

Speaker 1: Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave Asprey: You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is that if you took all of the DNA in your body and stretch it out as much as you could, it would reach from here to Pluto and back 17 times. Well, at least that's what it said in the Science Magazine but they didn't say where in the orbit of Pluto that would be since it's elliptical. I'm a little skeptical on that one. But [inaudible 00:00:35]. So anyway, that's your cool fact of the day and what that means is you got an awful lot of DNA in there and that's cool. Most of it is of course is replicating the same basic things over and over and over since most cells in your body have all of that DNA in it, so it's maybe less impressive than we thought.

Today's guest is a fascinating guy, a guy that I met a couple years ago through Jim Kwik. You might remember Jim Kwik. He's been a guest on Bulletproof Radio. He's a good friend and one of the top memory coaches for Fortune 500 executives and celebrities and just a great-hearted human being. So I'm speaking at Jim's conference and he's like, "Dave, you got to meet this guy. He's one of the smartest people out there and runs his company. There's a TV show based on him." So we sat down and had a really interesting conversation about emotional intelligence. The TV show I'm talking about is called Scorpion, and the smart guy sitting here in front of me is Walter O'Brien. Walter, welcome to the show.

Walter O'Brien: Thanks, Dave. Thanks for having me. Appreciate it.

Dave Asprey: Now when we first sat down, you told me your story. You basically had no emotional intelligence or very little of this and a very smart guy, obviously. But I want to talk with you about how you built a business around this idea of having emotionally intelligent people and basically people who are on the spectrum of Asperger's and pairing them together. What made you get to this idea because it's not something most companies do.

Walter O'Brien: Well, I guess like most businesses, it was a happy accident. I was a kid in Ireland who didn't fit in. Teachers complained I asked too much many questions. Parents are farmers, and I didn't want to take over the farm. So I was just didn't fit in every which way, at home or at school. I then discovered computers, love them, was self-taught, hacked into NASA at 13 and stole the shuttle blueprints. Got busted by the NSA via Interpol, turned them into a client, and then had to start a business at that point.

Dave Asprey: So when you're 13, you got a government client?

Walter O'Brien: Right, because it was either that or go to jail.

Dave Asprey: Okay. So this was the era of WarGames the movie, the '80s kind of time?

Walter O'Brien: Correct. They were just glad I wasn't the Russians. But basically, they signed an extradition waiver that I could work with them. The trouble is if I was 13, I was too young to be employed. But if I opened an entity, a company and I'm the CEO of it, they can employ the company. Then I can stop other people hacking in the way I did.

Dave Asprey: So you were a super geek and for people who weren't alive or at least teenagers in the '80s, it wasn't that difficult to break into a lot of these systems because frankly, if you had a modem and you dialed it, it would answer. So we had this thing called war dialing. We just dial around to find open modems, and I may or may not have logged into a few sites I shouldn't have doing the same sort of thing.

Walter O'Brien: Right. It was a little more complicated than that, but you're right. It wouldn't be near as complex as is today. Plus if you remember back then, it was CompuServe, it was dial-up modem over long-distance phone calls and super slow. So it took like four days to download what would be like a JPEG today.

Dave Asprey: Is it true that you can actually talk to a modem just by whistling, like you personally, as per your hacking skills?

Walter O'Brien: Maybe I'm just not a good enough whistler. I haven't done that.

Dave Asprey: Okay. I used to tell people that I can do that and they would believe me, so I'm just joking.

Walter O'Brien: Your question about EQ, IQ though, what happened then was they had sent me for an IQ test. I scored 197.

Dave Asprey: This is when you were a teenager.

Walter O'Brien: When I was nine, yeah.

Dave Asprey: Okay, got it.

Walter O'Brien: Then I went ahead and as the company got busier, we were kind of like geek squad. We'd run around fixing computers and printers and bad hard drives and installing DOS and stuff.

Dave Asprey: In Ireland.

Walter O'Brien: In Ireland, yeah.

Dave Asprey: Okay, so the US had some stuff going on over there?

Walter O'Brien: No. So my company was in Ireland, I live there.

Dave Asprey: You're serving Irish clients.

Walter O'Brien: I was serving Irish clients locally and then when the government over here would need something, I disappear for a week to do it and then be back there at school. As I got busier, I needed help so I hired my friends, the ones who didn't bully me. But they were in the Gifted Children Society so they were all high IQ prodigies and I thought hey, I'll have a company full of geniuses, that should be good. I was wrong because as soon as I put two of them on the same project, they tried to kill each other while insulting the customer. That's where I started to understand this concept that often, the higher the IQ, the lower the EQ, the emotional intelligence, common sense, social skills. So I went out and tested and found single moms, elementary school teachers, and psychologists who had high EQ scores, hired them to manage the people with high IQ.

Dave Asprey: You do this when you're still a teenager?

Walter O'Brien: Yeah.

Dave Asprey: Okay.

Walter O'Brien: I call them super nannies because they babysit the geniuses and the customers. So you now had fused together the best thinkers with the best communicators, the left brain with the right brain.

Dave Asprey: It's really interesting. So I was also in a gifted students program and what you're describing is the emergence of basically geek culture. It's like that, you have a bunch of smart and frankly very odd kids, like I had no social skills. Today, I think they would describe it as Asperger's syndrome. All of my aunts and uncles, my grandmother all score high on the autism or at least on the Asperger's scale and I was like 42 out of 50 on the basic test for that. I ended up rewiring my biology first which allowed my brain to work and then ended up learning social skills and learning how to do a lot of that stuff.

So what you're saying rings true and even in Silicon Valley, the entire time that I was working on early cloud stuff or the ecommerce and all that, there's a definite what's called an engineering geek culture where you come in. If you don't have the engineering chops like the stress test, they ask you all the hard questions, if you can explain stuff back. If you're accepted into the smart kids club, it's very much like the jocks versus the nerds in the old movies like that. So you were dealing with the same thing in Ireland that I was dealing with in New Mexico, actually, of all places.

