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VICKI: Happy Thought Leader Thursday. Today we're talking to Mark Barnes @[markbarnes19](https://twitter.com/markbarnes19) about the Hack Learning Model. <http://hacklearningfree.com>.

So, Mark, are you ready to be remarkable and what's hack learning?

MARK: Hey Vicki, I am ready to be remarkable. Hack learning is a model for problem solving for teachers and learners and really for all education stakeholders, for anyone who wants to be better. The model that does not involve the five-year plan. I'm not saying those don't have a place in education but I just feel like too often we default to that. Hack learning is identifying the problem and come up with a unique hack using the assets we have around us and to put a 'what you can do tomorrow' section in because educators need to solve problems today and tomorrow.

We face pushback, we anticipate it, we come right back with, "hey, here's how we would address that push back." We also have a hack in action in the hack learning model which is people who are on the ground doing it. And we say, "Hey, you've hacked this problem. How did you do it and how did it work out?" And that's the model.

VICKI: Okay. So give me an example of a school or a teacher that has used the hack learning model and what kind of results that they saw.

MARK: Great. Well, in our first book, Hacking Education: 10 Quick Fixes for Every School, <http://amzn.to/2qiqTkl> which I co-authored with Jennifer Gonzalez who just called to pedagogy, she's a super educator – really launched the entire series and the hack learning model, we sort of flushed it out together.

(See Jennifer's episode on the 10-Minute Teacher – 5 Technology Tools to Try in 2017 <http://www.coolcatteacher.com/5-tech-tools-try-2017-jennifer-gonzalez/>) And what we did is we said let's identify ten problems in education and let's hack those and let's reach out to our shareholders and get them to help us. So one of the first things we came up with was teacher time and we said, you know, that's a big problem is teachers don't have enough time and their time is interrupted too often. And we need to do something about that. And we said, "Well, let's really narrow that problem. What takes up time?"

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And we reached out to our PLNs on Twitter on Facebooks and everywhere and they [said] meetings. We are just consumed, you know it, you're in meetings. All the time we've got these faculty meetings, department meetings, team meetings, all of these things that are designed to help but often don't. So we said, well, what can we do about this? So that's the hack. And wanted to take the assets we have and we said, "Well, we have an amazing digital world and we have online spaces

that we can use.” We’ve got Google Drive and we’ve got Dropbox and all kinds of places that we can put things. And we said, what if we would take what we have in these meetings and we move them to the cloud? So we named that hack ‘meet me in the cloud.’

And we said, what if we take these meeting and any items we would hand out there and we select a cloud-based system which we call a bin and we slide those into that bin. Well, that was part of the hack and we liked it and a lot of other people liked it but then we had some administrators push back. And they said, well, that sounds good. And we do a little bit of that but what we find is it’s really hard to get out teachers to go to this online space and look at everything because teachers are busy and we’re talking about saving time.

So we said we need to know the piece. What’s another asset? And then we went to the back channel. We said we’ve got this bin, it’s got all the cool stuff in it, we’re going to meet in the cloud but now we’ve got to go tell our stakeholders, “hey, we’ve put some information in this bin that you need.” So we said let’s choose a back channel. And we can use Twitter, we can use Voxer, there’s all kinds of different tools out there you can use.

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And you just create your teacher groups and you get administrator to say, “hey, I’m going to jump into this back channel and remind my stake holders to go to the bin.” And then right there they can look, they can comment. So this ‘meet me in the cloud’ has been a really incredible hack and we hear teachers all over the country and in another country – I had someone reach out to me in another part of the world on Twitter and said, “We are just now moving to this ‘meet me in the cloud’ model and it’s been amazing and we’re finding so much more time to be better teachers.”

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VICKI: So, Mark, I have a question. So you’ve worked with lots of schools and you get the push back in the back and forth. When does hack learning not work? I’m not saying hack learning doesn’t work but we’re talking people here. And some people don’t like change. So when you say hack learning you’re basically saying I’m going to iterate and change rapidly.

MARK: Yes, that’s a great question, Vicki. And I agree with you. I was in that place myself as a teacher where often at times someone would suggest something and I’d go, “That won’t work.” And I think when hack learning doesn’t work, when the model doesn’t work is when instead of just pushing back, teachers are default to “It won’t work.” They don’t say, “Well, here’s a problem.”

VICKI: Mmmm, they shut down,

MARK: Yeah. They shut down. Instead of saying, yeah, okay, that sounds good or that might work but here’s some pushback. How do we push through that? They say, that won’t work. And I was guilty of that a lot myself as a classroom teacher and

I think it's fear, it's reluctance to change. So I think with the hack learning model, the big thing to push is to say, "first of all we're flexible." When I say that the hacks come from using out assets, often at times the assets are the people. They're the stakeholders.

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And we say, okay, here's what we're suggesting. What might not work here, what would you do differently or where else do you think we need to explore to improve it or to hack the hack? So I think that's the key – don't default to "it can't be done" but don't be afraid to ask questions and say, okay, I can see that, what else can we do to improve it.

VICKI: What I love about it, Mark, is that what you're forcing people to do is they have to – when they say they're going to hack learning that they're going to solve problems they don't marinate in them. But I do think there's some people who just want to complain and don't want to actually solve it. I just don't understand that, do you?

MARK: Well, I think I do. I don't accept it but I think to some degree I understand it. My experience with people who just say, I just don't want to do that, I'm not going to do that. I don't want to generalize too much but what I have found is that often at times there are people that have been, maybe, teaching for a very long time and they're just tired of change because on the surface it just looks like one more new thing.

And also, I think it's a systemic issue that has turned a lot of teachers to this sort of negative side because the bureaucracy sort of mandates so many things that overtime have proven that they don't work. So I think when you roll something out, a lot of people who've been around have become a little bit hardened and they say that's just one of the things that won't work. So I kind of understand it but I don't accept it and I have had a lot of very debates, people like this on social media who have told me that. And it's just one more thing – even about hack learning. That's just one more thing. And I say, "Hey, we have to be opened to change."

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And the other thing is it might revitalize you, that's the one thing I tell people who are reluctant and who are just [pardoned]. I say, "hey, if you try it, guess what, you might like it and then you might love teaching again."

VICKI: Well I certainly understand teachers who get tired of the policy du jour or the app du jour of the day. And then they go onto another something else and there's no continuity, no follow-through. Okay. So we want to finish up, Mark, because you have a free anthology that all of our listeners can download. Tell us about it.

MARK: I'm really exciting to talk about it. It's called the Hack Learning Anthology. And what this is we're up to so many books in ferruginous model. We've got 10 books now and 5 more coming in 2017 that are employing this model of solving problems and in a unique way and doing it right now. And what we did is we took the first nine books – it's sort of a greatest hit. We took what had proven to be the most popular hacks in each of those books and we just put them into this collection, this anthology. We call it innovative problem solving for teachers and leaders.

If you're listening just go to [hacklearningfree.com](http://hacklearningfree.com), can't be any simpler. There's a whole site there that they can sign up for free and you can download hack learning anthology to any device.

VICKI: Remarkable educators, I want you to think about hack learning, you know, I would just encourage you and don't shut down, just ask yourself. But now, what can we do? Thank for listening and get out there and be remarkable.

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