



Scott Ritzheimer

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<https://www.predictablesuccess.com/scott-ritzheimer-on-the-founders-evolution>

Note: *This transcript has been lightly edited for clarity and understanding. There may still be grammatical and spelling errors,*

Les McKeown: Hi everybody, and welcome back to Scale! with Predictable Success, where we get to talk to people who themselves and with others, have achieved that stage that we call Predictable Success in life and business.

And today, I'm absolutely delighted to welcome back to the show, not a very frequent thing, a returnee, my good friend and colleague, Scott Ritzheimer. Scotty, welcome back.

Scott Ritzheimer: Les. Thanks for having me. It's fun to be back.

Les McKeown: So two big changes since you were last on the show. One is, and our great listeners can't actually see this, but you're sporting a magnificent, what we call in the UK, a full set - beard, moustache, the whole thing, looking really well on you.

And that combines with the fact that I have a completely shaved head. So between the two of us with the same amount of hair, it's just been fully redistributed.

Scott Ritzheimer: Reallocated

Both: Laughter

Les McKeown: But the other, and much more important, transition is that you're now some time into the role that, you had just stepped into when you were last on the show, which is a CEO of Scale Architects.

And of course, we'll link to that show in the notes here. If you haven't heard that, you know what I'm gonna say I strongly recommend you go back and listen to it. But Scotty, for the folks



who didn't hear you on that last show, tell us a little bit about Scale Architects, what it is, what your role is in that, and, how people can find out more about it.

Scott Ritzheimer: Yeah. Our Scale Architects have the, highly enviable position of getting to use the Predictable Success model day in and day out. It's a wonderful thing. It was originally the Licensed Practitioner Program, as you know. And I always tell people, if you hear Les tell the story, in a stroke of genius, he decided he could get rid of a whole bunch of questions by, by bringing me on board.

So, you know, when in doubt, if you ever want something, just ask a lot of questions of the person who has it. There's probably a Bible verse on this somewhere, but it's the best way to get what you want.

But no, it's, it's really been awesome. And we're a couple years in now we've got 22 now, different Scale Architects, on I think four continents.

And it's just a remarkable program and some of the most wonderful people in the world, and they've given themselves to what you and I do every day, which is helping organizations, helping businesses, nonprofits, cause-based organizations get to this stage that we call Predictable Success.

And they get to use your playbook, which is such a cool thing. And I'm privy to all these incredible stories both from our coaches. It's just transformed their lives and for the clients that they're serving.

I mean, you know, like there's two things that you and I get to do. And that's to help people get out of Whitewater, right?

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: And to build a brilliant business as coaches. And we've been able to do that for dozens of folks now. And so, you know, for those who are listening, if you want help getting to Predictable Success or if you wanna help people getting to Predictable Success, or if you just love the model and want to do it more, right.

That's what most of the people in the program are like, they've used it in their business, they've done their thing, they got to Predictable Success, and they're like, man, I wanna do it again. And we get to do it again and again and again. And it's just an awesome thing.

Les McKeown: And really quickly, so if someone's, been using the model sort of informally, and they want to get more training, more framework, access to all of our tools, they can find out



about that on Scale Architects.com. And that's open to both to individual coaches and consultants and internal practitioners, is that right?

Scott Ritzheimer: That's exactly right. We call them Internal Scale Architects and External Scale Architects. The training is very, very similar. With one, we're building a business and the other we're getting buy-in across the organization.

Those are the different challenges. But the thing that's the same, and, and I tell this story a lot to folks who are kind of interested in the program, and for anyone listening, this is really important.

The Predictable Success model, even the Predictable Success book has a fundamental problem with it. I can say this to you. And that is that it's so easy to understand that we think we got it, if you're not careful.

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: If you just read it at face value, there's this kind of impression that you've tapped into everything. And I still remember that that happened to me.

And in that frame of mind, it still added over a million dollars to our bottom line. So if you just get to that point, you're in good hands.

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: But there's so much more to it. And I've been doing this now with you for I think four years, something like that, this month, four years? And there's not a day goes by that I don't learn something new.

So I remember this time, it's when we were doing training in your living room, and so this is, I think 2019. This is before covid changed the world, right. And you pulled out this book, and I was like, what in the world is that? And it was the Org Chart workbook for the Org Chart workshop.

