Finding Brave Episode #16
Sharing The Real You: How To Work Your Quirks, with William Arruda

Kathy Caprino: Hello, everyone. This is Kathy Caprino, and welcome to my podcast, Finding Brave. I've created this show for everyone who longs to create something bold and brave in their life, to rise up, speak up, and stand up for who they are, and to reach their highest and biggest visions. Each week I'll be speaking with inspiring guests from all walks of business, leadership, entertainment, the creative arts, and the entrepreneurial world, and they'll be sharing their intimate stories of finding brave, and offer their best strategies for building your most rewarding, joyful, and meaningful life, business, and career.

Kathy Caprino: Hello, everybody. Welcome to Finding Brave. How is your week? We are rocking it here in the Finding Brave studio, which happens to be my apartment, but there we go, and I am so excited. I know that I say this every single podcast, and I mean it every time, but today we have a person who's not only illustrious in about 20 different ways, but a dear friend who enriches my life in so many ways, and teaches me so much about personal branding, and how to show up in the world.

Kathy Caprino: The topic of our talk is sharing the real you, in your personal brand, and how to work your quirks. I don't know, I don't think we have any quirks, William. This is William Arruda, everyone. Do we, William? Welcome to Finding Brave.

William Arruda: Oh, I've got to tell you, I'm filled with quirks. I think that's all that I have, and I know you do, and I love you for your quirks and that's the thing that—

Kathy Caprino: Quirks galore.

William Arruda: —makes you stand out. I think that's the thing. Often people think those are the things that we hide about ourselves when, in fact, they're the most magnetic and interesting and memorable things about us.
Kathy Caprino: I so agree, and I think that we're going to get into all of this, what are the quirks that you need to share, and why do we hide them, but I would even go so far as to say that when you're a thought leader or trying to be, it's those things that you're incredibly embarrassed about, and often ashamed of, that when you can talk about them, that's where the following really is.

Kathy Caprino: Because nothing's the first time. I mean, everything we're afraid of, everything we think, (gasp) is so universal. Don't you think, William?

William Arruda: Absolutely, and I think we are conditioned to fit in. It doesn't matter if it's school or our first job out of school, or when we become a manager at that company, and we are told to model these other people and model these behaviors. We are taught over and over and over again that fitting in is good, and standing out is bad.

William Arruda: What we know in the world of success is that the most successful people are the ones who are willing to stand out by the things that make them unique and different and interesting and compelling, and often a little odd, or quirky, or whatever that is.

Kathy Caprino: That's so true. I know we're going to touch on this, but I do want to read your bio, so everyone knows what you've done in the world, but I want you all to be thinking for the women on the call, listening in, I know you know this. Standing out as a woman can also be the surest path to punishment. Really, I'm not trying to be hyperbolic. So many women, I'm 57, and for 20 years, the standing out was not a good thing.

Kathy Caprino: But what I want to talk about in a minute is how to choose ecosystems and cultures and environments that don't crush you down. Sure, there are going to be places that you're suppressed, and you are considered weird or an outlier, or it's not welcome. Well, then you've got to look at your culture that you're immersed in, right? Would you agree?

William Arruda: Totally. You know, sometimes the right answer is, "If I'm not acknowledged and respected and even revered for the unique things that I can bring, then maybe this isn't the right place for me" and that's an okay thing to know. I think it's not, "Okay, well then I'll just fit in and be miserable and be average like everyone else." I think the right answer is, "Okay, that's a great piece of information. What's my next move?"

Kathy Caprino: Oh, gosh. So true, and too bad many of us didn't learn that a lot earlier, right? Well, you loved your corporate career, which we're going to talk about. All right, so let me tell everybody about William Arruda. William is the personal branding ... Oh, named personal branding guru by Entrepreneur magazine. Wow. William has been credited with turning the concept of personal branding into a global industry.

Kathy Caprino: A corporate branding veteran, William is the founder and president of Reach, the global leader in personal branding, with representatives in 49 countries, and products that have been used by more than a million people. Gosh, William. Amazing. He has the distinct privilege of having delivered more personal branding keynotes to more people in more places than anyone else on Earth. American Express, Google, Gucci, IBM, J&J, Pepsi, Target, are just a few of the long list of clients, and as a thought leader, William is a spokesperson on personal branding and social media.
Kathy Caprino: He's appeared on BBC TV, the Discovery Channel, NPR, and he's been featured in 100+ publications. I thought my number of 100 was impressive. I've got to change that. He's the bestselling author of the definitive books on executive branding, "Ditch Dare Do" and "Career Distinction," and writes a regular and amazing column on Forbes' "Do Not Miss it."

