



Leading Amidst Complexity with Andrew Chrostowski

Podcast Episode 04 (Part I): Show Notes

Welcome to the fourth episode of our LIFT podcast! Allison identifies how skilled leaders approach systems complexity and the fundamental role people play solving problems successfully. She is joined by Andrew Chrostowski, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of RealWear, a tech company making hands-free industrial head-mounted wearable headsets for safe connected workers. He discusses how he applies systems thinking from his background in leadership and problem-solving both in the military and private sector. RealWear is the industry leader for powerful, voice-operated headset computers, their flagship product being the HMT-1, an industrial hands-free knowledge transfer platform for frontline workers. With experience in the Air Force, as a research physicist, and as a business leader, too, Andrew has an extensive understanding about the relationship between complex systems and the role of people within them. Our conversation starts with a sketch of Andrew's career and education, where he shares different scenarios that helped him gain the perspectives on systems thinking he shares today. From there, we dive into some important takeaways about the importance of humans in increasingly automated systems, why complex problems cannot be solved with simple solutions, how to build systems that tolerate failure, how to include your team in the development of company culture, and navigating employees with different strengths to align them to a common goal. Other golden nuggets describe the importance of the presence of mind in leadership, applying the "rule of five" to building resilient systems, and how to use the "pyramid of trust" to scale an organization. Tune in for all this and a whole lot more from today's enlightening conversation.

Key Points from This Episode:

- A brief introduction to Andrew's company, RealWear, and its HMT-1, a wearable tablet for remote frontline workers.



- A window into Andrew's background in the Air Force, as a physicist, and as a CEO.
- How Andrew has applied systems thinking from his background to leadership and problem-solving.
- Why complex problems cannot be solved using simple solutions.
- How to apply systems thinking to product portfolio management by starting with the initial goal.
- The rise of automation and the importance of the human element in delivering outstanding systems.
- Systems diagnostics techniques to solve complex problems.
- Managing risk tolerance and how it relates to failure tolerance in the context of organizations.
- Defining resilient ways of failing by setting up a structured experimental framework.
- Using the "rule of five" to solve problems and build more resilient organizations.
- Using the "trust triangle" that promotes a team-based, solution-oriented, and data-driven culture.
- Drilling down on values like ethics and authenticity.
- Instilling values in a team, some which come from the leader while others come from the team.

Leading Amidst Complexity – Andrew Chrostowski

Guest Biography:

Andrew Chrostowski is a senior executive with deep experience in developing teams and strategies that enable innovation, growth, and profitability improvements. As an NACD Certified Director, Qualified Technology Executive and a founding executive member of the Digital Directors Network, he strives to improve board performance and digital governance excellence. Andrew has a passion for the art and science of value creation and embraces demanding business challenges to deliver results across the spectrum from start-ups to Fortune 100 companies. He is recognized for using world-class techniques to overcome complex technical, marketing, and customer-driven challenges, bringing the proof to the bottom line.

Tweetables:

"Everyone sees the simple result and wants to flip a switch and fix it, but in reality, there's a whole bunch of things that have to be looked at in totality in order to give that system resilience to operate in whatever condition we're trying to design it for." — [@AndrewChros](#) [0:07:55]



“My epiphany, if you will, of leadership really came down to the idea that all technical problems begin with the human element. How well people are working together.” — [@AndrewChros](#) [0:10:16]

“A 70% solution today is better than a 100% solution six months from now.” — [@AndrewChros](#) [0:21:00]

“Risk management is where it all begins and ends. People don't realize that risk is not always bad. Risk gets you reward.” — [@allisonthought](#) [00:15:47]

“A lot of times I'm brought into teams to work on communication skills just as a side effect of trying to achieve a project. We can see the communications is what is holding up the project. I think so many people do not realize that a huge part of communication is listening.” — [@allisonthought](#) [0:24:22]

“A CEO is a steward with a 'do the right thing' mentality.” — [@allisonthought](#) [0:25:04]

Links Mentioned in Today's Episode:

Thought Marketing — <https://www.thoughtmarketing.com/>

Thought Marketing email — info@thoughtmarketing.com

[Andrew Chrostowski on LinkedIn](#)

[Andrew Chrostowski on Twitter](#)

[RealWear](#)