

Introduction

No Turning Back has reached an important milestone: 50 episodes. In honor of this, we wanted to release some of the most thought-provoking moments from our guests. We've noticed some shared themes over these 50 episodes: leading through COVID-19, building strong, trusting networks, the importance of diversity and inclusion, the dangers and benefits of technology, as well as some odds-and-ends leadership insights.

We have exciting plans ahead as we look towards launching a new series in the fall. But for now, please enjoy our favorite moments from the first 50 episodes of *No Turning Back*.

~music~

Anna – COVID-19 Introduction

We started *No Turning Back* in early 2020, as the pandemic reared its head. We spoke to Alex Gorsky, the CEO of Johnson & Johnson, Lidia Fonseca, the Chief Digital and Technology Officer at Pfizer, healthcare leader Michael Dowling, and the then-COO of Starbucks, Roz Brewer, on how their teams responded to the crisis.

Alex Gorsky

I would be in a situation where frankly, the world is facing one of the most significant existential threats challenges that we collectively have ever faced in history. And, and to realize, and, and understand the, not only the opportunity, but really the, the accountability and the responsibility that we have as a company like Johnson, Johnson, where we could actually be part of solving.

Uh, this really important issue. These are the vaccine or other medicines, uh, is something I couldn't even have dreamed of. But that doesn't just happen on its own. It happens because we've got literally thousands of scientists, the physicians of engineers, of leaders around the world working, you know, 24/7, 365, doing everything they can.

To accelerate to marshal the resources and capabilities to, to make that happen. And, but it's all coming from, I believe this source of mission that is far bigger than any one of us alone. And that is absolutely essential for the world.

Lidia Fonseca

I will tell you the creation of the COVID-19 vaccine was a medical miracle. We created a vaccine in nine months without sacrificing safety or efficacy. And, you know, I can tell you that digital played a key role in allowing us to work at that speed, both quickly and effectively. And, you know, I can tell you when the pandemic hit, we had to shift gears very, very quickly. Practically overnight, we transitioned 80% of our workforce to remote work and so that they could on the one hand stay safe, but also continuing to deliver those critical medicines that our patients rely on us for.

Michael Dowling

So it didn't come as a big surprise and it happens slowly in March and it ratcheted up towards the end of March. And then it really hit us hard. The first week in April, we went from about 90 COVID patients in our hospitals, on March 17th to 3,500 each day in our hospitals on April 6th.

So, but it wasn't a massive surprise. And when you have the right people in the right place, when you have the right team working together and you're, you have done the preparatory work in advance, and we have a lot of other capabilities here. This is what we're here for. You're here to deal with crisis.

Christiana Riley

And a period of time, you know, in those first couple of really tense weeks when central banks were pumping extraordinary amounts of liquidity through public markets to see our technology, our risk management systems... all of that volume while people were essentially, you know, completely distributed in their home environments, it was kind of a thrill. Right. And it, it validated all of that hard work and investment that we've been doing since the great financial crisis to make sure that we are resilient and robust for whatever the world is gonna throw at us.

And so that moment, when we did start to see, you know, the cogs of the wheels really coming together and the financial system performing its role in stabilizing markets, it was great. Banks were part of the solution in this situation in very sharp contrast, of course, to the situation in the great financial crisis.

Roz Brewer

Right, right. I get asked that question a lot right now. Um, how do I feel about the future and what's next after what's next?

Um, what I commit to when they, when I'm in those conversations is, is to tell them what I do know. And every day we're month where we are actually monitoring. Customer sentiment right now. Uh, what's on the minds of everyone. What's on the minds of the people that work for us. And we're feeding that back to the people who work for us so that they can understand, first of all, you're not in this alone.

Everyone is feeling the same uncertainty, but here's how people are mobilizing themselves. And we share information from other industries. So then this. You know, the information piles on each other. So at least you're in the know of what the reality is right now. The other thing is that we're just transparent to say, we don't know what we don't know, but here's what we're going to do about it.

And so we explained to them where the company is. Financially. It's interesting that right now, what we're doing is really breaking down in the most simplest terms where we are, because we're

seeing so many companies go bankrupt people. You know, we have people who are not close to the financial terms in our company asking us, do we have money?

