

BILL COPPEL

Well, I have to tell the truth here and say that since I have had the opportunity to meet you and prepare for this interview, I've begun to work very, very hard to adopt a lot of these techniques, and it's remarkable, in a short period of time. Particularly at a personal level, when you're interacting with a spouse or your family members who often come to you looking for what they think is an answer, and we'll quick to respond with what we think they're trying to solve for, but inevitably it's really not the issue. It's hidden deep inside, and it only takes through questions to get there. We've covered a lot of ground this morning, Hal, in this conversation, so I'm going to put you on the spot a little bit here, and I'm not going to let you answer this question by saying, "Ask better questions [laughter]." What's the one thing you'd like to leave listeners with today? And maybe it's around, "How do I just get started?"

HAL GREGERSEN

Whenever we're stuck, at work or in life, we are stuck because we're asking the wrong questions. And as Peter Drucker once said, "There's nothing more dangerous or useless than the right answer to the wrong question." That's why we're stuck. And the simplest, most straightforward way to get unstuck is literally to do, Bill, what we just talked about. Get out a piece of paper. Get out your computer. Get out your tablet. Do it maybe with somebody else. Take four minutes. Do that question burst. Generate nothing but questions about whatever the issue is, and 80% of the time, you'll start making progress. And beyond that simple method that I just described, the other recommendation is, look at your life. Look at your patterns. Look at how you're spending your time, and compose better situations in the way you go about your work, where you, yourself, are going to be a little bit wrong instead of right, a little bit uncomfortable instead of uncomfortable, and then force yourself to be reflectively quiet enough for that wrong, uncomfortable data to settle in and for you to let that new question emerge out of that experience. And that's often the question that's so unique and special and treasured for that particular situation that you're in, that it is a key that unlocks the window and door to a totally different way of doing things.

BILL COPPEL

Outstanding. Thank you so much, Hal, for your time today. And as we wrap up, if our listeners want to learn more about you, or maybe connect, how would they go about doing that?

HAL GREGERSEN

A very straightforward, simple answer, Bill, would be halgregersen.com. There's a lot of information there about my ideas and ways to engage. The book, Questions Are the Answer, at Amazon, obviously, could be another way of making the connection. I'd love to get their feedback, good and bad - what's working; what isn't - from the ideas, if they explore that, and hope that the conversation you and I are having today can continue on with them.

BILL COPPEL

Outstanding. And I hope we have the opportunity, the next time I'm up Boston, that we can sit down and continue our conversation.

HAL GREGERSEN

That would be wonderful, seriously, wonderful.

BILL COPPEL

Again, thank you so much for your time, and I look forward to our next engagement.

HAL GREGERSEN

Thank you, Bill. And I wish you all the best.

BILL COPPEL

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Outro

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