Walter O'Brien: Yeah. There's a favorite joke of mine in that which is the guy floats down the hot air balloon in Seattle and he yells out to a guy in a bicycle, "Hey, where am I?" The guy gets off the bicycle and looks at him carefully and looks at the ground and then says, "You're about 50 feet up in a hot air balloon." The guy in the balloon is slightly miffed and he goes, "You must be an engineer." The guys

goes, "That's amazing. How did you know?" He said, "Because your answer is technically correct but completely useless." Then the guy in the ground said, "Well, you must be in executive management." He said, "How do you know?" He said, "Well, you're floating around the clouds with no idea where you're going, but now it's my fault."

That is the dichotomy between the engineers and the management and literally, any software company where the founder is not still in charge and they brought in a whole bunch of the big four consultancy firms and you've got all these EQ people dismissing the IQ people and the IQ people dismissing the EQ people, and it's two warring factions.

Dave Asprey: Yeah. In fact, I would credit a lot of Google's success with the fact that they had two hardcore engineers who stayed in charge. When Google had two servers, the company where I co-founded the consulting of this company and we ended up holding Google servers and providing them space to grow and all that stuff. So it was very common to see those guys before they were famous walking around carrying a server and things like that. Those are real geeks, and when real geeks stay in charge, they build a different culture.

So the Google culture, there might be some complaints recently about that but overall, I think the fact that they just said we're going to choose an engineering culture and we're going to leave that in place, that it definitely provided different results than having just executive managers. But they've also hired a ton of normal "neurotypical" engineers and neurotypical executives to grow that way.

Walter O'Brien: Well, you got to know some of our super nannies and interact with them. That's better than working directly with me who's just about what do you need and how can I solve it.

Dave Asprey: There's no question that some engineers definitely can be rude, but they can be really brilliant and I think it's part of the brilliance. When I did network engineering and architecture, there's a big sign don't bother me. I'm focusing. Leave me alone, and all that sort of stuff. But you can soften those skills out. So when you did this though as a teenager, what did your parents say? Like I'm starting this company, and they're farmers. That had to be an interesting story. What's the deal there?

Walter O'Brien: So my parents, I guess I got lucky. I had very nice parents. But my dad is a farmer. All he wants to talk about is the weather and the animals. Anything outside of that scope, no interest whatsoever. So we're on different planets. We don't fight. We get along great. We do talk, but absolutely no discussion in terms of what I was interested in back then. My mom hates technology. Sweetest person in the world, loves life and movies and everything else we can talk about but absolutely allergic to technology. So it was funny actually the TV show is the first time when they sat down and watched a few episodes that they kind of understood what I do for a living.

Dave Asprey: It's funny. I'm pretty sure that my mother-in-law still thinks I'm unemployed because I don't have a proper job. It's like being an entrepreneur and all. I think maybe when she saw one of the books at the New York Times list, I think that it like, "Okay, he's an author," but I don't think that necessarily multigenerationally what we do necessarily computes. What did your parents say when you took off for the US for a week at a time? Did they freak out? That's not normal farming behavior.

Walter O'Brien: Yeah, there was a bit of a funny story on that. They learned early on by the time I was probably 13, 14 that there was no point telling me what to do. I was telling them it was past their bedtime and I'd stay up till 4 AM doing my programming and work because I got homework, school the next morning, and customers during lunchtime because I didn't quit my education. But I remember when I was leaving for the US for longer periods of time, my mom was crying because she was going to miss me leaving at the airport and then my dad said, "Why is she crying?" My mom said, "Well, I hope you'll be okay in the US." My dad who doesn't say much just said, "I'd be more worried about the US."

Dave Asprey: That's too funny. So you started your consultancy company and then what, about 10 or so years ago, you started transforming it and then ended up getting a bunch more clients. How did you take that model of hire people who are on the spectrum somewhere and then add in the super nanny model? How did you scale that? What kind of clients were you serving? And I have some specific questions like how did the interactions work, but just tell me the story.

Walter O'Brien: Yeah, I was biased. I only love computers. I love technology since I was nine and that's all I wanted to do. My degrees then followed in computer science and artificial intelligence. So we solve technical problems. Then we got pretty broad in that as technology expanded and people said, "Can you do a website?" We're like, "Sure." "Can you do an ERP system?" "Sure." "Can you do a database?" "Sure." It's all just data to me. And because I grew up with that industry, I knew enough about all those areas where I could take care of something for a client and couldn't really be fooled in terms of other vendors we're protecting them from. So I worked at Oracle, IBM, Microsoft, etc.

Then I realized I'm always taking a step back and looking at myself and my business going, "What can I do better? What can I do differently?" It was about 10 years ago. You're exactly right where I was meditating, proverbially sitting on a rock and looking at it going, I've got all this IQ in the company and I've got these wonderful people that are bonding with the customers in the EQ side, and we've worked out a methodology for solving problems that's very engineering in how we break them down. We assume the customer's always wrong so when they come to us, we try to push back and go, "Where did your assumptions come from and why are you really doing this and what's the root cause, and is it worth it?" Rather than a normal outsource company just says, "Yes, sir." They'll do whatever you tell them even if you're on the wrong path. So we'll push back any customer and go, "You sure about this?" The smarter customers get that and they love it.

But then I said why waste all this brain power on only solving technical problems? What if we just said we solve any problem and maybe we'll do it in a technical way but who cares, as long as we solve the problem. So we open up a website called ConciergeUp.com and we literally said if you want to search something, type it in Google, you want it to happen, type it in here. Slowly but surely, people came along and typed in things like, "My mom has throat cancer. Can you find all non-FDA approved operations outside the US that don't involve removing her jaw?" My daughter is at-

Dave Asprey: Does that one work?

Walter O'Brien: Yeah.

Dave Asprey: Does the person like around today?

Walter O'Brien: Yes.

Dave Asprey: That's beautiful.

Walter O'Brien: My daughter has anorexia. Can you find all food that's odorless and tasteless but high in calories and fat so we can get her back to ballerina weight so she can go into therapy? I'm moving my Porsche collection to Hawaii and I'm worried that the salt air will cause corrosion and rust. Is there a spray or a chemical that will protect the underside of the cars, and what boat do I use to ship them over there so I make sure they get there?

