

The **CRAFT** of **MENTORING** with **Marty Wikstrom**



Your Job is to Get Up, Dress Up, Show Up

July 8, 2026

Marty Wikstrom, Board Member at Fortnum & Mason, and a mentor and coach at The ExCo Group, shared candid insights with Adam Bryant. Key themes include building trust as the foundation of effective mentoring, using tools like the Leadership Values Assessment to sharpen self-awareness, and embracing consistency and accountability through simple daily discipline.

Bryant: What, for you, is the secret sauce of effective mentoring?

Wikstrom: It starts with chemistry. A great mentoring relationship has to be built on a foundation of trust. Because you can't have somebody hold back or hedge their answers. You've got to have that strong connection.

Sometimes that comes from the simple fact that you like each other. Sometimes that comes from the ability to have an open conversation. And sometimes it comes from setting some guidelines around trust and what it means to trust one another.

I occasionally do that by simply posing the question: What would it take for me to trust you, and what would it take for you to trust me? What's most important in our relationship? What would it take for us to really be candid with one another in our relationship? Reminding them that there is strict confidentiality in our work goes a long way to easing any concerns they might have.

Bryant: Is there a tool or framework that you use that typically leads to the greatest unlocks?

Wikstrom: I love the Leadership Values Assessment (LVA) we use at ExCo. In the assessment, we ask our clients to choose from a long list the words and phrases that they think best describe them. And then we ask the people who know our client best to choose the words and phrases from the same list that they think best describe our client.

It helps me understand somebody very quickly. It also helps me understand how well they know themselves and how they are perceived by their peers and the people they are leading. It's about authenticity, do they really see themselves the way others see them?

Bryant: Is there a difficult conversation you had to have with a client that ultimately landed in a good place?

Wikstrom: I had an entire conversation with a client about accountability. I quickly learned that this person seemed to think that, whenever there was a problem, it was everybody else's fault. We really had to put a stop to that.

Yes, there are instances when something could be 50 percent somebody else's fault. But frankly, it's better when a leader just takes on the complete accountability for success and weaknesses in the business and stops pushing that off on somebody else.

Sometimes that's a very difficult conversation, but I had to have that discussion with this client who was playing the blame game. It wasn't a good place to be. When you get out of that mode and decide that you're going to take charge, things go a lot better. I didn't know if I would break through with them, but we got past it.

Bryant: What is the best lesson you learned from one of your mentors over your career?

Wikstrom: The greatest mentor I've ever had told me, "Marty, really smart people make things incredibly complicated. Geniuses make things simple. Why don't you be a genius?"

His point was that when you are trying to get a message across to thousands of people, you can't overcomplicate things. You have to make sure there is simplicity in your message. You have to take the complexity out and summarize the key points you want to get across.

Bryant: Is there an expression you've repeated often over the course of your career?

Wikstrom: One is "get up, dress up, show up." Some days are diamonds, and some days are stones. Get up, dress up, show up means that you need to prepare yourself to show up and be in the game every day. There are times that life is tough, but that doesn't matter. Your job is to get up, dress up, show up.