So there's 13 imperatives. Folks know that. Well, there's a full day workshop that you can do, which is really about three days if you do all of it of material that's available. And one of the things that just blew me away was how much isn't actually in the book.

And that's a massive service for you to everybody else. But for those who have loved what you've seen so far, I want to tell you, you've only hit the tip of the iceberg. There's so much more that this guy has put together, and, and there's so much depth to your model that it is my absolute joy to get to share all of the rest of it that's below the surface with our coaches and our clients.



Les McKeown: I really appreciate that. And it's, it's been a fantastic four years, and here's to many, many, many more. All of that is not why we're here to talk. We're here to talk about your new book, "The Founder's Evolution: Conquering the Journey Every Founder Must Face".

It's brilliant. I love it. You and I have had an opportunity to talk about it a number of times. I've been on your podcast to talk about it. And, I'm excited to dive into it.

But my first question, is a pretty simple one. As somebody who's written quite a few books by now and know that that's not as easy as falling off a log, why'd you do it? What prompted you to go through the agony of actually producing a book, brilliant as it is?

Scott Ritzheimer: I think, this is the answer that just about anyone would give for anything remarkable that they've ever done, and that it was, I couldn't not do it. I had to do it.

I tried to avoid it for years, and I just kept smacking right into it, you know. I cheated a little bit. It's a very short book. Now, it's intentional. There's some design to that. But it's about half the length of a normal book because the audience that I'm writing to, founders and and busy leaders are founders and busy leaders, right?

They don't need, you know, another a hundred pages of fluff. They need the absolute essence of what we're going after. And that's the goal of the book, is to boil down their world of all the things that they should be doing to just a few, key kind of essential ingredients. And I tried to do that with the book as well.

Les McKeown: Right. And you've, really described it. It's, as I read it as a visual learner, it really spoke to me because it is a journey that you've uncovered. And I think, like me, the core skill that you brought here is pattern recognition. I mean, that's the world that we both live in.

So tell us what that pattern is. First of all, what are the challenges that founders specifically face that means, that they need this book?

Scott Ritzheimer: Yeah. There are, there's lots of challenges. And actually there are seven stages. There's challenges to each stage, but there's three really, really big challenges that I wanted to solve with this.

And fundamentally before we get there, they all come to one root issue. There's actually just one problem that founders have. And it's not that they're exhausted. It's not that they have, you know, people on their team that aren't keeping up. It's not that they don't have the right strategy for the future.



It's not even that they're getting in their own way necessarily. The fundamental problem that underlies all of that is that they haven't identified the stage that they're in, in their leadership journey and their journey as a founder.

And because they don't know what stage they're in, they don't know what they need to do now.

Les McKeown: Right. Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: And so we're just lost in the whims of, you know, whatever's demanding our attention, whatever we saw somebody else do, what some person who, you know, may or may not know what they're doing tells us we should be doing.

And one of the things that shocked me, and I've not been doing this for nearly as long as you have, but in the short time that I've been doing this, there's been this swing from folks not having enough information to know what they need to do to succeed, to instantly we have way too much information to know what we need to do to succeed.

Les McKeown: Right. And AI is really solving that problem for us, right?

Scott Ritzheimer: Oh, yeah. It's wonderful.

Both: Laughter.

Scott Ritzheimer: And so the fundamental challenge really is that. It's the same thing for folks in your audience. It's really helpful to understand because, we understand the Predictable Success model. We understand the value in knowing what stage your organization is in. And the piece that I saw, where I could help contribute to that is, what is that personal journey to Predictable Success look like for the founder in particular?

Now, it's true for other leaders, and, if we wanna nerd out on it, it's even true for this every story, every great story we've ever told, it's even true for Jesus, for those who are listening, right?

So, it's really interesting from a pattern perspective, but to keep it straightforward for folks, there's seven stages that folks go through. And, and there's again, a few challenges that really come to fruition in those stages.

So the first one is relatively early on, right. We've got a successful founder. They've got a nimble organization. For your audience, they're in Fun.

Les McKeown: Right.



