

DAVE

The People Maximizer
CARROLL

"The focus is never on the product or service, because it always starts and ends with people."

DAVE CARROLL:

THE PEOPLE MAXIMIZER

A Banker Leading From The Heart

BY GINA RILEY

Author's Note

Dave Carroll's 9-5 job is leading the number one Banner Bank in the Seattle metro area – two years running.

His career is deeply connected to two industries that cut to the heart of what matters most to people – their health and financial security.

With an award-winning leadership approach of positively maximizing people in ways that help them grow professionally, he lifts employees up so they can lift customers in ways that get exceptional business results. As Carroll says, "1 + 1 = 3".

Upon learning the theme for the November issue of Authority5.0, I immediately sent a message to Carroll to request an interview.

He was the first person that leapt to mind when it comes to leading from the heart.

I first met Carroll in Q4 of 2019 through what could have been an ordinary networking phone call.

Instead it led me to an invitation-only event sponsored by a professional networking group he founded called Cantillon.

With less than 24-hours notice, I cleared my calendar and made the nearly 4-hour drive from Portland to Seattle. I walked into a room completely electrified by over a hundred business owners and leaders who'd gathered to hear insights about how to create belonging and healthy organizational cultures.

Like moths to a flame, people gathered around Carroll who was actively making introductions that could mutually benefit the attendees.

There is something special about what Carroll is building outside of his "day job". He is an example of how a business leader can be effective WHILE leading with compassion and heart without sacrificing business results.

Dave Carroll has created the ultimate business win-win-win.

There is something special about what Carroll is building outside of his "day job".

It is obvious you lead with compassion and heart. Where does this come from and how is it fundamental to who you've become today?

As a boy, I instinctually found myself stepping up as the peacekeeper within my family because I related well to most everyone.

More than I care to remember, I would virtually put my arms around everyone and bring them together during times of stress to help provide harmony within my family.

“You have to invest in people and realize what business are you in.

It is not just about selling credit cards!”

As a young man, I was self-aware, and knew I had the strength to bring people together to work it out.

This shows up today in the way I am naturally driven to inclusively bring like-minded people together to learn, grow, take action, make mistakes and develop.

As you reflect back, how did your instinctive ability to care for people show up in the early part of your career?

Straight out of college, I worked for Gold's Gym. It was the first time I was confronted with the idea of “quantity over quality”.

The primary focus of that business was selling fitness products and training services. In my opinion, the expectation to “sell at all costs” was prioritized over providing quality service to our customers.

One particular day, I found myself pushing back and questioning our approach. The owner had demanded we continue to sell memberships even though we'd ran out of dozens of parking spaces.

I calmly stated our sales process did not account for the customer whatsoever.

Before I could finish my sentence, he suggested I change my mindset.

Needless to say, I didn't remain at this job for very long, but I took some life-long lessons with me.

When I went to work for Columbia Sportswear Company managing the only two retail outlets in the country at the time, I was positioned to provide the kind of customer experience I knew was “right”.

Here, I started ‘connecting the dots’ for customers. My team would get special requests for apparel from all over the country for hard to find items that would sometimes end up at one of our two stores.

I kept a basic CRM to manage these requests and unique client information and then created high-touch opportunities to fulfil customer requests.

I started to recognize the importance of taking care of people, namely my clients.



How have you carried this approach forward in your career?

It was clear to me as I moved through my career, initially in the health and fitness industry, quality would be a big priority.

Intently focused on my goals, I did not shy away from starting as a pool attendant at a private athletic club in Seattle and quickly worked my way to a position at the front desk.

I made it my mission to get connected to every member walking through our doors.

My plan worked and it paid huge dividends after a long stint at the health club.

After seven years of health club service and getting promoted to a director role, the most important turning point in my career took place when I met a "giant" in the fitness industry.

This was a person I'd never met but always considered a hero.

Enter Dr. Cedric Bryant of the famed Stairmaster World Headquarters who came to play racquetball as a guest of a member.

Needless to say, my jaw dropped to the floor when I realized who was standing directly in front of me!