Kathy Caprino: There you go, William. Personal branding guru. All right. So, we are talking, we only have 30 minutes together, and we want this to be rich and impactful, so all right, we're talking about why we resist standing out and how that has to change. But can you tell us, for people who think personal branding is just fluff and just a cliché, what is it in a nutshell and why does everyone, corporate or not, need it?

William Arruda: You know, gosh, I have fought this since the beginning of personal branding, where people think that branding is about creating an image for the outside world. What we know is that the strongest brands in the world, when you think of Volvo, what do you think of, Kathy?

Kathy Caprino: The one that's the safe for the family.

William Arruda: Exactly. That's because they build safe cars, right? They base that brand in authenticity, and so if we want to be successful, we need to know what our authenticity is, right? What is it that makes us interesting, authentic, compelling, unique, and how do we use that to be successful? Personal branding is nothing more than getting in touch with what makes you amazing, and using that as a way to deliver great value to others and to get where you want to go in life.

Kathy Caprino: Let's get this going here. Why is it that so many corporate, I think consultants get it, or entrepreneurs, because they know they're bringing themselves to market, and in order to make money, they have to stand out. They have to be known for what they're doing, but so many corporate professionals, and I work with a lot of midlife people who are now out of a job, and I've had two people in the past week say, "I don't know how to do this. I don't even know how to look for a job, and what are you talking about, about personal branding?"

Kathy Caprino: What has changed that so many people do know about it, but there's still this group that doesn't know anything about it and hates it? What's going on there?

William Arruda: I think it is because for a long time, we were told, as long as we conform, there's a career path for us here, and we just moved to the next step and don't make too many waves, everything's going to be great, you'll retire and move to Florida at 65, right? That mindset, I think, still exists for a lot of people.

William Arruda: That's not the world that we're living in. We know for various averages, people, the average stay is between two and six years in a company. We need something that is going to be that foundation that will help us regardless of where we need to go, and that will attract people to us. The problem that people have in the careers world is you know what? Sadly there are more qualified people for every open position than there are positions.
If you want to just tick the boxes, you're going to just be one of many. If you're willing to offer something above and beyond, something that's different, that's unique, that's interesting, that gets people excited about you. That's what's going to help you stand out from the myriad of others who can also do the job. I think that's why personal branding has become so prominent, right?

When I started, nobody wanted any of it. I was the poorest person on the planet, because nobody wanted any personal branding. Now people realize that it doesn't matter if you work inside a company, you have your own job, you're a solopreneur, you need to offer something that's unique and valuable, and that is based in who you are.

Oh gosh. And you know, you and I talk about LinkedIn constantly, and you truly are the LinkedIn expert. But I want to say this. When people come to me for a better career or more impact, honestly, in the first one-hour session, I'm on Zoom and we go look at their LinkedIn profile, and I say that how you do LinkedIn is how you do your job, and how you show up.

In about five minutes, it's very clear how they're hiding or how they're in denial, or how they're not in the know about who they are. How do you work with, if you have an hour with somebody and they say to you, "I really don't know how to do any of this. I don't know how I'm special. I don't know how I stand out." I know how I do it. How do you do it? How do you excavate with them?

Yeah, well you know what? I think most people know what makes them stand out, and they discount it. It's really an interesting thing. Most people I know have these amazing strengths, and you tell them, "Oh, my gosh, you are the most connected person I've ever met" or, "You are the best relationship builder I've ever met" or the most creative person, and they're like, "Oh, no, I'm not really" because it comes easy.

So often we think that what's going to make us successful is the stuff that's hard, right? You go to medical school or you get your MBA, or whatever it is, it's the hard stuff that's going to get you there. It's really not the case. The stuff that you can do just naturally better than anyone else is often the stuff that helps you stand out. There's a lot of questions that can help people unearth their strengths. I call them superpowers, so that they can move them forward.

The other great thing that we do is we get other people to tell us about that person, right? Because sometimes you're the person who's clueless, but everyone around you knows exactly what sets you apart and what your strengths are, right? You know that.