Dave Asprey: Simply said do basic research, find experts, and put together a plan, so you have to think about it. That can be valuable.

Walter O'Brien: How do you get books on the New York Times Bestseller list? How do you research relaunching a movie? Whatever people want to do and what it narrowed down to is every person we met with, at least the ones smart enough to hire us, has their own core competency and they're better than us in that area. But then if they spent their 10,000 hours being really good at that one thing, biohacking is an example, they end up sucking in a lot of other areas. There's things they suck at because they're good at that one thing.

Dave Asprey: Hey, you make sacrifices, okay.

Walter O'Brien: So we basically are appealing to them to say give us all the stuff you suck at and let us use our expert network to handle that and you do your magic, you do what you're brilliant at. That way, you reach your full potential.

Dave Asprey: So you started doing that and then somehow, it became a TV show. That is the oddest things I've heard of.

Walter O'Brien: Yeah, obviously.

Dave Asprey: So non sequitur there. Okay, how does that transition into being on TV?

Walter O'Brien: Sure. So what happened there was we started getting so many requests then that I started running out of geniuses to answer them. We had about 3,000 we could access in the consortium and they're are 150 IQ or higher which is about one in 10,000 people.

Dave Asprey: Did you actually give them an IQ test to get in?

Walter O'Brien: [crosstalk 00:15:29] Yeah.

Dave Asprey: Okay, cool. Which IQ test do you use for that?

Walter O'Brien: We use the Stanford–Binet and then we have our own test and other test, then we have our own EQ test as well. So they come with their own IQ test and we revalidate.

Dave Asprey: Okay, cool.

Walter O'Brien: So then, and very quickly if they're not, you find out in a week.

Dave Asprey: You really not hire someone who's 147 but has domain expertise.

Walter O'Brien: No. No, if they has domain expertise and they're the best in the world at something that no one else knows, we do keep them on our Rolodex to [inaudible 00:15:59] them in as an expert but they're not part of the consortium. They're managed differently. So we have, for example, experts in graphene for water desalinization. Not many people spend their life doing that, so we can't be picky. We'll take whoever knows that the best.

Dave Asprey: Is IQ that good of a predictor of job performance? Google found it wasn't, Microsoft found it wasn't. If you hire a total jerk who has a IQ, usually they blow things out.

Walter O'Brien: Yeah. Now there's a famous phrase, it's like it's great to hire smart people but it should be possible to like them. So the answer is no. High IQ would be horrible for job performance in any other environment. What I did is I fixed the environment. If you have high IQ and you go to work at a normal Bank of America, for example, you'd be fired in a week for not being a team player and insulting everyone around you as idiots. But if you are mentored by a super nanny, if you're stacking the deck where everyone you report to is smarter than you, not dumber than you, if your environment fairly rewards effort and monitors what your error rate, mistakes are and all the motivations and bonuses are set up correctly and you're rewarded for being a pessimist, not an optimist. So if you're kissing my ass all day, that doesn't do me any good. But if you point out a landmine I'm about to step on, I'll reward you for that.

Dave Asprey: You get bonus points for that.

Walter O'Brien: So it's the reverse of everything we know as corporate culture. But let me answer the movie, the TV show.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, one question before we go to the TV show. Do your super nannies just want to jump off bridges? Because it's really stressful to work with people who act that way.

Walter O'Brien: I'm glad you picked up on that. That is the hardest job in the company. The hardest job is not being the genius, it's being the super nanny because they want to throttle them, they want to choke them, and they can't. The geniuses have an excuse when they screw up because they are low EQ, as opposed to super nannies so they have to take it on the chin, whether the genius is playing under insecurities, trying to make them cry, trying to sabotage them, whatever it is. They have to be the ultimate double agents.

Dave Asprey: How do you hire one of those when you don't have an IQ test?

Walter O'Brien: Well, there's an EQ test to get the super nanny.

Dave Asprey: What score do you have to get on that in order-

Walter O'Brien: Seventy-five or higher out of a hundred. But it's not just that because lots of people are right brained but then will completely fall apart under pressure. So we often get them PMP-certified which is project management professional. Then we have to make sure that they're very, very tough mentally, very strong. You don't want one that's breaking down in tears every time things get rough.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, that won't work.

Walter O'Brien: So they have to be sensitive and right-brained enough to really engage and understand the customer's concerns and fears and a corral, the geniuses. One of them described it as herding cats while the cats are on fire. At the same time, I've had situation where they come to me and they're like, "We found out this guy is trying to sabotage us, hacking our family, endangering our lives."

Dave Asprey: Your own people have done.

Walter O'Brien: Our own people, a genius.

Dave Asprey: I'm assuming you fire the geniuses for that.

Walter O'Brien: No, absolutely not.

Dave Asprey: Oh, man. You should.



Walter O'Brien: Well, no. Here's what we have to do because that person could be critical on a project that saves lives, like our military projects. So I'll have to turn to the super nanny going, "Okay, you need to be this person's best friend and have lunch with them for the next six months and act like none of this has happened and you don't know it." That's the double agent part. At the end of the six months, we'll take care of it and they won't be here anymore.

Dave Asprey: Just to finish the project.

Walter O'Brien: But you need to be able to control yourself enough to be able to switch on, switch off, and handle that.

Dave Asprey: So your super nannies get hazard pay doing this? How does that work?

Walter O'Brien: Well, they get rewarded at the end of the year depending on the ... We have all kinds of stats on how the projects went and how much flow through there is.

Dave Asprey: How many evil geniuses can a super nanny manage?

Walter O'Brien: Twelve.

Dave Asprey: Twelve?

Walter O'Brien: Twelve.

Dave Asprey: Okay. So super nanny is definitely the hardest job in the company.

Walter O'Brien: Yes.

Dave Asprey: Incredible.

Walter O'Brien: Absolutely. Except for me who has to super nanny all the super nannies and genius all the geniuses. That's hard too.

Dave Asprey: That's got to be tough. You showed me your Myers-Briggs when we first met and you're pretty much three-quarters robot as far as I could tell.