Scott Ritzheimer: That organic growth stage. And the problem that they're having is there is a growing gap between their vision and what they're actually seeing come to pass. They want their organization to grow faster. And it seems like the more that they work, right, the bigger that gap gets.

So even if they're growing, their vision for the future is growing faster than their existing vision. And the gap between the two is painful. I mean, it's agonizing for Visionary leaders.

And so that's the first one. And it'd be fine if that gap was there, but we realized the harder we work, the less energy we have, we don't have any spare resources to go after it. So you're just tapped.

And it's like, it's gotta be better than this. That's the first one.

Les McKeown: And that's, that's the stage where, you know, you and I've seen it so many times, a Founder will, they'll have an epiphany that this gap is there, but it's snatched in between just the stretch of delivering every single day.

And it begins to build inherent frustration because you know there's something you need to close up on, but you've just gotta do the next indicated thing to get through to the next day. So that's really, really stressful.

Scott Ritzheimer: Absolutely. And the better you are at doing the next indicated thing, the harder it is to get.

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: And so I'm sure we'll be able to come back to that. But the second big challenge is, a little bit later in the process, we're talking about scalability. For you and I we're talking about getting to Predictable Success.

So we want our organization to scale beyond our success. We've kind of broken through some of those earlier barriers, but again, that gap is still like, we could be here. Like I know, like our vision for the organization is here, but we're just not gonna do it.

But here's the distinction. We realize at that point that it's us that's holding it back as founders.

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: They realize, "okay, I know that I'm in the way, but I still don't know what to do about it because, you know, a dozen people will tell me I'm in the way, but they all have different



reasons for why and what I need to do about it, and I don't have time to do all, all 12, and I don't want to guess the wrong one".

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: It's almost paralyzing because you've taken enough knocks by this point that, you know, you don't have it figured out, but you also know that there's something more. And, and again, it's this really painful for folks, it's almost, I would call it disillusioning, because you actually realize how hard it is to get where you want to go, but you can't want it any less.

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: There's something in you that has to happen.

Les McKeown: One of the things that I think founders often miss out on, which is a wonderful thing to gift them at this point, is that actually the self-awareness to even though it's really, really, really frustrating, the self-awareness to realize that you are now the barrier, the salvation lies in that, because there are so many founders aren't there that, that just get stuck at this stage because they think it's everybody else's fault.

Scott Ritzheimer: Yes.

Les McKeown: Or they think it's the marketplace's fault.

Scott Ritzheimer: Yes.

Les McKeown: Or they think it's their product's fault. And until you get to the point where you realize I need to change as a leader, you're not seeing the way out, right?

Scott Ritzheimer: Yeah, totally.

Les McKeown: So it's a tough challenge, but it's a good one to recognize.

Scott Ritzheimer: Totally, totally. And the third challenge then is, again, we're kind of working through this chronologically. The third challenge you experience, especially if you've overcome challenges one and two, is it, it's about succession, right?

You want your organization to thrive when you're gone. Now, whether you sell or you pass it on to the next generation, or you hold it and you have managers. It doesn't matter what your exit strategy is. You know that regardless of what that strategy is, you want it to succeed when you're gone.



Les McKeown: Right

Scott Ritzheimer: And that's something that's different for private equity or, you know, kind of the vulture capitalism, or even for CEOs and other leaders. Something that's very unique to founders is this thing is their baby. It's as much a part of them as their biological children are in many ways.

And and others might look down on that, but it's an inevitable consequence of all that you've done to get it to this point. And so they want it to succeed when they're gone, but they recognize it's still too dependent on them.

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: While you're leading an organization, it's fine to build it toward and right to build it around your strengths as a leader. Right?

But what happens when you leave? So the more we succeed at building a company that's tuned into who we are, the harder it is to succeed if we don't start to change the way we think.

Les McKeown: And I think that one of the wonderful things you've done with the book, well, I know the wonderful, the wonderful things that you've done with the book, is that if we take those three sort of mega challenges, as it were, they're really binary. Each one of them. If you don't solve for them, as the cool kids say, these days we used to just solve things, now you've gotta solve for a thing. I'm not too sure what that means, but there you go.

If you don't solve those things, you get stuck and literally, you end up in a cul-de-sac. Now, when you take those three challenges, the time lapse, it's obviously gonna differ for everybody, but the time lapse between challenge one and challenge two is usually shorter than the challenge between two and three.