They so love that. And I have found that when you get recommendations, you'll often cry, because it'll be language that you couldn't ever imagine anyone would use about you, and it's skills that you didn't know anyone noticed that made a difference. That's such a huge, powerful step. So good, so good.

So, let's talk about some of these quirks we're talking about. What are some of the way-out quirks, William, that you've helped someone turn into an asset? Can you—
William Arruda: Well, you know, I'll tell you a story about a woman. Her name is Brandy, believe it or not, for a branding story, and she works at IBM. And if you ever worked at IBM, and I worked at IBM, it's kind of a blue suit, white shirt, red tie, Chanel suit for women kind of thing.

Kathy Caprino: Wow.

William Arruda: Brandy came to work with pink leotards, black miniskirts, hair up in a crazy thing. She had toys in her office. Brandy's brand was about having fun. She believed that if you couldn't make work fun, she was not interested in being part of it.

Kathy Caprino: What was her role? Not to tell too many tales out of school, but was it communications or something where creativity could be—

William Arruda: Well, she was in marketing, but she was in projects management marketing. Not in like advertising, "Let's do crazy stuff."

Kathy Caprino: Wow.

William Arruda: It was much more, "How do you get a brochure through the system?" kind of thing. But her belief, though, would apply to any job function, because she believed that if you can keep a team having fun, they're going to produce better stuff. There were toys on her table, so that if—

Kathy Caprino: Wow.

William Arruda: —people came in when she was in a meeting, they'd be able to play with the toys. She started every meeting with a real life, crazy story that would make everyone laugh.

Kathy Caprino: Wow. What a person.

William Arruda: Now, there were people at IBM who would say, "Ugh, Brandy. She's not serious. We just can't stand her." But you know what? She delivered incredible work. When there was an opportunity on her team, she had a line outside the door. She hired the absolute best talent, and she was great. If Brandy was just fun and worked competent, it wouldn't work, but she was laying on top of that competence something that was unique to her, and she was willing to stand out. This is the key thing. Knowing that not everyone's going to agree with—

William Arruda: If you want everyone to like you, then you really, your full-time job should be fitting in, right? No one's going to love you.

Kathy Caprino: Oh, my God. That's a tweetable. If you want everybody to like you, then your full-time job will have to be fitting in.

William Arruda: That's exactly it, but people will not love you. They won't go to bat for you. They won't sing your praises to other people. They'll be like, "Yeah, they're nice enough," right?

Kathy Caprino: Right.
William Arruda: But what gets people talking is when you stand out and we have to be comfortable, though, that when we stand out, we can repel as many people as we attract. That’s the interesting part of branding, is if we’re really willing to be ... This is why I love what you’re doing with Finding Brave, because being your authentic self is finding brave. It’s saying, “This is who I am. Like me or not. This is how I’m going to deliver incredible success.”

Kathy Caprino: Thank you for that, but can I go back to what you just said? Let me understand it. Being your authentic self, so we know this in writing, in anything we do, if you’re really saying and doing anything important, some people aren’t going to like it. Some people are going to have a visceral reaction, you’re going to get hate, maybe. So, when you said you have to be able to attract more than you repel, do you mean ... Tell me more what you mean at the heart of that. In the corporate world, in other words, you can’t be repelling everyone, 'cause you’re out of a job.

William Arruda: That’s exactly right. What you need to do is you need to attract the people who are the important stakeholders to your career success. Everyone else doesn’t matter. So, if the powers that be, if the people who are making decisions in the organization, the people that work for you that you need to help you do a great job, the other people and other functions that you need to work with regularly, if they respect you, they may not love you, but they respect how you’re able to get things done, then you can move forward.

William Arruda: It’s about making sure that the people who really admire and revere you are the people who can also help move you forward. Whereas, those other people who may not really connect with your message, it doesn’t matter because they’re not the key people —

Kathy Caprino: Oh, good. I’m going to go out on a limb. I think, and I don’t mean to paint all women with one brush, or all men, but I think women struggle with this more, because we’re culturally trained to be perfectionistic over-functioning people-pleasers. So, even the idea that you’re going to perturb 10 people over here, that’s hard for women. Do you agree?