Walter O'Brien: on the Myers-Briggs.

Dave Asprey: So what's your Myers-Briggs score?

Walter O'Brien: A TNTJ but I am off the scale left brain in every category, nothing on the right. No feelings, none of the judging versus perceiving. No perceiving, all judging. I'm just left-brained all the way. So I'm simulating EQ using the IQ abundance in real time. I thought maybe after doing that for a few years, it would grow on me but according to the therapist that measured it, they said, "No, you're not emotionally invested at all. You're still playing it like an actor."

Dave Asprey: Do you have Asperger's, ADD? What's the diagnosis there?

Walter O'Brien: When I was growing up doing all these, they didn't have those phrases or those tests and I don't have time to go back for them. I'm sure that I'm definitely on the spectrum but where exactly now and whether if I took a test now, would I be still faking my EQ in the test or I appear normal or should I turn it off and be myself, in which case I'd probably be in the Asperger spectrum.

Dave Asprey: The reason I'm asking is that I didn't know anyone's name in my classes growing up. I remember like two peoples' names and I really wouldn't make eye contact. I had self-stimming, you press your fingers and like with your teeth and ODD and OCD. I also weigh 300 pounds. I'm a very different person than I was. When I realized that for what I wanted to do in Silicon Valley, I needed to develop those skills. I had a few really good mentors where they're like, "Let me show you how things work," because I was like pure engineering like just think about stuff and it's easy and I didn't get the results I wanted.

So I spent almost two years. I go to it's called the Stanford Barn, it's still there, and they had this business networking group. This is when the first browsers were invented and all. I would stand there like a tree holding a glass of some kind of alcohol and watch business networking like a scientist anthropologist. I was trying to do it and completely like you watch them, "Hey, what do you do?" I'm sure if talk about that.

Walter O'Brien: Did you remember to grab their elbows, you shake their hand? No, it's exactly that and I just got less awkward over the years.

Dave Asprey: So I did too but eventually, there's a certain point after I did some of the personal involvement stuff like I actually have a real EQ. I realized there was signal and all the neurological noise that I've just been tuning out and I learned how to tune to the signal and if you were to measure me today, I actually have a reasonable EQ. I haven't taken your test or anything but I found it was always in there, I just didn't know how to find it or see it. But you've had none of that in your life.

Walter O'Brien: I've had none of that. The other way of looking at it, if it is in there, I think what happens is it's completely ignored in terms of any waiting on it by decision making mechanisms. Everything I decide on is math, pros and cons, life is a casino, I'm playing the odds in every single thing and emotion doesn't weigh into it.

Dave Asprey: So you never get pissed off.

Walter O'Brien: I can get absolutely frustrated.

Dave Asprey: That sounds like an emotion.

Walter O'Brien: No, absolutely. Well, there's also a chemical stimulation. For example, if you drive a Lamborghini or Ferrari, that makes no sense logically. I should be driving around in a Prius.

Dave Asprey: Right, if you do your math thing.

Walter O'Brien: But the stimulation from it, to me, is like meditation. If you're doing nearly 200 miles an hour, it's hard to think about work.

Dave Asprey: Oh, yeah. That's, I used to have a big problem speeding for that same reason.

Walter O'Brien: Yeah, there you go. Then you go home and delete your tickets.

Dave Asprey: Perfect.

Walter O'Brien: But yeah, you're like yeah, I was the fat kid, I was the poor kid, and I was the weird kid. So I had the trifecta, and the teacher's pet. So I could be bullied from all angles and that helps shut down your right brain.

Dave Asprey: Oh, it sure does. What about joy? You're like, "I'm all numbers." You get some joy out of driving fast. So you get pissed off and you [inaudible 00:24:00] joy, happiness, stuff like that or these things that you seek as things that you do?

Walter O'Brien: I have a whole definition around that.

Dave Asprey: What is it?

Walter O'Brien: In that whole philosophy. Did you want me to answer the TV show or get back to it?

Dave Asprey: We'll get there.

Walter O'Brien: Okay. So all right, let's talk about that for a moment. So] as a scientist, I looked into it. I was like, "Okay, if you're not worried about paying the rent anymore, what's life about? What's your purpose? Why are we here?" And I looked at Maslow's hierarchy of needs and most people spend their entire life scrambling to pay the rent and survive. But if you get to the top of the triangle, it's self-actualization. One definition of that is how do you use the gifts and skills you have to do the most good for society before you die. So I thought about that for a little bit.

Then I also looked at Napoleon Hill said happiness is living a purposeful life. So if I figured out my purpose through self-actualization and I was on my journey to it, that should make me happy because I know where I'm going. So then I thought about that and I thought, "Well, if I'm going somewhere, it means I'm the vehicle to get there." So I could be on a bicycle or I can be on a BMW. One of those is going to get there faster and more reliably. So and then, I started

breaking down how do I improve my vehicle, biohacking myself in some ways so I can get to my self-actualization. I call it balancing my Qs, so let me take you through this real quick. And because I'm a car nut, I believe everything in the world can be explained using car knowledge.

Dave Asprey: Electric cars broke them all.

Walter O'Brien: Yeah.

Dave Asprey: Anyway, so we'll assume these are gas-powered cars.

Walter O'Brien: This is a gas-powered car. So now, picture you're in a gas-powered car and you're going on a journey to your destination. So your IQ is your horsepower in the engine, doesn't change, you're born with it, can't really go up or down.

Dave Asprey: I can show you 15-point differences in stuff that I do.

Walter O'Brien: Large amounts of marijuana will make you go down, absolutely. Now, so that's the IQ. The next one is the EQ. EQ is your steering, handling, breaking, your aerodynamics.

Dave Asprey: The control systems, okay.

Walter O'Brien: Control systems. That's the problem with most prodigies. They have a high IQ, get off the starting line, they're way ahead of everybody else, first time there's a corner, they crash and burn. They have no handling, no finesse, no cornering, no breaks. So you need that EQ to get around the bends in life. In the car with you is your RQ, that's your relationship quotient. Your friends, your family, your partner. Are they toxic? Are they good for you? Are they supportive? Are they negative? Who do you cut out of your life? Who do you keep in your life? Critical if you're going to enjoy your journey. Who's in the car with you?

