EPISODE 254: FACULTY, STAFF, & STUDENTS – HOLIDAY DOWNTIME RECOMMENDATIONS

Jack Sessums

I think it was so right and so ahead of its time. It would be very interesting to see a modern remake. We have the Internet, we have YouTube, we have TikTok. Definitely an interesting movie, and one I don't know if it gets talked about enough.

Female Voice

From William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. This is Leadership & Business, produced by the William & Mary School of Business and its MBA program. Offered in four formats: the full-time, the part-time, the online, and executive MBA. For more information, visit wm.edu.

Ken White

Welcome to Leadership & Business, the podcast that brings you the latest and best thinking from today's business leaders from across the world, sharing strategies, information, and insights that help you become a more effective leader, communicator, and professional. I'm your host, Ken White. Thanks for listening. Well, the holidays are upon us, and we hope that means you get some well-deserved downtime. Some quiet time to read a good book, listen to a podcast, watch a movie, or stream some good TV. We asked some of our colleagues at the William & Mary School of Business to share their recommendations with you, something they think you'll enjoy while you watch, listen, or read. Our first recommendation comes from Professor Phil Wagner. He recommends a documentary and a drama, both available on Netflix. While he enjoys the stories in both, he chose them, especially because of their unique production value. Phil, you've got a couple ideas for something for our audience to watch over the holidays. What do you recommend?

Phil Wagner

I'm going to give you two. In the age of AI-generated everything, I'm so sick of AI-generated visuals, so I'm really drawn to camera work. I've seen two things on Netflix this year, and I don't know that they're new, but they're new to me. One is a documentary. It's called The Perfect Neighbor, and it's a documentary that exists almost entirely through body cam footage. I came here from Florida. It tells the tale of a Florida neighborly dispute that goes to pretty extreme places, and it's so well done. Then on the drama side, there's a wonderful single-camera drama called Adolescence. It's a little dark

and heavy, I'm not going to lie to you, but it's shot so beautifully, and I can't forget it. Powerful story, but really powerful visuals.

Ken White

So interestingly enough, you're really focusing on the production of both of those.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, because you can watch anything, but it's how those two are done. They're so different. You can't look away, even though they're both pretty heavy.

Ken White

Excellent. You also have a book that you told me is.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, yeah, yeah, this is old school, but I reread Stephen King's Misery, and I think that's just what reading was meant to be. I love a good novel. Something with a little like, thrill and grit. That one does it, and it's so good and twisty, and that's what reading is supposed to feel like.

Ken White

That's Professor Phil Wagner recommending The Perfect Neighbor and Adolescence, both on Netflix. Among other things, Professor Terry Shannon teaches the Renaissance Leader course in William & Mary's online MBA program. It's only fitting he recommends a book on leadership. The book is The AI-Driven Leader by Jeff Woods. Professor Shannon says the leader who embraces AI is different from the leader of the past. Well, Terry, thanks for joining us. You have a book you're going to recommend. Tell us about it, please.

Terry Shannon

It's called The AI-Driven Leader by Jeff Woods. Relatively new release, it came out in 2024. Obviously, the whole AI world has been exploding in recent years and just found it really practical stuff in it for today's and tomorrow's leaders to be able to consider as they move forward.

Ken White

Have you finished it or are you still working on it?

Terry Shannon

I'm still working on parts of it, but I've got the full feel for where it's going and what's happening with it at this point.

Ken White

From what you've read so far, is that leader different than the leader a few years ago?

Terry Shannon

It is because the leader of a few years ago is so driven by the day-in and day-out operational tasks of the organization and spends very little time on future strategic planning and strategic direction. The importance, and where this book begins to highlight, is the ability to use AI as a strategic partner versus just a source of information or confirmation, or combining different thoughts and so forth, but really turning AI loose a little bit in the conversation that you have with it.

Ken White

Wow. Will everybody embrace it?

Terry Shannon

Not everybody, but some will. Some will start to experiment with it. He actually presents a framework, an acronym, C-R-I-T, Context. Provide solid context in your prompt that you prepare for AI. And that takes practice and iterations for sure. And then the next R is roll. Set up a persona for the AI character. Tell them what position you would like them to look at things from. Because if you do those couple of things right, and then the third, the I, is interview. You want them to ask you questions versus you asking them questions. So it's reversing the traditional use of ChatGPT. And then the final one is task. Know what you're trying to potentially accomplish before you go into it as you develop these prompts. It's all about, as I said, creating a strategic partnership, using it as a sounding board for ideas and thoughts, allowing it to ask questions back to potentially discover blind spots, versus the traditional operational use. I'm looking to do an advertising program for this amount of money. Help me design something, but really partner with it. I've not played with it in that form yet, but it sounds incredibly interesting and a different approach.

Ken White

That's Professor Terry Shannon recommending the book, The AI-Driven Leader. Well, since you're listening to our podcast, chances are you listen to others. Professor David Long has a podcast recommendation for you. David, thanks for joining us. You have a podcast that you're recommending. What is it?

David Long

It's called WorkLife, and its host is Adam Grant, who is an organizational psychologist at the Wharton School of Business. His premise for his podcast is how to make work not suck so much. What he does is he interviews researchers, scientists who typically are somehow affiliated with the space of work and organizations. He asks them how to apply their research in a way to help people become better leaders, make them enjoy

Ken White

Is there one that sticks out to you?

David Long

So he had the Heath brothers, Chip and Dan Heath, who wrote lots of books about leading change. And in one of the interviews, they told a great story about the Don't Mess with Texas ad campaign being an anti-littering campaign, and how just that whole ad campaign changed the way that people polluted the state of Texas. It was really influential, clever way to get the typical litterer to stop throwing out garbage from the pickup truck on the streets and highways of Texas. It's just a great a good storytelling that you hear about really cool ways to apply some of the science.

