**Dr Kent Ingle Audio.m4a**

**Andrew Olsen** [00:00:07] Hi, listeners, this is Andrew Olsen, welcome to the Rainmaker Fundraising Podcast. You're in for a real treat today as we hear from Dr. Kent Ingle on leadership. Dr. Ingle is president at Southeastern University and before becoming president at Southeastern University in 2011, he held leadership positions in higher ed, pastoral ministry, and the nonprofit sector. He's an expert at leading turnaround organizations and has led teams through transformational change in L.A., Chicago and Seattle. Dr. Engle is a founding member of the president's Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration. He's also currently serves on the Global Leadership Council for Pray, a social network of faith organizations and nonprofits and on the board of the Florida Chamber Foundation. As a frequent guest on Fox and Friends, CBS and CNN, Dr. Ingle is the author of several leadership books, including Framework Leadership: Position Yourself for Transformational Change, and the creator and host of the Framework Leadership podcast, Dr. Ingle, welcome to the show today.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:01:02] Thank you. It's great to be with you.

**Andrew Olsen** [00:01:04] Honored to have you here and really excited to talk with you about leadership. And before I do that, I noticed also as I was reading through some of the content on your own site that you started your career in television, sports, broadcasting. I guess I'm really curious to know and I know kind of gets the first question I want to ask you about about your personal leadership journey. But how does one go from a sportscaster to university president? It doesn't seem like a natural progression.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:01:32] No, it definitely was not an intentional journey as well like that. That's the ultimate goal in my life.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:01:40] You know, I think from early on and and I'm grateful for a mentor that I had in high school, it actually was my my pastor.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:01:49] And he taught me a couple of things. He said, if you want to know God's calling and you want to be in the right place where God wants to place you. You need to focus moreso not on a job or a job title, but you need to focus on being self-aware and self-disciplined. Self-Aware allows you to understand who you are, your gifts, your passions, your abilities, your experiences. And always knowing that helps you to understand if there are opportunities before you. Yes, that's something I can step into or know. That's something that I won't step into. And so he said, if you follow those elements in your life, you'll always be in the right place at the right time. And I kind of view my journey as that. You know, I when I graduated from high school, I at that point did not know exactly what I wanted to do, didn't know for sure where I wanted to go to college. I knew that would be important in my life. But so what I did was started to follow my passions. And one one passion of mine was I loved communication.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:03:05] I loved I loved broadcasting. I loved those kinds of things. In fact, when I was in junior high, I had an opportunity to to sit down with Al Albats, who is the brother of Marv Albert, who was has been a major reporter.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:03:22] Al was the voice of the Denver Nuggets at that time. And and I was a big ABH fan. Then when I was in junior high and I loved I loved that. So I had an opportunity to sit down with him. And he talked to me about, you know, sports, broadcasting, that kind of stuff. So I had a passion for it. So I decided to go ahead and go to the community college there where I lived in Bakersfield, California. And one of the classes I decided to take early on was a class in broadcast writing. And while, lo and behold, the professor of that particular course was the news director at the local NBC affiliate. And through our friendship and he got me on as an intern, plug me into one area that I was interested in sports. And that market is, of course, a a smaller market. Bakersfield is. And so at a market like that, you learn everything very quickly. You're gonna learn how to write, produce, interview, all of those things. And I did I was there probably about three or four months. And the the actual sports anchor for the weekend sports got a new job. And I I was only 18. But, you know, 18 year olds tend to be a little courageous, go in and do whatever. And I did I went in and said to the news director, I think I can do this job. And he got a laugh and said, but I do know, you know, your your gifts and your skill set just by having you in class. He said, I'll give you an opportunity to produce and do something right here on the set. And I did. And he hired me. So I actually started doing work in sports. But again, that position. And then for the next.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:05:05] 10 years did that went from Bakersfield to mid, mid, another market in the Midwest jumped quite a bit in market.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:05:14] And then finally ended up in Los Angeles. But the thing is, that opened up not because I was necessarily pursuing that, but because it was a passion and I enjoyed it. And I had been affirmed by many, many over and over again that that's a great skill that you seem to have. And so that's that's it. Same thing when I left that 10 years later. You know, throughout my life, I always been a person of faith early on and integrated my faith with my life learning. And I enjoyed coming alongside people. That's also been a great passion of mine to empower, encourage, challenged people to be and fulfill kind of their destiny and potential because people did that for me. So through through some events and experiences in my life, some tragic experiences with with my family, through that, I felt a call into full time ministry. And so I left. And people thought I was crazy because I had left a great career to go into to pastoring, which I did, went into northwest Los Angeles and and replanted a church there. But it was, again, an opportunity that came to me. I wasn't pursuing it. I sensed I had a call in my life and for that through experience. And then others confirmed that. Then I went back to school because I think you always have to be a good steward of whatever your calling is or wherever your context is and out of that. I went back to school to earn a degree that would help me to be a great ministry leader. You know, church history, biblical studies, practical leadership. And and then so I pastor there for another 10 years. And then it opened the door for me to lead another congregation, go through the same thing of replanting that congregation. And then out of that received a call out of the blue again from a university in Seattle. And they said, you know, we're we're looking to redesign our whole college of ministry in theology.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:07:28] And we love what we have seen you do in leading turnaround churches, which, by the way, seemed to be a theme in my life, leading turnaround organizations.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:07:40] And they said we want to turnaround our entire college, a ministry in theology, redo it, retool it. And we think you would be the one that has the gift mix. And again, I looked at that and thought, yeah, that's exactly the kinds of things that I love passion about, stepped into it and serve there and for six years. And then the opportunity opened up at Southeastern University.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:08:02] So I look at it as, you know, again, not searching after a particular job or career and then saying, I'm going to do everything I can to get to that. No, I focused on who I am and how did I feel that I was wired, the gifts, the skills, the experiences. And when opportunities arose, I could evaluate that and say, yeah, I would be a good fit for that. And so that's how my journey has unfolded. And I can say every step of the way has been an amazing opportunity because I have been able to utilize my passion, my gifts, my experiences, my knowledge, all of that to make a difference in an organization. But more importantly, make a difference in the lives of people. So that's how I've approached it.

