

Support for Prop G comes from ServiceNow.
Seems everyone is talking about AI.
The hype's everywhere.
It's writing college essays, running earnings reports,
and fabricating my voice so well
that I'll no longer need to record podcast ads.
Just kidding about the last one,
but you know what's not a joke?
ServiceNow's ability to put AI to work across your business.
With their intelligent platform,
you can improve customer experiences,
help non-coders to code,
accelerate your IT team's productivity,
and resolve HR cases faster.
So work can actually work better for everyone.
So stop the hype and start putting AI to work.
Go to [servicenow.com slash genai](https://servicenow.com/genai)
to see why the world works with ServiceNow.
Support for this episode comes from Mercury.
You've probably heard the stat
that about 90% of startups fail.
Mercury exists to close that gap
with Banking Engineer for the startup journey.
They offer a product crafted to help you scale long-term
with safety and stability.
It goes beyond banking
and provides access to leading investors, operators, and tools.
You can join over 100,000 companies banking with Mercury
at mercury.com.
Mercury is a financial technology company, not a bank.
Banking service is provided by Choice Financial Group
and Evolve Bank & Trust, members of FDIC.
I'm Scott Galloway, and this is No Mercy, No Malice.
What is the most underrated skill
in leadership and in relationships?
Listening.
Listen, as read by George Hahn.
Listening is underrated.
Unlike vision, hearing works in the dark and around corners.
We hear 20 to 100 times faster than we see.
And what we hear stays in our heads longer,
often evoking strong emotions.
Just listen to your favorite band from college.
However, for many of us,

we don't begin to harness this superpower
until the age we begin to lose it.
Hearing, like youth, is wasted on the young.
We all hear things.
There's no corner of the globe
that's free from the vibrations that manifest in sound.
So we must decide what to listen to.
But many of us aren't listening,
and that dampens our abilities
and undermines our relationships.
Leadership equals listenership.
That caption is cheesy and off-brand, but it's late here.
As a younger founder and CEO,
I believe leadership was getting a quick take on a situation,
pondering it for several seconds,
and then expectorating a confident opinion.
Like a fraternity brother who owns his vomiting,
with the bravado of a middleweight
holding up the belt awarded
for giving another boxer early-onset Parkinson's.
Leadership, for me, was rallying troops into battle,
except I hadn't thought through the strategy
and wasn't even sure who or where the enemy was.
All that mattered was inspiring action
aligned with my emphasis on my view.
Lately, I've been seeing these TikTok videos.
I think the CCP is boosting them to show how stupid we are,
where an American family lights a pyrotechnic
that becomes an out-of-control hose spraying fire.
As a young leader, I was the firework,
directionless and loud, demanding everyone's attention.
I was 26 when I started my first company,
a strategy firm called Profit.
Our first big client was Levi Strauss Company.
I attended several board meetings,
and what struck me,
other than how opulent big company board meetings are,
was the CEO and chairman mainly asked questions and listened.
They weren't there to advocate or cajole, just to listen.
Around that time,
I joined the Young Entrepreneurs Organization,
where I was assigned a mentor.
Mine was Bob Swanson, the founder and CEO of Genentech.
He shadowed me for a day,

not saying a word, just observing.
At the end of the day,
I prepared for a mix of professional therapy
and a validation of my general awesomeness.
He said, you need to listen more, and nothing else.
Good leaders are known for producing great results,
and greatness is in the agency of others.
A leader's opportunity to take the field
with the all-star team is a function of retention,
the loyalty of the most talented players
who have more opportunities to go somewhere else.
Their loyalty is a function of the leader's appreciation,
economic and psychic.
Great leaders listen,
then tangibly demonstrate they understand
someone's unique needs.
Some people want to manage others.
Some would like to work abroad, have more balance,
or see their name in lights,
be quoted in industry media, et cetera.
In Peter Drucker's classic article on executive leadership,
he lists eight critical practices,
and the first two are questions to ask.
His concluding advice, listen first, speak last.
Madeleine Albright put it this way,
you can lead, but you must listen.
Unquote.
A host of research studies back them up.
Good listeners make better leaders.
Add this to the list of ways social media
is ruining society.
It's skewing our perception
of the relative value of listening versus speaking.
Social media is a contact sport
in which takes are the game ball.
It's taught us incorrectly that all our opinions matter.
Worse, that everyone needs to hear and comment on them.
Pro tip, words are wind.
Do I really need to express my outrage,
and do you really need to hear it?
Most humans suffer from a lack of impulse control,
ignorance, and ignorance of our, wait for it, ignorance.
And social media amplifies these flaws.
Going public on an important or sensitive topic