William Arruda: Totally agree. Yeah, and you know what? Let’s face it. I’m not saying negative about white guys who have the jobs in the corner office, but women are told, "You want that job in the corner office? Act like the guy who’s in that corner office" and what they do is they shed everything that’s unique to them, and they start to try to develop some of those skills. And some of those skills are really valuable skills and it’s good to learn them and behave that way.

William Arruda: It’s also good to think about what you can uniquely bring that they can’t bring, that adds extra value to the organization. Personal branding is diversity down to the level of the individual, where each person has a unique ingredient to contribute, and if they don’t bring that ingredient, then the company loses out.

Kathy Caprino: Oh, gosh. I want to talk to you for an hour. Let me go back to something. Did Brandy, I want to dimensionalize this for people? Did Brandy walk in and say, "You know what? I don’t give a rat’s patooty if anyone likes this or not. This is what I have to be to be successful" And then it just turned out that there were ambassadors and sponsors and mentors who loved her, or did she suss it out first and then said, "You know what? I’m going to be me here?"
William Arruda: Yeah, you know what? I don’t know the whole Brandy story before I met her, but I think that Brandy, I think for her it’s really hard to not be who she is, but I think that what she did is she saw that it wasn’t working against her, so she amplified it.

Kathy Caprino: Oh, wow.

William Arruda: She was able to just let it be bigger and bigger, and I will tell you, she is known way better than most people at her level in the organization. Throughout the organization, because she is willing to stand out, and she does know there are people who are saying behind, “Oh, she’s just not serious about work.”

Kathy Caprino: “She’s taking it way out.”

William Arruda: Yeah, but that’s okay. She’s like, “Yep, you know what? When it stops being fun here, or they stop letting me make this fun, then I’m off onto my next thing.” That’s the finding brave, right? It’s being brave enough to say, “Hey, you know what? If at some point they don’t like what I have to offer, I’m going to go find my next thing where people really appreciate who I am and the value I deliver.”

Kathy Caprino: I’ve got to ask more questions. Do you mind? I’m going to grill you. We’ve talked about how, don’t you speak about 100 times a year, William, for organizations?


Kathy Caprino: Yeah, can you give me some miles? I really applaud the fact that first of all, organizations see the need for their employees to better themselves and reach their highest potential, they need a strong personal brand that’s aligned with who they are, and they’re not worried about people quitting. And I more admiring of you, that the way you do this doesn’t perturb the corporate system that people are going to quit when they hear William’s message. So, how do you manage that? For all of us who do teach personal branding, how do you manage that?

William Arruda: Well, you know, part of it has been done for me, because there’s been a huge evolution in the world of work. From at one point, there was one mouthpiece and one message to the marketplace, and that was through the communications department. The CEO was really protected, no one had any kind of connection to her or him, and that’s just how it was.

William Arruda: Today, social media has just broken down all of those walls, and now every person is a spokesperson for the organization. That means that those people need to be empowered and engaged, they need to be out there building relationships, and we build relationships through authenticity, right? No one wants to build a relationship with someone who’s faking it, and so companies need people to be themselves, for the organization itself to be successful.

William Arruda: And the other big mindset shift I think companies have really been able to make is they know everyone’s not going to be there for 35 years and get a gold watch and move to Florida at the end of it. They know people will be there for a period of time, and they have a choice. They can maximize that value while they’re there, and maybe have them stay a
little bit longer because they're really engaged and they love it, or they can just have them be average employees and on that average day when it's time for them to go, they just go off to wherever next.

William Arruda: I'd love to be able to take credit for companies doing that, but really it's a lot of societal and social and other phenomena that are happening, that are creating the need for, and the demand for personal branding inside companies.

Kathy Caprino: You know, you remind me of something we didn't say earlier, but the other critical need for a strong personal brand that reflects who you really are is we don't get jobs the way we used to anymore, through the recruiter or hearing about them. We get jobs by people finding us online, and networking, of course. 80% I think of jobs are gotten through networking, not applying online, but I can tell you the minute you're going to network with someone, they're looking at you on LinkedIn, right? I don't talk to anyone before having looked them up.

William Arruda: That's exactly right, and you know what the interesting thing is? So people, this is a new phenomenon, right? Personal Googling, where to learn about somebody, either we know about them and we want to learn more, or we have a meeting with them but we haven't seen them yet, we will Google them, or we'll go directly to LinkedIn, right? In a professional capacity.