**Andrew Olsen** [00:08:53] That's great. Thank you.

**Andrew Olsen** [00:08:53] I want to ask you a follow up on this, because I think what we see in the nonprofit sector is so often there are people coming, particularly in the corporate sector, who, you know, they've they've attained some level of success in business and they've made the decision that they now want to focus on, you know, the life significance and they want to have a role in the nonprofit sector to kind of give back. But there's a certain level of personal discovery that has to go on to really know where one should should end up and where to go with that kind of decision. Can you talk a little bit about the you know, that in that personal discovery process, just how honest and rigorous you have to be with yourself about what your true capability and calling out?

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:09:38] Yeah, I mean, that's that's its discipline. Bottom line, you've got to be disciplined. And if you're not disciplined in in creating what I call a system or a framework that helps you to recognize recognize that it will be difficult. So, I mean, I constantly I mean, one of the things that I do from a personal standpoint is I kind of do like a personal retreat every year where I get away. That's just one of the disciplines I do where I get away and. I really examine what's going on in my life over the past year. Who are the people I've met? Who are the people they've come into my life? What are the things that I've studied read about? What's going on in my current context? What are the things that I would love to speak to? What are my gifts right now? What do I feel like I have done with great gifts? I look at all my experiences good, bad, difficult and relational. And and and actually I begin to journal and write. I literally write almost like a paper on, you know, who is Ken thingo right now? And it it helps me. That gives me great opportunity to really maybe see things that I didn't see that look at maybe what our future opportunities that might come to me that I might be good at. I just generate all that. Well, that's a discipline. So I build that in. And then I build that discipline actually on a daily life. I look at, you know, in the morning, I build disciplines into my life in terms of physical. I look at, you know, I've got to make sure I'm staying in shape, because if I don't I mean, that affects you know, I've I was diagnosed about 20 years ago with type 2 diabetes. Well, thank God I've been able because of the discipline in in my diet and also activity, I've not had to take insulin. So it's been you know, but it's but it's I have to manage that. And that goes back to my discipline. Same thing in learning. I've got I need to make sure I'm reading. And so I have a rhythm of reading and getting, you know, the knowledge and wisdom I need to help me with my current context. People I reflect on people who who did I talk with today? Who what were the conversations? What can I learn from that? What helps me? I mean, so it's it's that kind of thing that helps you to be. I call it contextual awareness. And that's a major thing in my life. I need to make sure I'm always personally aware, but also organizationally aware.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:12:09] So it's all about context for me. And so those are the things that help me. Hopefully that answers what you're you're you're looking for the sense of what what is it that that makes you able to make the choices and decisions you do make?

**Andrew Olsen** [00:12:26] Yeah. Know, I think it does, you know. So often I think people jump into whether it's coming into the nonprofit or just another career path, thinking that, you know, it's going to solve a problem that they feel or something they feel is missing in their life.