Um, you know, how are you going to, you know, is the bank gonna give us any loans? How many loans do we have? You know? And so you really have to break that down for them and say, Hey, listen, we've got a balance sheet. You remember a couple of years ago when we, you know, closed, you know, 400 stores, do you remember that, that cleared out our balance sheet and guess what? It freed up some cash for us. So simplifying those conversations, they're like, Oh, okay, I get it. But it's all about really being as, you know, sharing as much as you possibly can simplifying the message, uh, being on the frontline with them.

And, and also showing that you're vulnerable too. Because there's some things that I don't know, all I can do is help us prepare for the future. And I want to give everyone that works for Starbucks, the confidence that we are trying to prepare for worst case. So we've built some scenarios, worst case, mid case, and best case, and we're going to follow all those. And we're going to talk about those three scenarios. Constantly. And so they'll know if, if things get terrible they'll know and they can make personal decisions or they can say, I'm going to hang in there with you because I think I know where you're going.

Anna – Transition to Trust

A common motif in many of our discussions around COVID-19 was building strong, trusted teams. Two Keiths speak to us about this: Keith Krach, the former CEO of DocuSign and former Under Secretary of State (among other accolades), as well as Keith Ferrazzi, the author of bestseller, *Never Eat Alone*. Another bestselling author and visionary, Simon Sinek, also speaks to the importance of building trusted networks.

Keith Krach

The way to get these kinds of networks going, whether it's the Ariba network or the DocuSign Global Trust Network or the Clean Network or the military network that you were talking about, it starts with a network of friends. Because you've got to see that network originally, and it always starts off with known relationships where that trust is. Every kind of a network begins with the people's side.

So, the question is what's one of the most important military skills, business skills, government skills? It is building those trust relationships. And the other thing I say [in] all those areas, time is important. You don't have a lot of time. So how fast can you build trust, divided by time, is a key leadership skill.

Keith Ferrazzi

When you are a person with a mission or a goal, and you need to enlisting network, you go back to the same principles of never eat alone. You lead with generosity, you follow with authenticity, you earn permission to lead. And I frankly feel that the best forms of leaders. Are individuals who ignore the boundaries of org charts, including the boundaries of your defined leadership position or stated authority.

And you begin to look at the people who you need to get things done, and you say, how can I serve this group people? How can I enlist this group of people? How do I then, and even better, how do I take that principle? How do I get off my own podium and walk amongst them and get them to serve you? And that's why I thought I had to create a new word.

I created this word co-elevation because I believe high-performing teams and high-performing leaders are just a group of individuals going higher together, committed to a mission, but equally committed to each other and lifting each other up and great leadership to me. And what's changed. I think from traditional leadership to leadership today is getting off of our podiums and helping our team serve.

Simon Sinek

So for example, um, one of the, one of the, uh, practices of, of, of leading with infinite mindset is building trusting teams. And that means operating with empathy and patience and knowing how to have difficult conversations, all these skills that we rarely if ever teach in, in business. Unfortunately, you know, just as a quick aside, I'm tired of us calling them soft skills because hard skills and soft skills.

Those are in opposition. No, it's hard skills. And human skills and you need both those skills to be effective at whatever job we're asking you to do. That's an aside. Um, and so what we saw when the pandemic hit is many people in leadership positions, whether they were effective or ineffective leaders prior to the pandemic, they fell back and leaned on their natural human.

They picked up the telephone and they called each member on their team and they said, how are you? You doing okay? I'm worried about you. What's up. How you doing? Let's just call it good leadership. It doesn't take a crisis for us to do that.

Anna – Pivot to Diversity

Part of trust comes from having diverse teams – knowing that diverse opinions are incorporated and valued. Lisa Jaster, one of the first women to graduate Ranger School, speaks to diversity, as does Patty Horoho, the first nurse and woman to hold the role of Army Surgeon General. Norman Wright, Chief Customer Experience Officer at UnitedHealth Group, also contributes to the topic.

Lisa Jaster

In the special operations community, specifically where the mission set isn't five people make a team. Two teams make a squad, four squads, make a platoon. You operate this way. You set up this way where there's a lot more variables. It is silly to limit your toolbox. Why only have tools from the left side of the cabinetry when you could have a whole plethora?