William Arruda: But even for people who don't go directly to LinkedIn, guess what? When they Google them, your Google profile's going to show up in one of the top three spots, so they're going to end up in LinkedIn, and I tell everyone, "This is incredibly great news." Because it means if you want to manage your first impression online, there's one place to go, tell your story in an authentic and compelling way in LinkedIn.

Kathy Caprino: Wow. Look at that. Now, one other question about what you do in corporations, have you ever been hired where people say, "Yeah, we want what you have to teach" but then they tell you they actually want to sanitize and control what their employees say online? Do you ever get that?

William Arruda: Yeah. You know what? So here's my thing. I'll only work with clients who get my thing, right? I don't want to miserable, and I don't want to do stuff that I don't want to, and they don't want me to do stuff that isn't great for them. I find companies that are like-minded.

William Arruda: What do I recommend to companies is you don't tell people what to say, but you give them guidelines, and help them understand what the parameters are, and you give them some content they can then massage and deliver to the world in a way that's authentic to them. In the corporate world, it's applied personal branding. How do you take what makes you unique and valuable, and use that as a way to further your career, and at the same time, move the company brand forward?

Kathy Caprino: Wow.

William Arruda: It's really powerful, right? By the way, it takes a really forward thinking company to do that. That's why every company is not my client.
Kathy Caprino: You know what's so fascinating? Knowing you as I do, you worked for Lotus, and you met you through my dear friend Nancy, who worked for you at Lotus, right? Or, anyway.

William Arruda: We worked together, yeah. I love Nancy. She's—

Kathy Caprino: She's so wonderful, and the way you two talk about Lotus, what a nirvana. And it doesn't surprise me you do the work you do now, because you really adored that company, and that company in some way shaped who you are, right?

William Arruda: Exactly right.

Kathy Caprino: It makes sense to me that you want to help make that happen for other companies. You have a lot of them, many companies I think, right?

William Arruda: That is exactly right. I will say a lot of people say they had awful experience in the corporate world, I thought I was going to work for the rest of my life there and retire. It's just this darn article by Tom Peters about personal branding made me think, "Oh, my gosh, I have to start the first ever personal branding company." If I didn't read that article, if somehow that was missing from my desk that month, maybe I'd still be working there.

Kathy Caprino: We wouldn't have you in the world, doing what you're doing. Thank God for that. All right, so this, we are wanting to talk about quirks, so what maybe three tips can we give people, William, that they can actually turn this podcast off and go to LinkedIn, or go to their website, or wherever they communicate who they are, and work their quirks in a deeper way? What do we tell them?

William Arruda: Well first of all, you need to figure out what they are, right? We all have a whole bunch of them, and I think getting an inventory of what those things are that make you unique. So, to understand what makes you unique, you need to know among whom you're standing, right? So that you can stand out.

William Arruda: When you think of that community of people, what are the things that you offer that they don't? And getting that piece is key. The second thing that you want to do is you want to know among those, which are the elements that get other people excited, right? Which are the things that make people really engage with you? It's not going to be everything, they don't build their brand around 2843 things that we want people to know about us.

William Arruda: You want to distill it down to that thing, like safety for Volvo, right? That you're going to be able to communicate. Then, the third piece is you have to say, "Okay, what do I do on a weekly basis and how do I rethink the way I do it so that I can communicate what I want people to know about my brand?" We do this exercise with clients where they'll say, "Okay, the number one thing I do is meetings. That's half of my week," right?

William Arruda: So, how do you rethink every part of a meeting? Sending out the agenda, kicking off the meeting, leading the meeting, doing action items, thanking people for coming. How do you integrate your brand into each step of that process so that when anybody can actually do, they think, "Oh, my God, this person is so global. Everything's global." Or, "This person is so creative" or so encouraging or whatever it is.
Kathy Caprino: Wow.

William Arruda: If you're deliberate about it, and again, it's got to be authentic, you can't make it up, but if you're deliberate about it, there is no way that people won't experience it, because you're giving yourself ... At some point, this just becomes natural. You're just constantly giving yourself permission to be your best self every day.