Next one is picture the wheels. That's your BQ, your body quotient. If the wheels fall off your wagon, it doesn't matter how good your IQ is, you're not going anywhere. So you look after your health a little bit. That's the one I ignored for years. I started taking care of it about four months ago. Next is imagine if this car has a spare tire on the back. I call that your FQ, financial quotient, taxes, legal, accounting, contracts, insurance, spare keys to everything, money for a rainy day, your 401K. If you ignore all that stuff because you're all right-brained and having a good time as an artist, the first time anything goes wrong, anyone sues you, your car crashes, your house burns down, you're stuck on the side of the road going nowhere. If you have all of that put in place, you're up and running the next day with a rental car from the insurance company.

The most important one is your GQ. That's your grit, your passion, your drive, your conscientiousness, and that's your fuel, your gas. You run out of that, it

doesn't matter how good the car is, you're still not getting there. So you got to balance your Qs and when you wake up in the morning, the hard part is you should work on your lowest Q because your feelings will make you want to work in your highest Q. So me waking up every day working on my IQ is not going to make a whole ton of difference to my business. But if I work on my BQ, maybe I'll live 10 years longer.

Dave Asprey: There's a pretty good return on investment from having hardware in your body that works okay. I found that the hard way as well.

Walter O'Brien: I'd be hypocritical if my philosophy is to help as many people as possible and then I let myself die early.

Dave Asprey: I would agree with that but man, it happens to a lot of people.

Walter O'Brien: Absolutely.

Dave Asprey: So what have you done then? This is cool. Only lasts for months. So what are you doing? I'm assuming.

Walter O'Brien: So I went to Dr. Franklin Reeve and they did all the blood work on me but not like I've ever seen before. It's like a five, six-page smog test with all 50 different things they measure. Then they've said frankly to me, "Okay, do you want diabetes or not because you're heading right to that spectrum," because I ate like an engineer for 40 years. It was a party. I ate and pizza, whatever I want at two and four in the morning.

So I said, "Okay, well I prefer not to have that. So what do I need to do?" I said, "Do your worst because I'm on off switch. I ignore health. Let's do it." So protein shakes in the morning, prepped meals delivered to the house. I removed all sugar with all carbs, personal trainer. I hate mornings and when I wake up, all hell's broken loose at the company and every night, I have some event or some charity thing I'm going to. So when do I work out? Five PM in the afternoon. All the fires are out, I'm not getting ready for dinner yet, and the work day is pretty much wrapping up. Personal trainer comes to the house because I joined the gym called the No Excuses Gym and then I found an excuse not to go.

Dave Asprey: to get there.

Walter O'Brien: So now the personal trainer shows up at my door. I'm not a flaky guy, I'm not going to turn him away. So he turns up, I'm like, "Oh, crap. He's here." Now he's going to work my ass out using stretchy bands and resistance bands which means I don't pull muscles or injure myself. If my arm gets tired, I don't stretch as far. So I did all that then I realized I was tired. I had sleep apnea and snoring. I didn't know how long I've had that. I was waking up 30 times an hour, every two minutes with lack of air. So I may have not been sleeping for years. Now, no apnea, no snoring, sleep through the night. When I'm working out, I can work

out twice as long because I've twice as much oxygen going through. So I've lost over 35 pounds and 16% muscle mass and just heading in the right direction. I'll just keep doing it.

Dave Asprey: Congratulations. What a huge change in a few months, and I'm going to get you some of the Bulletproof bars that also don't have any sugar but will fill you up, I swear.

Walter O'Brien: So that's it. I call it the fool's diet because I fooled myself as an engineer. So everything I used to have and snack on late at night is now replaced with other stuff and I'm still snacking late at night, but all that other stuff is one gram of sugar. I figured out a way to practically fit it in my life because if I had get up at 7 AM, go to the gym and work out and move my schedule and move my calls, it wouldn't last a week.

Dave Asprey: I think for most computer programmers, waking up at 7 AM or 5 AM isn't in their DNA. There's a disproportionate number of people who have the circadian timing that shifted late in that world. I don't think it's because they're developers. I think that that's part of what makes them developers. I know that it's not the lifestyle of being a coder, it's that 15% of us just tend to be night owls and 15% of us are the morning people. So I've rarely seen engineers who like their life when they become super morning people unless they've always been that way. There are some but-

Walter O'Brien: Plus if you're up at one, two in the morning, every one's asleep, there's nothing on TV, nobody's calling you. You can get a good three or four hours of work done in silence.

Dave Asprey: That's when I'm doing my writing. I was up till three last night working on my book and that said, I controlled my light exposure. I don't eat after it gets dark usually. It's like I tweak all the environmental variables so that I can still function the next morning.

Walter O'Brien: You asked about the TV show.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, yeah. So let's get to that. So anyway, your story is fascinating so how you manage your stuff is awesome. All right. So now you get your company and you built up this unusual model where you have these incredibly gifted super nannies managing evil geniuses, some more evil than others, obviously. Then how do you turn into a TV show? What's the story?

Walter O'Brien: So we're getting so many requests and we're running out of geniuses and they're hard to find. So I went to my geniuses, I said, "Now, I have funded problem. How do I find more geniuses?" They analyzed the problem as engineers do and they came back to me and said, "If you write a book, the millennials probably won't read it. If you make a movie, they'll forget your name in six months. But if you replace CSI as the number one show in the earth for the

10 years, the geniuses will come find you. The 12-year-olds out there will grow up wanting to be scientists instead of wanting to be Kim Kardashian, and that has to be good for the country."

So I said, "Great, how do we make a TV show? I've never done anything in Hollywood." So being geeks, we picked out favorite movies. So we got the producers of Transformers, Spider-Man, and Star Trek, the director of Fast and the Furious, the writers of Sopranos, Prison Break, and Hostages. Got them all together in a room and that was four years ago, and the show has been number one and number two now in a hundred and eighty-eight countries around the globe but up to a billion viewers a week. We're still on every Monday night on CBS.