And the challenge at stage one didn't just arrive outta nowhere. They're all part of a continuous development, which is where your seven stages come in that you go through. The literally the founder's journey.

So I know it's tough. I get asked all the time, so I know how tough it is. Seven stages, seven minutes. Go!

Scott Ritzheimer: Go. Alright. So the whole thing starts before you ever start. The whole thing starts in what I call the Dissatisfied Employee Stage. And for each of these stages, one of the things that's really helpful is I like to compare it to, I overdo, but intentionally a sports metaphor for each of these stages.



Now, why is that? A fundamental challenge that founders have is that there are no sidelines in being a founder. You'll go through five stages before you ever actually become a CEO, but you've called yourself CEO from day one, right?

Les McKeown: Right. Or at least thought of yourself that way.

Scott Ritzheimer: Right. So there's nothing that kind of indicates you've progressed from one stage to the next.

Whereas if you're an employee coming up through the ranks, you get a new title, or at least new responsibilities each step of the way, or, you know, and in sports even you get a new position or, you know, you're leveling up through from minors to professional, but that doesn't exist in the business world, and it definitely doesn't exist for founders.

And so having this analogy that we can just point to, to give us a concrete picture, a mental image of where we are and what's important right now is really, really useful. And it's just been a foundational tool in what I've been doing with my coaching clients to help them kind of grasp where they are, get a picture of what they need to be doing, and then execute on that well.

So for each of these, you're gonna see, there's a there's a title for this stage, and then there's a position in a sports infrastructure if you will that mirrors that. And this is the trainee on the sideline.

And the fundamental thing you need to be doing, the biggest place that we get this wrong is we try and skip this stage. We try and go from, I'm tired of my job to, I'm starting my own business.

Now, here's the problem with that. When you're tired of your job, you're learning a lot of how not to do things, but you're not actually synthesizing how to do things.

Les McKeown: That's such a great point.

Scott Ritzheimer: And so, if you try and skip this stage, you end up with a whole list of things. I'm not gonna lead that way, I'm not gonna respond to customers that way, I'm not gonna use this tool, right? I'm not gonna have these checklists.

And you got this whole list of not to's, and you can kind of get by on that yourself. But when you try and get a couple stages later where you're trying to teach other people what to do, right? So I've got kids, you've met my kids, and you know, that they very frequently need to be told to slow down. And so, at the pool...

Les McKeown: Unlike their father, of course!!



Scott Ritzheimer: You're not allowed to run. And so what does the lifeguard say? They don't say don't run, they say walk.

Les McKeown: Right That's right.

Scott Ritzheimer: Right. And so what we've got to do in this early stage is learn how to do what we want to do. We have to learn how to play the game, not just how not to play the game.

And when we do that, we get our shot, we get into the game, and this is the thing that we all kind of, you know, glorify these days. It's the startup entrepreneur. And being a startup entrepreneur, the reason why we glorify it is because it's like being the star player in the game.

The better you are at doing what you do, the more you succeed. And so you invest in yourself, you develop the skills you need, you smile a lot, and it's like that entrepreneur smile. You know, the one, like when you just got punched in the face and you don't wanna show 'em, it hurts.

Scott Ritzheimer: You know, it's, you smile a lot. And we kind of get this, there's lots of information on this stage, but what happens when you're successful in this role, the better you are at making the diving catch, the better you are in business at selling or delivering or having a great product. All of that put together, well, what happens? You achieve, you get success.

And, and so you get more clients, you get more work, and now you need more people. And the first couple of people, they're just there to carry water, right?

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: Like, they're just there to help you, get some stuff done, get rid of the stuff that you actually hate. But once you get around somewhere between five and 10 employees, it feels like the game just flips on its head, or it feels like it's an entirely different game.

And it's not overnight that would be easier to recognize. But you kind of get up, and you find yourself, instead of thinking about, you know, what you need to do, you find yourself constantly thinking, what's wrong with these people? Because the folks that you've now hired are not like you, right?

You quit your job because you're tired of being managed, right? You're tired of being managed into a box. And now you have people that if they're brave enough, are actually asking to be managed.