Ken White

That's Professor David Long recommending WorkLife, hosted by Adam Grant. We'll share more holiday downtime recommendations in just a minute. Our podcast is brought to you by the William & Mary School of Business. When it comes to choosing an MBA program, there's much to consider: the curriculum, fit, cost, quality, and the time it takes to earn your MBA. Well, one major component is the learning environment. For that, the William & Mary MBA program cannot be beat. For the fourth year in a row, Bloomberg Business Week has ranked the William & Mary MBA program number one in America for learning. The faculty are simply outstanding, and the students support one another inside and outside the classroom. If you're thinking about pursuing an MBA, choose a program in which you'll learn, one that transforms you and takes you to the next level. Check out the MBA program at William & Mary at wm.edu. Now, back to our holiday downtime recommendations.

Ken White

MBA student Jack Sessums surprised us by choosing a movie that's almost 50 years old, but one he says is relevant today. The movie is Network. Jack tells us about the main character, news anchor Howard Beale, who's played by Peter Finch. Jack, you've got a very interesting recommendation. Please share that with us.

Jack Sessums

Yes. Happy to be here. I'm squarely in the movie camp if we're going to pick some entertainment to relax to over the break. My recommendation is a movie from 1976 called Network. It was directed by Cindy Lumet and written by Patty Chayewski. It's got Faye Dunaway, Robert Duvall, but they're supporting characters. It really follows the story of Howard Beale. I don't remember the actor's name, but he's the anchorman for a

failing news network. This is 1976, so there's still basically three or four major networks, and this is a fictionalized one called UBS. And one day, he just decides to go off script and start speaking what he deems as harsh truths about society. And everybody in the production room, they don't notice it, only until after his segment's over. The company they all have to get together. What are we going to do about this? And they fire him. Then the next day, they bring him back. They said our ratings were through the roof. Our business is recovering. And it's a really interesting movie, especially for how old it is, because it touches on mass media spectacle. It touches on corporate governance. It touches on politics, geo-politics. I think it was so right and so ahead of its time. It would be very interesting to see a modern remake. We have the Internet, we have YouTube, we have TikTok. Definitely an interesting movie, and one I don't know if it gets talked about enough.

Ken White
No, probably not. I remember watching it in college, as a matter of fact. Where did you see it?

Jack Sessums
I think I just found it on some list of acclaimed movies. Never had heard of it, but yeah, threw it on. Loved it. Been recommending it to friends ever since.

Ken White
And what's the famous line?

Jack Sessums
The famous line is, I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore. And he says that line, all the viewers at home, it pans through all these apartment buildings. Other people resonate with it. So yeah, it's following his arc as this shaman on the news, but ultimately, different interests come in, and you have to watch the movie to find out what happens.

Ken White
That's MBA student Jack Sessums and his holiday downtime suggestion, The movie Network. Assistant dean of graduate business programs, Julie Hummel, is a book lover. She recommends an author and three of his books. Well, Julie, thanks for joining us. You've got some recommendations. What are you recommending?

Julie Hummell
If I had to recommend one author to read over winter break, it would be Amor Towles. Amor Towles is an American author, and three of his novels stand out for me. That's Rules of Civility, A Gentleman in Moscow, and The Lincoln Highway. The reason that I

like Amor Towles' books is because he transports me from my sofa in Williamsburg, Virginia, to a totally different era, a different age, and a different place. For me, escapism is what I like to do during my winter break, and so that's why I would recommend his books, any of them.

Ken White
Do you have a favorite out of the three?

Julie Hummell
I would say that my favorite was the Lincoln Highway. The Lincoln Highway is a modern American odyssey, which follows the life of Emmett, who is a teenage boy released from prison in the 1950s in Nebraska, and he wants to go to California. So he has this trip that he's going to take to get him from Nebraska to California, but then everything goes awry, and he ends up going east instead to New York. And the book is just fascinating because it follows his friends, the unexpected turns in his life, and this opportunity that takes him the wrong way, but ends up being a very impactful experience for him.

Ken White
That's Julie Hummel suggesting three books: Rules of Civility, A Gentleman in Moscow, and The Lincoln Highway. I'll jump in and share our final recommendation. It's a series available on Peacock. It's not for everyone. But if you like crime dramas, and this one can be graphic at times, I suggest The Day of the Jackal. It's an eight-episode story about a lone assassin and the British Detective who works to track him down. It was nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Television Series in 2024. That's The Day of the Jackle, streaming on Peacock.

Ken White
To review our suggestions for your downtime during the holiday season, the documentary, The Perfect Neighbor, streaming on Netflix, the drama, Adolescence, also on Netflix, the classic movie, Network. Streaming on Peacock, The Day of the Jackal. The podcast, Work Life, hosted by Adam Grant, and four books, The AI-Driven Leader, Rules of Civility, A Gentleman in Moscow, and The Lincoln Highway. Well, that's it for this episode of Leadership & Business. Our podcast is brought to you by the William & Mary School of Business, home of the MBA program offered in four formats: the full-time, the part-time, the online, and the executive MBA. Check out the William & Mary MBA program at wm.edu. Thanks to our guests for sharing their recommendations, and thanks to you for joining us. I'm Ken White. From all of us at the William & Mary School of Business, have a safe and enjoyable holiday season and a happy New Year.

Female Voice

We'd like to hear from you regarding the podcast. We invite you to share your ideas, questions, and thoughts with us by emailing us at podcast@wm.edu. Thanks for listening to Leadership & Business.