And the willingness going back to the volunteer army for the longest time, we said, Hey, men, you have to do this. And I've always felt really strongly that men don't have to be obligated to

pay the United States is bill. So when we go to war, we pay with lives, we pay and it's not all death and destruction, but it's.

It's time away from family. It's you come back change no matter who you are, and no matter how awesome or terrible your deployment was when you go and live in another country, even if it's quite, I know Kuwait, isn't a deployment, but even if it's Kuwait and you live in a different environment and see different people, you come back changed. And why would we. We only put a segment of our population either at that risk or have that opportunity.

Patty Horoho

Because it was, you know, going back to 1775, where it always had been a white male physician in charge of army medicine. And so I thought it was going to be, that was going to be the challenge. It was actually being the first female, that was the hardest. And I made an assumption that that wasn't even the issue.

And when I had dinner with some people from Israel and France, one of the things they said, is they said, do you want to know what happened when the United States selected a female, not a nurse, but a female to be the Surgeon General. And I said, I'd love to. They said it was a shot that was heard around the world.

All of these countries called each other and said that the United States of America selected a female to lead army medicine. And it made them be introspective to look at how they could do that as well. And what were the barriers that they had. And then the UK called me when I was in Afghanistan to congratulate me.

And I'll never forget this. And they said, we want to congratulate you on being selected, how does it feel to know the whole world's going to watch to see if you succeed or fail. And and it did change my lens, you know, I thought, okay, let me up my game.

Norman Wright

There is no way we, any of us can be as effective as you want to be or hit our full potential. If we're not thinking through a more diverse and inclusive lens, we still haven't addressed health equity, um, in as significant way as we want to in this country. So this is our, this is our home. This is our doorway into... let's get these issues out on the table. Let's just be real about them. It's going to feel uncomfortable. That's okay. But once we all get to a common understanding of this moment, this starting place, then we can work on solutions in a, in a, in a very real and hopefully an impactful way.

Anna – On Building Teams:

There has been tremendous churn and shuffle in personnel during these pandemic months. Many organizations were forced to entirely rethink how they built teams. Lt. Gen Saltzman spoke to us about how he is building the Space Force, while James Kerr, bestselling author of *Legacy*, shared

insight on how ritual brings organizations together – helpful lessons as we live on during COVID-19.

Lt. Gen. Saltzman

You know, and maybe a different way to say it is with the merger of all of the various cultures, how do you carve out the new culture, which is the Space Force? And is that a deliberate process, is it an indirect process? This is a worrisome thought for me, quite frankly, because I know that, you know, as we talked about earlier, we're making a lot of decisions now that will come and go, you know, budget decisions, even policy decisions, what uniform we're going to wear. These things have a way of kind of evening out over time. But culture. Boy, that's one of those things that starts to grab hold and you can't shake it one way or another sometimes. And so I think the first thing I would tell everyone is we're being very deliberate and we are recognizing that no matter what actions we take, it will develop a culture. So, since that's true, boy, let's get it right.

James Kerr

And I think one of the key ways to influence an entire organization is start to work on a team level. Start to model excellence team by team. And we're an amazingly mimetic species. We copy each other. If we see something that works, we grab it and we go for it. And so I think, I think there are a lot of models on sort of organizational change that have really been kind of hierarchical and monolithic. We're going to change the whole organization and you know, you can, you want to have that intention, but you know, it's difficult to change yourself, let alone, let alone 300,000 people spread out across 200 geographies, you know? But if you can start to model on a kind of almost team by team basis, the, you know, I hesitate to say this, but you know, given, given the pandemic, but you know, culture is kind of a virus.

It, it, it spreads by, by, by, you know, being a contagious virus in a sense. And, and if it's good. And if it's not good, then the path then the immunity gets built up and it will be redacted. So, you know, implanting great principles on a small team basis and modeling them and rewarding them and recognizing them, I think is a, a very powerful way to start to enact real change within larger organizations.