Les McKeown: Right. That's why they joined. That's one of the things, and excuse me for interrupting, so we'll give you a little more than seven minutes. But one of the things that, and you've come across this as well, that is very frustrating.



It's totally understandable, but very frustrating. When you hear founders say over and over again, why can't they think like founders? Well, forgive me, I almost swore, if they thought like founders, the first thing they do, they would believe, right? Yes. They think like founders, they're going to go, they're not founders.

Scott Ritzheimer: That's a hundred percent right. Now, here's the problem with that. And you know this from the leadership styles, 'cause it's a huge part of this, but you don't want a bunch of other Visionaries running around in the place, right?

Les McKeown: That's the last thing you want!

Scott Ritzheimer: And you don't want a bunch of other Processors. You don't want a bunch of other Synergists. And so the problem is, we don't think about that. We just hire any warm body that can help, or someone who seems to have the functional skill we're looking for.

And the problem behind that question is, yes, the problem is you, you need to manage now. But the problem is also, you've not hired the right people. And so the skills that it would take to manage them are different if you have the wrong people, and you shouldn't develop those skills yet, then if you have the right people, and you need to make those changes.

But if you don't know if you have the right people, how are you ever gonna have the confidence to develop the skill that you need? Right? You're just not gonna do the work to make it happen. 'cause it doesn't seem like it's worth it.

It's like being a captain on the field. The other challenge of this is that, you're still in the game. You still have functional responsibilities you have to do. In fact, they go up every time you bring somebody in. 'cause now you have to sell more to cover for them, right?

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: So you bring other people in hoping that it will mean you have less to do, and then you bring them in and they need to be managed, that you need to sell for them. You need to answer their questions. And while maybe more stuff gets done, you have way more to do than you did before you had those employees.

And so I call it the reluctant manager because there's not really a founder out there worth their salt that doesn't struggle at this stage. It's just the fundamental wiring that's needed to be a great star player and embrace that role almost precludes you from having these skills at the outset.

And so, if you can get through that, you can get through that reluctant manager, the flip side of that. 'cause some people can stay here. I really don't recommend staying here for very long



though. But you can be a joyful manager. But that's usually not the route most people want to take. They want out, right? They've gotta find a way forward.

Now, the really unfortunate part about that is the route out is not up and to the right. Yes, your organization's gonna grow. There are massive growth that happens in this stage, especially as a percentage basis.

And so organizations going up and to the right. But in our journey as founders, the personal feeling of success and accomplishment and fulfillment, it actually takes a step down and to the right through the course of this.

And we step into this fourth stage that I call the Disillusioned Leader. And there's a story I like to tell on this because, and actually open the book with this, because it is the place where we get stuck.

And so, imagine, let's go to our sports analogy. And it's the big game. We can't say the name of it 'cause we get in trouble for that. But it's the big game. And, it's the very end of the big game. We've got a couple seconds left. and you just gotta get the ball in the end zone, and you've got the perfect play for it.

You've run it a thousand times. You know it like the back of your hand. It's a fake to the running back and then a throw to the corner to your wide receiver. The difference though is you are not on the field anymore. You're the coach on the sideline, right? And so once you call the play, you've gotta hope that they know how to execute it.

And so you're holding your breath, they hike the ball and everyone kind of shifts and it works. The defense thinks it's a run. They collapse on the hole. It's perfect. You called the perfect play.

And, you look to the left, at the wide receiver and horror of horrors, they're not running, they're blocking. They got the call wrong! And so what do you do, right? The picture of it always makes me laugh in my mind.

But just imagine the coach, the normal physique of a coach, right? Not quite your star player physique that you had back in the day. You realize what's going on. You know that ball's gonna fall, right?

And you know that the game is lost, but you know that you can solve it. And so you take off faster than you have ever run in your life, right? I don't know how you do it. You don't know how you do it. Nobody does. They'll be studying the physics on this for years.

But you book it down the sideline and you toss the clipboard to the side, your headset's falling off, you like shed the jacket and make the diving catch in the end zone. And you're expecting to



hear, yeah. You know, because every time you've made a diving catch in the past, you've heard yeah.

And your teammates run and congratulate you. And instead it's silence. 80,000 people. And you could hear a pin drop. And the only thing moving are these little yellow flags, direction. And men in black and white stripes come running at you.