Over the next six months, I began to develop a professional relationship with Dr. Bryant. One thing led to another.

He invited me to join his team at Stairmaster to start up the first ever inside-sales division within the company. It was an incredibly exciting time for me because Stairmaster was the largest fitness company in the world - and I had just become Dr. Bryant's understudy.

I am so grateful and blessed he is still my mentor to this very day!

Reflecting back, when it comes to motivating, inspiring and influencing people, this was a particularly impactful time in my career.

For example, there was a new temp employee assigned to work with me who was battling obesity.

She had come all the way from Arkansas to Washington to begin a fresh chapter in her life.

One of the best stories of my career is helping and working with her to drop weight from 410 pounds to 187 pounds.

It was such an accomplishment; she was even invited to be a guest on the Oprah Winfrey show and bring me (her strength coach) along with her!

Was this when you started to recognize you were making a difference?

I realized in my late twenties I had been sort of 'asleep at the wheel' and not truly tapping into my potential.

It came to me, when I put my heart, mind and hands to good use I could really make a difference. Around this time, Dr. Bryant made a special trip to Texas to join me at an industry trade show I was leading.

While I thought he was there to give me some support - I was wrong. He flew in from Seattle to personally give me the Lanny Potts Corporate Award voted on by all 750 Stairmaster employees from across the company!

This award was given to the employee who most

The People Maximizer

"I never, ever forget
I am building more leaders.
They are not followers."

embodied our company values.

This is when I knew I was making a real difference.

Your career had a couple of twists and turns, but you eventually ended up in banking.

Yes! During the next phase of my career, I traded in my sweatsuit for a three-piece suit and swapped physical fitness for fiscal fitness.

When Stairmaster sold, I went on to a couple of short-term assignments and one of them was managing the largest Gold's Gym on the entire West Coast.

This was my last hurrah before I received an introduction through my network to the business of banking.

He helped show me I had the business results and transferrable skills it took to be successful in a different industry.

I started off in the management program with a position of leading the largest US Bank in Washington state, where I found myself right back into

the quantity vs. quality predicament.

Although I was growing as a leader and learning about a different industry, I did not enjoy answering the hourly question, "What have you sold today".

I got fed up chasing what I knew I did not enjoy.

I knew my mission was to be in the business of literally "investing" in people, chiefly my employees and my clients.

I would NOT go back to the life of just selling credit cards! Heavens no!

Five years later, I landed a job leading the largest Umpqua Bank in Washington state, which operated 100% in the other direction with its business approach.

I kept asking for my business goals only to be told, "Be friendly! Be nice! Be ready to serve!".

Six months later I stopped pinching myself because I knew it was true - our main aspiration was to roll up our sleeves and help where it was needed inside of our communities.

It was clear people needed our banking expertise - they just did not want to be sold to.

I found a way to help customers with high touch quality service by first focusing on building up my team of people.

This was the quality I wanted, the quality necessary to treat people good and right. I was taking a 360-degree approach.

As a retail leader, I believe you need to have eyes in the back of your head so you know what is going on with everybody.

By this, I mean it is my responsibility to understand what people feel, think and know.

It is about my employees and my customers.

Another success story from my career is about a woman who was on her way out of banking.

Her bank was being acquired by my bank and her last manager literally wore her out. She wasn't exhibiting any confidence or motivation.

There seemed to be no way to keep her when one of our executives begged her to come join my team.



Cantillon

Even though she didn't know me, she agreed. During the next 6 months, my only goal was to build our relationship and her confidence.

We sat down and developed a plan together to serve our clients. Selfishly, I wanted her to be one of the best bankers in the entire company because I knew she had what it took. We just had to find it again.

Daily, I encouraged her to share her voice in a way she hadn't exercised before.

I asked her a lot of deep curious questions to aid in

the ownership of her decision making. She started to hear herself.

I allowed her to make mistakes and I assured her I had her back.

She started standing taller and people were listening to her.

Her smile grew and grew. She looked you in the eyes while offering her insights.

By mid-year she was leading our large daily morning bank meetings before we opened to the public.

Her financial results were within the top 5 employees in our company.