Anna Narration – On Technology's Potential and Power

Many of the leaders on *No Turning Back* shared fascinating insight on technology: how it influences us, how we should leverage it, and how our nation should offer it. Here are some of the most thought-provoking insights from Tristan Harris, the Co-Founder & President of the Center for Humane Technology, Ruba Borno, Senior Vice President and General Manager in Cisco's Customer Experience organization, and Lisa Gevelber, Chief Marketing Officer, Americas Region at Google, and Vice President of Grow with Google.

Tristan Harris

You know, you got those 10 designers, a hundred designers have designers in our rooms at Facebook, Google, Twitter, Tik TOK, and they're making these decisions about how say a newsfeed is going to work.

And that newsfeed is used by about 3 billion people. Something close to 3 billion people. I mean, that's, Facebook's aggregate user number, but you know, we're getting there with all the other platforms. If you make just a subtle tweak by even one degree and you don't even know what you're going to impact.

It's like climate change, right? Like you just changed things by one degree. And suddenly there's this complex emergent system that's going to change a whole bunch of ecosystems. You didn't even realize you're going to change the dynamics of trust in society. You're going to change their relationships.

You're going to change people's brains so that the attention spans and ways that people are able to read. If I try to read a book, that's on my bookshelf, I can't do that nearly as well as I could do before. And so the subtlety. Of what we're changing in ourselves. What question are we not asking is like, how are we changing ourselves?

Ruba Borno

So technology infrastructure is, is critical infrastructure. I think we're starting to get the recognition of that, especially in, in the past year. It is critical infrastructure. We've got to start treating it as that. Um, I, I used to say that, you know, the, the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy was connectivity because you need that to be able to do anything.

And I think, and I, you know, we, we said that a few years ago, um, when we, when we debuted a Cisco strategy at one of our conferences and it is been proven true now more than ever, is that when you need connectivity to be able to do anything, so it's critical infrastructure and it's necessary. Um, for our kind of economic future as a country, it's really necessary from a competitive advantage perspective for us.

I mean, getting that last mile connectivity, making sure that we're connecting the unconnected. Um, and I would expand it beyond just the United States. I think we do have a responsibility to do that to the rest of the world that doesn't have connectivity as well, because we've shown that, um, it does result in more innovation.

It does result in more economic activation and that, you know, supports. Uh, everyone's productivity and it's just a better outcome for, for our species.

Lisa Gevelber

You know, lots of folks, even though they have access to internet, just don't have the skills really to know how to use it. And you know, the world has changed. Two thirds of jobs require mid- to high-level what are called "digital skills." Like that could mean knowing how to make a spreadsheet, it could be knowing how to make a presentation, just so many jobs today involve some very basic knowledge of digital skills. So, I think we need to get the access part right, and

then we need to make it easy for people to learn this stuff, right. Nobody's born knowing how to make a spreadsheet. Like it just isn't something unexpected of people.

And so, I think if we take this responsibility very seriously and Grow with Google has trained over 6 million Americans just in the last few years on, you know, basic digital skills.

Anna – On Service

Many of our guests spoke to the importance of service: many were servant leaders, some had served in the military, and others spoke about the importance of service to teammates. Here are insights from Senator Joe Manchin, Intuit's Brad Smith, and Jake Harriman from More Perfect Union.

Senator Joe Manchin

So I call him and we're talking and everything and he's telling me, and we're just getting chitchat going and trying to get some calmer, you know, some common dialogue going. And I just said, can I ask you a question? This is, how do you like your country?

He saw, I love my country. I says, how about your family? Always says, family is everything to me. I said, how about the life you have? I love my life. I says, wouldn't it be a pathetic shame of people that had the expertise you have that loved everything you just told me you loved and protected, but wouldn't get involved.

How do you think we have the country? How do you think you have that? How do you think as you're proud of your service and the country you have, and the sacrifices and your family, because you're afraid someone's going to say something and your kids are going to see it in the, and that's going to embarrass you. That's a small price to pay for democracy.

Brad Smith

And I would sum it up by saying Mark Twain had a wonderful quote, which is "The two most important days in your life are the day you're born, and the day you discover why." And honestly, and those dark days of transitioning out of that role, I discovered my why and crazy as it may sound, it goes back full circle to where I came from. Anything I'd ever achieved in life were the values instilled in me and the people who invested in me in West Virginia.