You've not won the game. You've made your team a laughing stock. What would've been celebrated for and gone in the annals of history, right, is now going to be one of the most embarrassing points of your life, in your team's life.

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: Why? Because you don't understand how the rules of the game have changed. You don't understand how your position has changed. And instead of being a coach on the sideline, you're still trying to be a star player.

And when we do that, our star players are the ones who get the most embarrassed. They're the ones who are gonna be gone next season.

We undermine the value. And in the business world, we can kind of get away with it in the short run. We think we got away with it. And to an extent, you might even get people who continue to write about it.

But when you really look under the surface, you are crushing your team. You're crushing their ability to progress. You're crushing your own ability to scale. And so what we need to do is identify, "Hey, we're coaches on the sideline now". What does it actually look like to lead when the ball never touches your hands?

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: And the skills are completely different.

Les McKeown: Can a founder go backwards? We haven't discussed this directly before. So this is a bit of a left field question, but obviously if the guy's 60 and totally outta shape, never gonna happen, but can a founder who's made that metaphoric shift and just can't help themselves, can they realize, you know what, I just want to be quarterback on the field. I'm gonna stay, keep the business small, accept that and get back out there. Is that possible?

Scott Ritzheimer: Yeah, absolutely. I'm a big Pittsburgh Penguins fan.

Les McKeown: Oh! I am sorry.



Scott Ritzheimer: It's in the book. I write a little bit about how Mario Lemieux went on and progressed through these stages himself. And it's really fascinating. He had more success as an owner than he did as a player.

And we have that option. But Jaromir Jagr is still playing hockey today in the Czech league. The guy's like 57 years old, something like that. And he's still scoring goals. And they love him over there.

And so, find your people like, yes, you can absolutely go back, and it's much easier to go back in our world than it is for others. Now, it'll cost you something, right?

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: You can't go back and stay at the same size you are. That demanded for you to move forward. You can't go back and still scale up.

You have to make the intentional decision to move back. But for many people that's completely appropriate.

Les McKeown: Got it.

Scott Ritzheimer: So yes, you can absolutely go back. You don't wanna get stuck in stages three or four. Those are the two places you really wanna move forward. And the challenge here with this fourth stage is we've kind of moved down and to the right twice now.

There's enough for a pattern. There's enough history. It's usually several years as well of just feeling like this is heavier and heavier and heavier. And so if you don't know what the pattern looks like, it's kind of like watching your favorite movie and stopping about when there's five minutes left in the movie. Everything that could have gone wrong has gone wrong, right? It's just downright depressing. How is this entertainment? It's the last five minutes that makes it worth it.

And Stage five is like that last five minutes. Now it's a lot longer than five minutes. But Stage five is where we make the transition from, what I would call founder to CEO.

It's when we move from being a coach on the sideline in the rain, in the heat, you know, with all the guys all the time at every single game to being the GM in the box where there's air conditioning and a full bar, and you can be there or if your job demands you to be somewhere else, you can be somewhere else.



And making that shift from founder to CEO, making that shift from coach on the sideline to GM in the box is, I would argue, the single biggest transition in the life of any founders, the most rewarding when you can get there, it's the hardest to do because the skillset is so different.

But if you can do Stage four, well, if you can get to Stage five, what I call the Chief Executive, then it's at that point that you've, you can set yourself up for an entirely different lifestyle as a founder.

Now, a lot of folks can stop there. A lot of non-founders have to stop there. But for founders in particular, there's a couple more stages that you get to enjoy that nobody else gets to. And it's one of the really special things about being a founder, is that you have two more stages that you can achieve where most other people have to stop.

And the sixth stage, the first of those last two, the sixth stage is what I call the True Owner. And it's where your business works for you instead of you working for your business.

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: Now, here's the thing. Because this is really popular. Own not run, you know, start a business that runs itself. It's baloney, right? It's absolute poppycock. Like you do not get to Stage six without getting through Stages 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. You don't get to skip stages.

And so what happens is you can pretend to be in a stage. Right? You can go and pretend to be the coach on the sideline if you want to. And for some of you, that may be what you wanna do. Hats off to you. Do your thing. Fly your flag, do whatever you wanna do.