Dave Asprey: So now with the show, do you have your squad of geniuses work on statistics for the show? Do you have them work on plot lines? You have a group of writers but I'm not sure if they're all 150 IQs. I don't know if that counts.

Walter O'Brien: Well, thank God they're not because the show was a great example of what we're talking about. If I made the show, I made it technically correct and accurate, it will be a documentary in Discovery Channel that nobody watched. By letting go and letting the writers have fun with it and letting Hollywood put in some car chases and some romance, 70% of my true message gets out to a billion people instead of 100% of my message getting out to nobody.

Dave Asprey: What's the true message you want people to take away when they see it?

Walter O'Brien: There's a few. Number one, and a lot of it is coming from the background we spoke about. Number one is explaining that people with low EQ is a disability like any other and to have some empathy for those people rather than bullying them because they don't play football. Trying to create a bit of a culture that we should celebrate intelligence instead of celebrating sports, for example, that there's a place for everyone who never fit in if you make that place for them. So my company is like an orphanage for smart people or a home for the mentally enabled. The show shows that there's a solution to every problem if you think outside the box enough. So I believe those are all good messages to put out to 26 million people a week in the US.

Dave Asprey: That's pretty incredible. I love that message. Now, you mentioned you have a degree in artificial intelligence.

Walter O'Brien: Yes.

Dave Asprey: I have a degree in computer information systems and my minor or specialty was in decision support systems because they wouldn't allow us to call it artificial intelligence because the promise of AI had been made and broken so many times in history of computer science, like please don't ever say those words.

Those are banned from the campus. But it was essentially, it was AI. So you actually studied AI. Where did you do that?

Walter O'Brien: Sussex University.

Dave Asprey: Sussex, okay. Because that's a good school. Okay, so they were courageous enough to actually talk about it whereas where I was ... I went to this place because gave a million dollars a year for the computer systems.

Walter O'Brien: Sussex is like the number four spot in Europe.

Dave Asprey: That's a big school. Okay, so they had the balls to say AI early in the game. What do you think is happening now? We're on the cusp of artificial intelligence disrupting a lot of jobs. There's a place for everyone. In a world that's coming in the next three years, is there really a place for everyone when we've got these really smart computers? You're a smart guy, what do you think about that?

Walter O'Brien: You're right. We're on the cusp of a very interesting turbulence that'll come up that I think won't turn around in three to five years. I think it could be a good 15 to 20-year run where we could hit 47% unemployment. Self-driving cars will put 1.6 million truck drivers out of business, 160,000 Uber drivers. Then a lot of blue collar workers are put out of place because the robotic arms in Japan, they can do the same job, are now cheaper than minimum wage and work three shifts of production with no smoke breaks and no union. So that'll happen quickly.

The appropriate solution to it would be, of course, robot wages, robot taxes, and universal basic wage so everyone gets 25 grand a year for being a citizen from the government, so they're paying the government taxes and the robots make everything four times cheaper so it's the equivalent of a hundred grand a year salary. If we had smart enough leadership, that's what we should be moving towards. Gate says it, I say it, Musk says it, nobody's listening. Or everyone could be greedy and stick our heads in the ground and do a power grab and we end up with half the people unemployed who cannot feed their kids and we end up with riots in the streets and bloody war.

Dave Asprey: That seems ugly and not impossible.

Walter O'Brien: We could.

Dave Asprey: Yeah. I can tell you that there's nothing worse than hordes of hungry people for making everyone's life suck. So it's our job as entrepreneurs to do that. Can you use your show to get that message out?

Walter O'Brien: Unfortunately, whether it's that show or even this show, only about 1% of people listening will really register it and call us and go, "I want to help," or "I need your help." Then other 99% will tune out and go, "Well, that was entertaining."



Dave Asprey: I'm hoping the audience for Bulletproof Radio is higher than 1% who pay attention.

Walter O'Brien: We'll find out. Prove me wrong, please. Go to Concierge Up and type in your three wishes. It's like meeting Santa Claus. What are the three wishes in your life you want to fix?

Dave Asprey: I think it's three funded wishes.

Walter O'Brien: Correct. Let's clarify that. Funded wishes. You have to have a minimum of 10 grand to put towards it just as a deposit so we can chat and figure it out. But we believe we can fix any problem but the trouble is that the majority of people are in a democracy. You can be right or you can be popular, and we vote in the person who's popular.

Dave Asprey: We certainly have a track record of doing that. All right. Let's say that I'm microplastics in the ocean. It pisses me off. So if I was willing to write a \$10,000 check to Concierge Up and I go, "Remove microplastics from the ocean. Here's 10 grand." What are you going to do? How would you approach solving a big problem like that with the structure of Concierge Up?

Walter O'Brien: So for a lot of problems you'd bring me, I could rattle off a solution right away and take you through it. I haven't studied microplastics, so the first thing I would do is bring in the water boy which is the guy who built 12 of the desalination plants for Dubai. I'll also bring in our graphene and filtering experts who know how to filter stuff at a nanotech level. Then we'd have to work on overall what is the budget that you have beyond the 10 grand because 10 grand ain't going to cut it.

Let's say the budget you have is a million bucks. Do we use some of that to create a campaign, an awareness, a fundraiser, a register as a nonprofit so that there's a functional arm of people raising more money if you know what you're going to need. So use your money to go get money so we don't run dry and maybe laying the whole thing dies in the vine. We luckily now, because of who we are and being a household name with the show, there's almost no professor or university we can't call or reach out to who doesn't call us back the next day or two and we get to chat. So we'll start finding the experts on this and pulling them together.

One of the things we found over and over again, whether it's medical doctor, professors, they're paid to research and ponder. Engineers are paid to deliver every Friday. We got to ship. So when you put engineers in charge of researchers and then you bug them by going, "Are you done yet? Are you done yet? What's holding you up? Why can't you speed up FDA approval? What's the delay? How can we get around this? Talk to my lawyer. Let's get a lobbyist. Can we do an injunction? Can we speed this up? Is your competitor slowing you down?" Suddenly, you get things moving because a researcher is paid to

research forever, whether it's cancer, ALS, MS, you name it. They're not paid to solve it and the day they solve it, they're out of business and they usually don't own the IP of it anyway when they do solve it, so it's no skin off their nose. They'll benefit to that. So the motivations are all wrong.