And I have always felt a kinsmen ship to those individuals who were overlooked and underserved who have had to navigate a lot of adversity and they're trying their best to create a better tomorrow for their families. So, I knew that we wanted to put our passion there. Then the question is, well, how do you know what to focus on?

And this is where the techniques from the Silicon Valley helped. We teach something called customer-driven innovation. Where is there a big, important unsolved problem that you have a hypothesis and a coalition of the willing be able to solve together, and you can create some sort of sustainable change that will give advantage to the next generation. And it's the intersection of those three things that help, you know, where to focus and what we came to the conclusion of, is

our state has an opportunity to reimagine itself through education, entrepreneurship, and the amazing natural assets we have, which we call our environment.

Jake Harriman

Look, in this democracy reform space, I don't have a political bone in my body. I've never done anything political. And I'm always the dumbest guy in the room when it comes to democracy or form, there's always going to be someone out there stronger, faster, better, smarter, but it's my opinion that our generation has got to step forward from the rank and file right now.

And lift your hand and say, "Look, if not me, then who? You know, we've got our generation has to step forward and take charge and own our country, you know, to get it back on track.

Anna – On Leadership

Our guests had fascinating leadership lessons throughout each of these fifty episodes. There are far too many to share all of them, but here is one memorable takeaway from some of our guests. Television host, Rachel Maddow and leadership expert, Gautam Mukunda, speak about the personal and professional sides of leaders. Afterwards, Norman Wright brings us home with his thoughts on the burning platforms we all stand on.

Rachel Maddow

Yeah. Well, why do we care about character in leaders? I mean, and why do we care about the personal lives of our leaders? I mean, ideally, I suppose what you're going for is a prediction of future behavior that we think that character shows when times are difficult and when stress is high and when individual decision-making has critical life and death consequences for large numbers of other people, like we think that's when your inherent goodness or badness and strength or weakness becomes operative. That's oversimplifying it, but I think that's why we care.

Gautam Mukunda

I would focus on people's professional lives when I'm assessing leaders, as opposed to their personal ones, because I don't know what the relationship is between personal... I'm sure there is one, but I can't identify it cleanly. But I would draw a professional life pretty broadly. If you are an extraordinarily skilled, you know, battlefield commander, but you throw your phone at your subordinates, like, I'm sure there are things that you do and maybe a, you know, a sufficiently adaptable organization could actually find a role to use those talents where you didn't have subordinates, but you could, you know, do something where you couldn't do that.

But I would not under any ... like the longer-term toxic effects of that on an organization are so profound that it is difficult for me to imagine any level of skill or performance that would make up for that.

Jamil Farschi

And I don't think that the role of a leader is to just go through and explicitly define what the other people need to do. I'm not going to be picking technologies. I'm not going to say this is the right specific strategy for access control or whatever it may be. I want to hire these people to do, to do their role. And that's what the role is. And so I want them to be able to step into it and certainly I'm going to guide them and provide my 2 cents when, when necessary.

But ultimately I think the, the, the Key measure for a successful team is that I can go away. And this team is going to continue to operate at the exact same level that it has been because they understand what the CRE what the critical factors are for success. They understand how to analyze and diagnose a particular problem and establish a meaningful strategy and then drive the resources necessary to right, execute on whatever that plan is.

Norman Wright

And then last thing, Stan, I would say no turning back. You often will find, and I think it's a little human nature. I don't really hold it against people. I coach to it all the time. And I don't think it's often human nature to say, "Here comes another big change initiative. Here comes a, another smart person who's pitching a new methodology to get something done. Yet, I know that we've done things this way and it's worked well for us."

And it's important from a leadership perspective to make it super clear: we're not turning back. Right. We, we, the burning platform is real. The competitive threat in our situation is real. Members and patients really need us. We have to be better. So, there is a, there's a different way. There's a next generation, we're going to work our way towards it. Get on board and stay on it. So, no turning back."

Anna - Conclusion

That's it for our celebration of 50 episodes of *No Turning Back*. Thank you for listening in – we will see you next week.