But you will undoubtedly sell yourself short on what it can accomplish. When you start something to not run it, and you keep trying to fast track that, you will inevitably stunt the growth of you, your best people and your organization.

And so, to an extent, yes, it's achievable. You can have a million dollar company that runs itself, but you've done so much work, why wouldn't you do the last couple of steps to make it a \$10 million company that runs itself, that can grow itself to be a \$20 or \$50 million company.

And so being a true owner is not about just leaving your organization, it's about building an executive team and entrusting it to the right kind of CEO that can lead it. Not just care, take what you've created, but to actually lead it forward.

And this is a really, really important thing. You have to do six well, to do seven well. Each of these stages accumulate on themselves. So you've got to learn how to bring in and equip and actually lead a Visionary CEO. It's a necessary part of Stage six.



Not just an Operator, not just a Synergist who's gonna take care of the things while you're gone, but someone who's got a greater vision for your organization, one that jives with yours, but stands on your shoulders and pushes it forward.

Les McKeown: Right.

Scott Ritzheimer: And when you do that, when you learn how to lead another Visionary, you actually open the door to stage seven, which I call the Visionary Founder. Or it's like the Hall of Famer, right? Where you've actually earned the right to speak into others' lives, in terms of influence.

You get to work because you want to, not because you have to. You get back into the game purely for the love of the game. And the only way to do that effectively, to do that with other founders is to have learned how to lead Visionaries with them volunteering to you. You don't have any control or authority over them. You can only mentor them. And it's a skillset and one that is unbelievably rewarding.

Les McKeown: What a great tour de force on the way through. There's so much in there. One thing I wanna foreshadow is, we're gonna give people the opportunity, I'll let you talk about it in a moment or two, to go get a copy for themselves.

So if any of those stages resonated with you as the stage that you're either in or you recognize 'cause you've been through it or you can see it coming up, there's so much in "The Founder's Evolution" that's gonna help you with that.

I wanna finish off with, two things. I wanna turn the camera around a little bit and make it personal to you, Scott. You wrote "The Founders Evolution". I had to do this when I went through, producing the Predictable Success model, is I had to look myself in the mirror and say, "well, where am I in all of that?"

So there are two questions here. Where do you see yourself in the journey? And the second thing I'd again like you to reflect on is, again, it's something that, that, I found very helpful was every single time I've written any one of the four books in the Predictable Success cannon, so to speak, I have ended up learning something. I've pulled something out of it that I hadn't really formalized, but as I codified stuff and put it down, I had an Aha for myself. Like something that, you know, people sitting there in plain sight, people don't recognize it, and suddenly you see it.

So where are you in the Founder's journey and what was your biggest takeaway from writing the book for yourself?

Scott Ritzheimer: We've got another two hours, right?



Les Mckeown: Laughter.

Scott Ritzheimer: Okay, so where am I? So this is a fascinating thing. We'll kind of go next level down on the evolution, and that is that you can also reset the stages.

So, I started off in a dissatisfied employee state. And then I had a really interesting, co-founding experience where I was able to kind of be the Visionary and also see the Visionary happen.

So I was able to kind of do this and see it at the same time in a really weird way. A part of the perspective that I think unlocked this for me. And so I made it, especially stages three and four. I remember it, man.

Like, we were there for a long time. And I remember, you know, like I remember sitting one day on the stairs of my house just crying in stage four because I didn't know what to do.

I knew we were stuck. I knew I had to change and I didn't know what to do. And I remember breaking through that, and your work has just been a tremendous piece of that. And I made it to stage five and kind of realized I was in my very early thirties at this point.

And what am I gonna do with this? Right. I can run this for a while. But I didn't actually want that. I didn't have the vision for that. I didn't have the vision my organization needed to move forward.

So I kind of intuitively and accidentally moved myself into Stage six at 33. And the question for that is like, "what do I do now?"

And you have two options there. So those who are in, you know, Stage five, even in Stage six, you basically have two options. You can get back in the game, or you can help others get into the game. That's kind of what you're gonna do.

And I chose, because I still have the best years of my working life, I wanted to get back in the game. And I wanted to do that helping others. So there's a little quasi Visionary Founder thing in there where I'm helping other Visionary leaders.