**Andrew Olsen** [00:12:38] And if they don't go through a rigorous process like that, it just seems like you're more apt to take a wrong turn and to still not feel fulfilled. Once you've made a change like that.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:12:49] Right. Right. And here's the bottom line. You do you want that sense of fulfillment, people? [00:12:53]There's two things I've always said. People long for value and significance and and value. You know, I think you're going to experience actually growing experience, both of those if you are self-aware and self-disciplined, because value is going to be tied, significance gonna be tied to your ability to capture your design, if you will. [23.0s]

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:13:19] And then taking that designed to a level that provides influence, that provides leadership. I've always believed that everybody's a leader to a degree, because leadership is all about people. Leadership is all about your relational connectivity and how you interact and influence and have impact. So I think both of those things are significant through your you know, through understanding who you are.

**Andrew Olsen** [00:13:49] Yeah. Thank you. So I want to pivot a little bit. You talked about sort of having a career path of of turnarounds.

**Andrew Olsen** [00:13:57] And particularly, I'd love to talk a little bit about your work at Southeastern. and to learn a little bit about what excited you most about going there and sort of what the U.S. looks like you've had some explosive growth in the organization over the last decade. Know what was most exciting for you? And I'd love to know. Also, what did you find most challenging through the process?

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:14:21] Sure. Well, first of all, what's exciting to me and has always been and I've already alluded to it a great passion is I love to to discover the potential in in an organization.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:14:36] And ultimately the organization. The potential of an organization depends on the potential of people. So when you put those two together, I mean, that's that's what really gets me excited and motivated. Any opportunity I can do that to to empower people, to empower an organization is is what motivates me. And southeastern. was one of those opportunities. An amazing community, an amazing place. Devoted to the integration of faith, learning and leadership in life, and it it had been probably one of the fastest growing up to that point. When I came universities growing from about 600 students to a little over 3000 before I got there. Under great leadership. Dr. Mark Rutland and but but when after he left there was that they didn't I didn't arrive for another two years. Took him two years to to find the successor. And I think a lot of people realized that two years without a leader, it's very difficult for an organization. And as a result, there was a significant loss of enrollments, probably about 700 students and a significant loss in revenue that dramatically affected the future of universities. So going in kind of understanding those dynamics really was exciting for me because I mean, a great community, great people, great potential. So that's what what motivated me to want to be a part of this community. And then just to be able to have the opportunity to change the way you do higher education. You know, to create more accessible, more affordable, more experiential education.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:16:38] One of the dynamics of of leading change in this organization happens to be how do we take education to where people are rather than expecting people to come to us? And instead of just focusing solely on traditional education, let's focus on and we call it that, South-Eastern unrestricted education, where you can dream about how you take education to where people are, because again, if you look at the higher education issues today, people can afford traditional campuses anymore, and especially with what we're facing right now. You know, covered 19 and what this pandemic has brought even more so from a financial issue, going to a traditional campus is going to be very difficult. And so but yet education is very important. And so so we need to provide ways that we can bring education to where people are and to make it affordable, to make it accessible, to make experience. So we've worked hard at that. I mean, we we we actually have right at one hundred and fifty campuses nationwide. We don't just have our our Lakeland campus, but we've literally gone into communities, cities around the nation looked at what are their need oriented educational issues, partnered with faith based institutions, local businesses that want to grow, you know, and invest in their their people in skills, skill set development. So so we're we're working hard at that. So that's been exciting. One of the most difficult and challenging things for any organization is to be excellent at systems thinking where you see the big picture, understand how the individual parts really interconnect to each other to accomplish the big picture. Meaning you you have to understand your systems and how the systems must change constantly. Well, probably one of the difficult aspects of that is especially when you grow fast, if you don't grow your systems at the speed of your growth, you're probably going to hit some some plateaus. And we've definitely hit some of those because of our fast. So. So those are been probably the most difficult challenges for us to make sure that we have the right systems to handle. You know, growth and what's happening, so work. We're right now in the middle of retooling some systems. So that will help us to scale to the the amazing growth that we've had. So that would probably be one of the challenges that we've had to face and walk through in the midst of this.

**Andrew Olsen** [00:19:33] OK, great. I know we just have a few more minutes with you before we have to jump off. But one more question. And really, this is about the people side of things, right?

**Andrew Olsen** [00:19:41] So any major change initiative you're going to have some people who are early adopters are really excited about the change, some who will just come along and then probably, you know, a number of folks who, you know, for whom changes is something to be resisted. Can you talk a little bit about what your approach is to to help maintain alignment and focus for your teams and people throughout the organization? When you jump into a big change initiative like something like this?