If there's seven kinds of cures for breast cancer, for example, but nobody's writing grants against them, guess what, the doctors and researchers will keep researching the same stuff over and over again because people have grants for that, that particular kind of cancer.

Dave Asprey: I think what you're illustrating there it is at a certain point like well, I've got to solve a problem now and I don't have all the research. In fact, we never will have all the research because the point of research is to keep discovering. But given what we know, you got to have an applicable solution.

Walter O'Brien: Right, so if it's your daughter who has diabetes or something else, then you've got a timeline and a deadline so now you're motivated to say, "Okay, what can I do for her?"

Dave Asprey: Especially if you can test whether it works three months from now, like did my insulin sensitivity change? If so, do more of that. But it's not the end of the world but sitting around and doing what you did to get there seems dumb especially if we're doing it to wait for 16 clinical trials.

Walter O'Brien: To me, it's like NASA. When NASA went to land on the moon, it took them \$8 billion dollars and X number of years. What Space X wanted to do is less than a hundred million dollars and it was 18 months. So if you've got to deliver and you're looking at it from a commercial deadline point of view, you can do things much, much faster.

Dave Asprey: So what you're describing is certainly something that I've fantasized about as an engineer who reads science fiction. It's like okay, what if we had this technocracy where the engineers are in charge. But I'd think about that but then I go back to Silicon Valley, Fairchild Semiconductor, one of the first big chip companies out there. They have like 16 toxic plumes in the groundwater under Silicon Valley where they completely even to this day, you don't want to live in those apartment complexes because you're going to get cancer. Engineers, in the context of solving a problem now and quickly oftentimes, especially for low EQ, haven't considered societal effects, environmental effects, whole system effects. If we put engineers in charge of everything like this, what does that world look like in your vision?

Walter O'Brien: I honestly think it would be a better world because you'd have less nepotism, less politics, less ... I've never seen a bunch of scientists go to war and try and kill each other.

Dave Asprey: I don't know. Ever put a bunch of scientists in a room with scientists who don't like vaccines?

Walter O'Brien: Yes.

Dave Asprey: There's a few areas where they seem to want to kill each other.

Walter O'Brien: They will argue, but it's blind faith and emotion that cause wars where you have people you cannot rationalize with and there's no way to prove something right or wrong, and you can't agree to AB test it. Then the only thing left is let's chop each other's heads off. Those are the people we voted to power because they're the ones who have enough EQ to play golf with the right people all day, while the others are off in the lab actually doing work.

Dave Asprey: The question though is that if you think of this idea, okay if engineers rule the world, they wouldn't play these power politics games. But you also have these engineers who are hacking super nanny systems. Engineers do get pissed off and get vindictive. Tell them their code isn't clean and watch what happens. No one's immune from these.

Walter O'Brien: I didn't say they were perfect. But if you do use the 80/20 rule, 80% of their time might be used for something more productive than the other way around right now.

Dave Asprey: That's a fair point. Now here's the other thing. You sent me a couple press releases just the last couple days where you've worked with some of your engineers and you've built some basic drone swarming systems for combat. Well, none of us wants war. You're also still supporting this. How do you work that out within your moral compass?

Walter O'Brien: Absolutely. My company doesn't do anything illegal or bad for the planet. People come to us every week with stuff they want to do that's shady and we turn it down.

Dave Asprey: What's the worst shady request you've had?

Walter O'Brien: Well, one of the funniest ones was this guy came to us and he said he has a website that he wants us to SEO the hell out of, so get it to the top of Google, get all the right AdWords around it, promote it up there, and make it appear for all these different searches. We're like, "Sure, yeah. We can do that." Then we said, "What's the site?" It was an entire site he built proving that his neighbor is Satan. I don't know how to respond so I said, "Okay, I don't think that's going to make the world a better place." So we turned that down.

Dave Asprey: But was his neighbor Satan?

Walter O'Brien: But you're asking about the drone stuff. This is the difference with this press release. The army press office authorized this release which they rarely do to confirm that we're the ones who were awarded the contract to put artificial intelligence in the MQ-1C. So the MQ-1 is the Predator drone, the MQ-1C is the Gray Eagle which is the army's version of the Predator. It's the same thing but in a different division. And Hunter and a bunch of the other drones that they use.

What they're trying to do is unify the ground control system so that many drones can fly off the same control system. And instead having one drone one pilot, you can also now have one pilot multiple drones and then you need to have them fly in swarms so they won't run into each other and they can act intelligent ways even when humans can't communicate with them. Then you've got to test all that stuff and that's one of the strength there is in our company. We have artificial intelligence software that'll test for all possibilities, kind of like two chess computers playing each other, think of everything that could happen.

Now on the moral compass side, peace means one guy has the biggest stick in my view. We've had relative peace meaning not a World War three for over 40 years because one person held the biggest stick. Now the US isn't perfect by a long shot, but most people in most parts of the world would prefer the US to be in charge than some dictatorship.

Dave Asprey: That's a fair point. No one likes dictators.

Walter O'Brien: Everyone would prefer nobody to be in charge, but that lasts about a week till somebody becomes in charge again. So the other thing is these sticks need to be really accurate. Twenty-six hundred people were killed in the Gulf War by stray missiles because the target systems weren't accurate enough. The last system I built-

Dave Asprey: Probably more than that.

Walter O'Brien: Twenty-six hundred civilians in the reports. The last system I built is 99.98% accurate.

Dave Asprey: For missile control?

Walter O'Brien: Which means two out of a thousand go astray. So if I don't do it, they'll use the old system. So now, am I supporting a war or am I trying to save lives?

Dave Asprey: If the presupposition there is that in order for there to be peace, one person have to have the biggest stick, that's definitely a position with some equilibrium there. However, I like this idea of building a world where none of us feels like we really need to have a big stick to whack each other.