But more than anything, I've started over, I went back to Dissatisfied Employee in my own company. And started doing some learning, did training with you, because I wanted to learn what to do, not just what not to do, because I've had a lot of really bad coaches in the process. I wanted to be a good one.

And then I started out. I'm in Stage two, I'm a Star Player right now. And the hardest thing about being back in Stage two is to not act like I'm in Stage 3, 4, 5, or 6.



Les McKeown: Right!

Scott Ritzheimer: It's like, "oh, shoot, I gotta get to the game". You know, I gotta get outta the air conditioning. I gotta get it back in here. And it's like to get up in the morning and workout again. You work out differently when you're in the box versus when you're gonna be on the field.

And so getting back into that game, even though all of this happened in a relatively compressed timeframe, for me, that's the hardest part. And I see a lot of people who are Re-Founders who struggle with you. You cannot overvalue the lessons from the future in the same way that folks who are coming through the first time have to be careful of overvaluing the lessons from the past.

Les McKeown: Right. Love it. And your biggest personal learning?

Scott Ritzheimer: The biggest thing that that got me, and, and this is in the book, but it is to have joy in every stage of the journey. And I actually take some time in every chapter to just stop and say, yes. Like, we wanna progress, or yes, we wanna get to the right stage, but if we're constantly looking to be in a different stage than what we're in, we're missing it. Right? We're missing every bit.

So I have a 12 year old, a 10 year old, and a two year old, and there's a whole lot of story in there, but I've had this really cool opportunity 10 years apart to say, how do I wanna do this this time? Right? Like, we went from, you know, elementary school to diapers and strollers and I was 25 when we had our first, I was 35 when we adopted our third.

And I'm a completely different person. But the number one difference is I have so enjoyed the first two years of her life. Whereas with the boys, and a lot of guys are like, it's kinda like, I don't know what to do with you. I have nothing that you need right now. Like, here's mom. You know. And so I missed it. I missed so much in there. And, and the thing that I want to do, because even to tie this back to the previous question, I don't wanna be a Star Player, right?

There's elements of that that are a lot of fun, but I'd love to scale something up again and I have this temptation to kind of lean forward when I'm not supposed to, instead of leaning in and that's where the joy is.

The joy is not from just trying to get to the next thing. The joy is found in the very unique expression of what you can do in that stage that you will never be able to do again. And don't sacrifice that just because you wanna get to something else.

Les McKeown: Great words to finish on. Just super fantastic book. "The Founder's Evolution: Conquering the Journey Every Founder Must Face". Scotty, tell people how they can get, I think you're giving away a digital copy for free, is that right?



Scott Ritzheimer: That's right. so we've got a digital copy free for everyone. and you can get it at [Scale Architects.com/founders](https://ScaleArchitects.com/founders). Nice and easy [Scale Architects.com/founders](https://ScaleArchitects.com/founders). Sometimes it's hard to spell architects, so we'll put it in the show notes, hopefully. Get there, [Scale Architects.com/founders](https://ScaleArchitects.com/founders). You get a copy of the book.

And the big thing with the book is one, we get to go into a lot more detail than I can cover here in 40 minutes. But the big takeaway that we've not even touched yet is at every stage there's just two or three things that you need to do.

There's just two or three essential strategies. Now what that means, okay, that's great. Someone else to tell me what I should be doing, right?

No, what it actually means is there's 20 to 30 things you've been told you should be doing that you don't need to do.

So the big promise behind the book is if you take it, you find what stage you're in and what you need to be doing, and take a look at everything else. You can probably cut 10 hours out of next week. Just to focus on the things that you should be doing. It'll be more fulfilling, it'll be more effective, and you'll save yourself a ton of time doing it.

Les McKeown: Yeah, let me underline that. It really is a very, very practical book. And, you know, you and I have a tendency to geek out on models 'cause we both love that. And it is a fantastic model, but more than anything, it's a roadmap. It's a handbook. It's a way to get to progress through the founder's journey.

So Scotty, thank you so much for coming on. I'm sure we're gonna have you back again. In the meantime, everybody click the link in the show notes below and you'll get your digital copy of "The Founder's Evolution". Thank you very much.