When we all gathered for the annual corporate awards gala the following year, she won the Banker of the Year out of 2700 employees!

This is emotional for me to talk about. It really chokes me up.

You see, I am in the people business and if you are in this business, you had better believe in the people you work with.

I am so proud of her and knew beyond all doubts she had 'this' in her even though she didn't.

She'd gone from feeling beaten down and ready for retirement to receiving the top award at our company.

When it was all over, she knew she'd earned it. She owned it and she accepted it like a true professional.

In fact, she went on later to start a brand-new business she still owns and operates today. She's a believer now!

Tell me more about the inspiration to launch Cantillon? What is Cantillon?

When I was at Umpqua Bank, they wanted me to fill a slot they'd sponsored for a business referral networking club.

I didn't want to do it because it was right back to "quantity over quality". I wasn't playing that game anymore.

Knowing I could build up a better network myself, I made my boss a proposal and launched the Cantillon

Club on the side - in addition to my day job.

Cantillon proved to be very successful early on and the rest is history!

Cantillon supports owner-operated companies across the greater Seattle area through education, higher quality peer to peer connections, access to business-building resources and coaching that amplifies a business owner's ability to achieve their highest professional potential.

We do this within the confines of confidentiality, transparency, vulnerability, generosity and accountability.

"Everybody has a voice... if we could only listen more and ask deeper questions."

Those five pillars build trust. With trust you can build anything.

Our mission is to serve uniquely engaged leaders with a support network they can count on.

Through invitation only Masterminds and events, I bring successful CEO's, entrepreneurs, executives, , business owners and experts in their fields together from a breadth of industries.

With a focus on quality over quantity, our community invariably creates a truly unique opportunity to connect, discover, think and flourish... together.

We are helping people improve and elevate themselves and their businesses.

They have opportunities to learn things and meet people like them.

They start to see the potential in their businesses with the information sharing and programming we provide.



What feedback do you get from the members of Cantillon?

Cantillon is all about bringing out the authentic best in people and helping them to effectively maximize their results, personally and professionally.

By participating, they attain resources, deep connections and honest relationships with each other and the group as a whole.

Members tell us Cantillon help leaders 'rev it up' and kicks their business into first gear!

Cantillon has a lot of collective wisdom in the room.

We have a uniquely shared group experience where we talk deeply about the successes, stressors and struggles of our member leaders.

What drives you and your mission of service? Where does it come from?

Every person has a voice if we would only listen and ask questions. It is important to me to listen for it.

I try hard to listen which helps me truly hear more things - real things. I'm listening for places to harmonize, bring people together and invite everyone in.

Over the course of your career, you've been able to work your way to the top of one organization after another. Tell us how.

Relationships. It is relationships. 200%.

I'm not really sure that I sell anything, Gina. I develop relationships one at a time. I guess that sells.

Helping people with their financial needs requires a great deal of caring and trust.

What are the top three things you recommend to leaders who want to stay current and relevant with their approach to leading people?

1 I never, ever forget I am building more leaders. They are not followers. There is a different mentality about that approach.

2 I want everyone to participate. It does not matter what your current role is. Every brain in the game!

3 I want my employees and emerging leaders to know it is OK to make mistakes.

I create safe spaces to make mistakes - in fact, I encourage it.

How else is someone going to learn and then take action? I can tell you; they don't make those same mistakes again!

There is a reason I have the best team at Banner Bank. My team comes before my customer. I've got to water the plants first so they can bear fruit.

We have a great culture, but we continually do on-going training because we don't want to slip or go backwards. We never want the customer to feel it.

Over the course of my career as well as my life, I've learned the focus is never on the product or service, because it always starts and ends with people.

"I want everyone to participate.

Every brain in the game."

CONTRIBUTING WRITER'S PROFILE

Gina Riley Consulting & creator of the CareerVelocity System™. She is a career transition coach who helps leaders customize their career stories to land jobs where they can leave a legacy. She is an Executive Search Consultant for Talence Group.



**CONTACT
GINA:**

ginarileyconsulting.com

 [@ginariley](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ginariley)