Walter O'Brien: Right. But in the history of mankind, the majority of humans have never agreed to do the right thing for the right reasons ever. Greed and power takes over every single time.

Dave Asprey: History of mankind, we've never put people on Mars but I just heard a talk from people who are saying six years. I actually don't believe that. I think it's going to take longer because the astronauts will die on the way because we haven't solved some environmental things, but maybe I'm wrong. But anyway, history, whatever. Aren't you about doing things that have never been done in history before?

Walter O'Brien: Absolutely. But converting the majority of human's behavior is something we don't have the budget for.

Dave Asprey: I'd write a \$10,000 check for that one. There is some hacking of human nature to be done and that takes a lot of education, a lot of resources and just the different thinking [inaudible 00:48:02].

Walter O'Brien: A whole different level of sophistication.

Dave Asprey: Yeah. It also takes time. If you're hungry all the time, you're not going to think about thinking, you think about eating. So there's some big problems to be solved in the world for sure. I tested out Concierge Up when I was working on Head Strong, my book that did end up hitting New York Times bestseller list. So I worked with a super nanny named Lisa, and she did a really good job of just compiling all the data that my team at Bulletproof didn't have. So we looked at other patterns and things like that. So I got a lot of information that was useful and actionable and Lisa even made some introductions I wouldn't have expected to different avenues for distributing books and getting just more exposure for it.

So it was definitely a cool experience and it was going outside of the team I already have at Bulletproof. It's an interesting idea to say, "Here's a poorly structured problem without an algorithm to solve it, can you guys figure out an algorithm to solve it? Can you find the data that needs to be solved? Can you put together a plan?" So it was a really valuable experience.

Walter O'Brien: You put it well because our customers, we try to encourage them to bring us a fuzzy problem, we call it. Most people are used to outsourcing after they figured everything out. Let's say building an app traditionally. They have the requirements to build out their screenshots, they know exactly what they want to do, and they hired some company in India and they tell them every inch of the way what to do. With us, we're encouraging customers to come to us earlier than that saying, "I kind of sort of want to do something in this area. I don't know if it's a dumb idea or not. Can you pull up some data, see if this holds any weight? Does this make sense? Does this cost a million dollars or is it actually

cheaper? Is there stuff out there we can already reuse or piggyback off of?" Then we pull it all together.

I remember we have one client whose wife wanted to start a blow bar which is like a hair dryer ... It's like a hairdresser but you don't cut the hair. So very quickly with analytics, we found which mall has no blow bar and is furthest from all of the competitors that has a large number of women between 35 and 45 with disposable income. And then protect her by making sure she's not screwed over on her lease and then everything from her insurance coverage to her QuickBooks to her swipe card to her American Express merchant accounts to everything she needed to put it together. And then the social media structure says she's going to hold a launch party and invite all the influencers who then went to a booth to set up to take their selfies that had coded the hash tag in there.

Now, she knows hair. She doesn't know all the rest of this. She's not an expert on thinking swipe cards and merchant accounts or QuickBooks, but we are. Then we put the security cameras in so if she does get sued, she can cover and explain herself, stuff she would not have thought of. That's a quick example of where people could come to us with a fuzzy problem and in everything they're not an expert in, we try and compensate for.

Dave Asprey:

Cool. Walter, if someone came to you tomorrow and said, "I want to perform better at everything I do as a human being, what are the three most important things or three most smart piece of advice you have for me," what would you recommend?

Walter O'Brien:

So I would actually go back to my balancing Qs philosophy on that person and what I'd want to do is do a bunch of assessments of them, both physical assessments, a Myers-Briggs assessment, an EQ, an IQ tests, etc., so I can get a baseline of what are they already good at that they don't need to worry about. Then what is their weakest spot? What is it maybe they're brilliant but their relationships are in the toilet because they don't know how to maintain a good relationship.

So trying to bring some balance initially is the first thing. The studies, Malcolm Gladwell's Outliers and others said some of the most successful people out there are not the highest IQ or not the best looking or not the highest EQ. It was the people who had the best balance of all of the above. They were smart enough, they were EQ enough, etc. So try to bring some balance to it.

Then in terms of figuring out happiness, finding out their true self-actualization. Maybe they're running a factory because they inherited it from their father. Maybe that's not what they want to do. So what is it they want to do. Now if you take their Myers-Briggs test for mapping the brain and then do situational matching on top of that which is what situations are they ... Is their brain naturally fitted to what jobs, that can lead them to self-actualization.

So it's interesting when people haven't considered this before and you sit down to dinner with someone and you go, "I wrote you a \$10 million check right now that you cannot spend a penny on yourself but now you have real power to go wander the earth and relieve pain and suffering from any charity or any area you want to, who would you help? Who would you help if you don't need to help yourself?" If you believe that it's possible for you to build that building with your name on it, then that's your self-actualization destination. Now we just got to balance out your BMW to get there. And even if you're only halfway there, you'll wake up every morning fulfilled. You know where you're going.

Dave Asprey: What's the third one?

Walter O'Brien: The ability to execute is key. Some people have money and some people have ideas, but very few have the discipline, education to execute. If that's not your strength, if you're not an engineer and you're not used to knuckling down and big detail orient and executing, then hire someone who is and listen to them, half the time at least.

Dave Asprey: So cultivate an ability to execute or maybe you could just boil it down to just do it, to quote a famous company.

Walter O'Brien: Just have somebody do it because it might not be you.

Dave Asprey: I think that you hit on a really important point there. Well, Walter O'Brien, thanks for being on Bulletproof Radio and people can go to [ConciergeUp.com](http://ConciergeUp.com) to check out what you're doing with Scorpion there. And of course, they can watch Scorpion the TV show wherever TV shows are broadcast. Is that how ... What station is it on?

Walter O'Brien: Well, it's CBS.

Dave Asprey: CBS, okay.

Walter O'Brien: Amazon Prime has it. Walmart, Target, Best Buy, box sets are everywhere.

Dave Asprey: Okay. It's a big stuff.

Walter O'Brien: It's easy to find.

Dave Asprey: Awesome. Well, thank you very much.

Walter O'Brien: Thank you for having me. Great conversation.