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:20:09] Sure. Again, it goes back to developing a system of stewardship. And then we operate out of framework leadership.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:20:20] In fact, I have written a book about it called Framework Leadership, and it focuses on every question that every leader faces. And it's a constant question is how do you build a map to a place you've never been before? And and it's you have to have a system that will help you do that because things are constantly changing and you have to assess that. So we simply have a four framing process that helps us to really empower, come alongside people and really accentuate their potential to make this a strong, vibrant, healthy community that is growing and fulfilling its mission and its purpose. So the first one is listening. We are constantly listening and we do listening with our constituency groups, every constituency group that you would imagine for our organization from, you know, our faculty to our students, to our staff, to our alumni, to our donors, to our community leaders, to our trustees. I mean, every kind of constantly listening because Jim Collins, one of his principals and good to great is you can never know the potential of an organization till you know the potential of the people. And so it's a constant listening so that you can capture what are the issues. And I I like to use the appreciative inquiry approach, which is you approach vision, you approach challenge, you approach change with appreciation rather than approaching it with what's wrong with an organization. You approach what's right with an organization. What what's great about this community? It's somehow when you approach things like that, it unlocks people's imagination and a lot unlocks dreams and unlocks really incredible potential. And every time you go through listening like that and you learn, you discover to help, you know how to begin to lead some change that might be very helpful and healthy for the organization. The second thing that we do in our framing is, is to have a contextual on it, making sure we fully understand what are the issues, what are the challenges, what are the competitive finances, sustainability. I mean, all of the things that will be important to make right decisions. Good decisions. Now, obviously, you're not going to please everyone with every decision. It's just happened. You mentioned that. But you want to do your best to make the right decision. And the right decision will only come when you you audit a context after you listen. You keep auditing that context the other way that helps you to make the best decision you can to continue empowering is what I call clarifying the goal, clarifying what is going on. And that's all about communication. You have to have constant feedback, constant loop of communicating and listening. And it comes back to you when you start to hear what you're communicating to to people in your organization. You start to hear that back. Then you go, wow. Now we're getting shared understanding. We're getting shared that we're all a part of this, that we understand. These are the issues. These are the challenges. These are this is where we need to go. And it becomes amazing. And so clarifying is a is is something that has to be a constant to to help you be successful and to keep motivation strong and healthy. And then the final thing is just making sure that you are aligning the vision. And that is you align people's strategies, you align the finances, you align the systems to meet the decisions or to meet the vision or to meet the strategy that's going on. You you readjust, you know, so it's it's constant. But what you want to end up with is. That is that systems picture where everything the big picture is being accomplished because everything is running smoothly with the smaller compartments and the smaller aspects of of what makes that whole organization continue.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:24:30] I liken it to when I was in sports broadcasting, my favorite team to cover in Los Angeles was the Lakers and it was the Showtime Lakers when I covered them. So Magic Johnson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and James werethey and Pat Riley was the coach.

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:24:47] But, you know, it was just amazing to see when you watch that team play and they call him Showtime, because it was it was seamless. It was a mess the way they flowed. Well, they put a lot of hard work in. And I was able to see the behind the scenes. I mean, you know, from early in the morning in the gym to late at night, people just working hard at their plays, at their strategies, at match-ups. You know, just all of these things. And and people's tend to think, oh, they just it's just natural talent. No, it's gifts. They have gifts, but it's hard work. And you can't have alignment in a team and organization, anything like that unless you have made sure that you align all the aspects that will make it seem like it's a seamless team or a seamless organization. So those four things we constantly do that that framing system helps us to make sure that we're always on target for for where we're going, what we're doing. And it always empowers people no matter the tough choices, because there are going to be a lot of tough decisions that have to be made that will always and every decision you make affects people. So that's why in everything you do, you must make sure that you're being others oriented, even though they're tough. And that's always been my personal mission in my life. If somebody ask what's your what's your personal statement about? About you, it's just simply others oriented. I just want to make sure that everything I do will empower others to their best ability and will understand, you know, when you make tough decisions, for example, in people's lives that affect them. I really believe that, you know, ultimately it's going to be great for their lives down the road because something else is going to open up that'll be incredible or or great that's going to allow to accentuate who they are, their gifts and their abilities. It's all about wanting people to get into the right place, right position in an organization so that they can flourish in who they are and flourish their gifts and their abilities and their experiences. And to me, that's leadership.

**Andrew Olsen** [00:27:06] That's awesome. And it's really good stuff. Thank you so much for sharing with us today. I know you have a hard stop to head out, but if if somebody wants to get in touch, wants to learn more about you and the work you're doing? What's the best way for people to find out more about you?

**Dr. Kent Ingle** [00:27:18] They can go to my Web site, kentingle.com] is another place they can go to. [1.8s] But on Twitter and Instagram and all of that. So great.

**Andrew Olsen** [00:27:33] Thanks so much for being with us today.

**Dr. Kent Ingle:** Thanks. Sure.