Kathy Caprino: Oh, my God. I've never heard that tip, that final tip, that way. I mean, what comes to mind is I remember when I was a VP, and we were in charge of a few big products, and I had a woman on my team who was so fun, and so creative, and we were trying to launch a new piece of a program to the sales team, and it was Cinco de Mayo, and we had a party with alcohol free beverages, but it was a total party.

Kathy Caprino: Well, the sales team left totally jazzed. I don't know that they remembered any elements of our new product enhancement, but they had a blast. It just made them want to go and talk about this new product. That would be fun, that would be engagement, that would be infusing everything you do with some juice that makes it different. Is that it?

William Arruda: You're putting your stamp on it so that people know it comes from you. I knew someone once who was just a fan of Broadway, and plays, and you would hear him say these quotes from these plays, and playwrights all the time. It just became an interesting thing, and you would expect it, and you would enjoy it, because it was part of a—

Kathy Caprino: A little bit of a theatrical thing?

William Arruda: Yeah. It was always relevant. it wasn't like, all of a sudden he'd, "That's to be or not to be" in the middle of something, but that's the kind of fun part about it. And then you know what? When you're being yourself, when you're connected to your passions, and you're sharing them with others, you're going to like your job better. That's the key thing, right? Let's face it, we spend so much time working, let's enjoy it.

Kathy Caprino: You know, I know, I'm aware of our time, I want to point out one thing. I'm always telling people what comes so naturally to you is invisible to you, but that's what was with you since you were 16. One of those things that you couldn't live without then, but you've totally forgotten about now, but your overlaying something even more powerful, which is okay, you've got those things, but what are those things that automatically, you have traction in, that people are excited about?

Kathy Caprino: Then, you're not starting it all from scratch, but you're simply leveraging that to as you say, amplify it. I mean, I think that makes it easier for people. If someone wanted to learn ... First of all, where can everybody learn from you? You have developed for me an incredible guide on how to build your ideal LinkedIn profile, but if someone wanted to learn more about this quirks issue, give me specifics. I think I know what my quirks are, but what do I do? Where would they go? Where should they go to learn more?

William Arruda: Well, we're developing, so I have a whole new company now, in addition to the Reach personal branding. It's called CareerBlast.tv, and it's really designed for people who are ambitious professionals who understand that their own development is their own
responsibility, not their company’s, so checking out some things at Career Blast TV would be a great thing.

William Arruda: We’ve broken our content into three areas. Perception, performance, and purpose, right? And the purpose piece is figuring out your quirks. "Who am I? What's important to me? Where do I want to go? What are my superpowers? How do I use who I am to be more successful?" So, that might be a good start.

Kathy Caprino: I think it's a pretty good start and, people, if you want to know about personal branding, William is the go-to source. Been doing it so long, but also so flexible and you've morphed as the world has changed. You have brought new tools to us, so I can't thank you enough for all your inspiration. Check out William's Forbes blog. I don't miss a one. I don't know how you're so prolific.

William Arruda: You're so kind. No, no, no. Let me tell you, you are the ... If I could write as brilliantly and as consistently as you, I would probably change my career to be a writer. You're absolutely amazing, and I know it's just one of the 80 million things you do, but I am forever in awe.

Kathy Caprino: Thank you, William. Thank you so much.

William Arruda: You're incredibly gifted.

Kathy Caprino: Oh, thank you. I do feel exactly the same way about you, but thank you. I really take that in and appreciate it. All right, my dears. I hope you will take all this in, go check out Career Blast TV, yeah?

William Arruda: Yes.

Kathy Caprino: CareerBlast.tv. And we'll link to that below, as well as to William's Forbes blog, and let us know how you enjoy this. Let us know your questions. We're not doing our job if we're not bringing up questions, and further areas of inquiry, so you can comment below this, comment on my Facebook page, Finding Brave Today. We would love to hear from you and answer your questions, and I hope this will allow you to be braver in loving your quirks and using them, because they're what make you so special and so valuable in the world. Thank you everyone, and thank you, William, for your time. Come back again.

William Arruda: Thank you so much, Kathy. This was so much fun. I wish I could do this every day.

Kathy Caprino: Oh, I could make that a possibility if you want. I'll talk to you soon, my friend, and thank you, everybody. Have an awesome week. See you next time.

Kathy Caprino: Thanks so much for joining us today, and please don't forget to check out FindingBrave.org for more programs, resources, and tips, and tune in next time for your weekly dose of Finding Brave.