you have no domain expertise in is a transfer of value,
a trade of reputation, and unnecessary risk
for ear cleaner adverts.
Justin Bieber's Instagram post, Praying for Israel,
lost some of its force when people noticed
the background image of a destroyed city
was a photograph of Gaza.
Social media has not only elevated virtue signaling
to pseudo importance, it has weaponized it.
People are losing their jobs
because they feel compelled to make statements.
The online obsession with statements
and the aftermath of terrible events
is the daily experience of social writ large.
Twitter's basic structure is about speaking, not listening.
The platform's formal innovation was that it made replies
first class citizens equal to posts.
Social gave everyone a voice, but it blocked our ear canals.
The more complex or painful or shocking an event,
the more it behooves us to listen first, speak last.
But we don't, there's likes to be had,
and if you're a semi-famous DJ,
your fans need to know what you think about Gaza.
Posting your view on an issue not only reveals your position,
but also cements it.
You can inadvertently back yourself into a corner.
I see this all the time.
Someone takes a position without thinking
just as part of the flow of the conversation.
It's challenged, they defend it,
and within minutes that passing opinion
becomes a central tenet of their being.
This is part of our larger bias toward consistency,
our need to see our words and actions as coherent.
Speaking hinders subsequent listening.
Social media makes this worse,
encouraging us to record our every passing thought
and then binding us to it,
lest the guardians of gotcha come for us with receipts.
Speaking on a hair trigger also makes us more prone to misinformation.
If you listen for support of your views
rather than illumination or evolution,
you're less discerning of sources and claims.
Just as you can't breathe and eat at the same time,

you can't listen when you're speaking.
To be clear, everyone has the right to speak.
But before you decide to share your views on a charged topic
with the five billion people on social media,
ask yourself three questions.
Do I have something to offer?
Do I have a personal or professional connection?
Is it worth the risk?
If the answer to any of these is no,
perhaps take a beat before speaking.
I was married to a wonderful woman,
smart, nice, fun to be around, generally impressive.
She was also in touch with her feelings,
which I was not.
She would regularly express something she was upset about.
My response was to manage and deflect.
It didn't matter what she felt or even how I felt.
Her comments were incoming missiles to be shot down or diverted.
This resulted in a relationship that was harmonious,
but increasingly distant.
She wasn't in a relationship with me,
but someone managing their relationship.
Truth built up and up and then burst.
Listening alone makes feedback more effective
and engenders loyalty.
If I want to give my son's advice,
what to tell them is the easy part or such dopes?
There are only so many problems
and young people have more in common than they realize.
It's getting them to listen, that's the trick.
The parent hack is to ask questions before we start preaching.
As my dad says,
communication is with the listener.
And if you don't soften up their defenses with active listening,
you'll never get to the beach.
Listening is a gift.
When people are in pain, in doubt, or struggling in any way,
they may legitimately need to express themselves.
For every celebrity village idiot
who feels the need to express their ill-informed opinions on social media,
thousands of people with an actual stake in events
use platforms as an outlet for grief and rage.
But then the platforms feast off this pain
and convert it into fodder for someone else's take

and the wheel spins.

The urge to express oneself

when facing a dilemma or in pain is real.

I communicate for a living,

so I have to resist the need to take the floor

and begin speaking in every situation.

Something that helps is that as I age,

I'm becoming more introverted,

which oddly has strengthened my relationships.

Today I'm more prone to listen than to perform.

The delta between hearing and listening

is attention being present.

This is difficult in the age of devices,

but respect is what makes the other party feel heard.

Sam Bankman Freed would play video games on Zoom calls,

and our idolatry of innovators mistook this bug for a feature,

a sign of his genius.

No, he's not thinking different.

He's just an asshole.

When people seek advice,

it often isn't advice they want,

but someone to listen.

A good listener, someone who is present,

who asks probing questions,

who doesn't use the person's pain

as a starting gun for them to speak,

is a balm for anxiety.

That's why a good listener makes a useful partner

in problem solving.

Some of the best mentorship moments I've experienced

on both sides have been when the mentor doesn't offer advice,

but expresses affection by focusing solely on you

and what you are saying.

The best advice you can give is to listen,

which is to tell that person that they matter.

The most effective treatment for anybody's grief or anxiety

is time and care.

The former takes care of itself,

and the latter can be achieved

when we tell someone we love them,

without words,

by listening.

Life is so rich.

Support for this episode comes from Canva,

who just launched Magic Studio,
a set of AI-powered tools that supports
every part of your workflow.
With Magic Studio, you can create custom designs
from just a text prompt,
generate sparkling copy in your brand's voice
for any design or document,
edit images, or create new ones,
generate beautiful content,
fast-track your first draft,
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improved EPA estimated range of up to 320 miles
and advanced safety technology,
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combined with luxury design as standard.
The time is now.
The all-electric Polestar 2.
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