

BRAD: For me. I think Stan responsibility is recognizing that the focus needs to be on others and not yourself. You serve others before you serve yourself. You serve a cause greater than yourself. You are a part of a system. You're a link in the chain. And someone once said, there is no "I" in team, but there is a "me" and my teammates are counting on me.

CHRIS: Welcome to *No Turning Back*, a podcast hosted by General Stan McChrystal and myself, Chris Fussell. Our goal here is simple: to have serious conversations with serious leaders so that we can learn from the best and navigate these complex times together. Thanks for joining us.

ANNA: Meet Brad Smith, former CEO of Intuit and its current executive Chairman of Board of Directors. Stan and Chris are fascinated by the way Brad transformed Intuit, diving into leadership lessons learned while Brad was at the helm for 11 years.

Beyond this, Stan and Chris also explore Brad's focus on community. A West Virginia native, Brad Smith has most recently founded the Wing 2 Wing Foundation, which aims to provide education and entrepreneurial support to Americans in underserved communities. He applies the same customer-driven innovation principles that made him and the team successful at Intuit to these communities: he starts with a hypothesis of how to improve conditions, then gathers a group of people, to create sustainable change.

In this discussion, Brad distinguishes passion for principles, explains why vulnerabilities are strengths, and discusses what he learned from President Kennedy's leadership in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Brad is a transformational leader at heart, focusing his efforts on how he can improve the world around him. The conversation is dynamic and fascinating - we think you'll really enjoy it. Thanks to Brad and his team for making the time.

Now, over to Stan.

STAN: Well, Brad, first welcome, and thanks for joining us today and sort of a setup for our listeners, the reason that Chris and I have been so excited to have you is because obviously we've been friends for many years, but there are two things about our relationship that's pretty special. The first is, and you may want to deny this, is McChrystal Group's 11 years old now, and much of the way it is, is because of you. You are one of our first clients. And as you know, when, when we work with someone, you take on many of the, the attributes and wisdom of that client and you shaped our organization in a way for which I'm still deeply thankful. in a business sense and then in a broader sense.

But also we've been excited because you're from West Virginia and you haven't forgotten that. And after your success in business, you have gone back and gotten involved in philanthropy and the future of West Virginia in a way that I think is an important conversation for us to have. So that's the setup on why we are so appreciative about you and why you're here today.

But I also want to start with a question that says, you know, I was life in the military. Chris was life in the military. I got out, I had this vision of business leaders, and it wasn't particularly

positive. And I had perception of Silicon Valley leaders and that was even more skewed. And I thought that military leaders had discipline, they had doctrine, they had things to hold on to. And Silicon Valley leaders ...kind of did whatever they wanted. But typically, they hitched themselves to a good product and they just went along for the ride, but that's not what we found at Intuit. We found someone who was transforming a business that had become critical in our economy. Can you talk about that moment and leading an organization like Intuit?

BRAD: Well, Stan, first of all, thank you, and thank Chris for inviting me. And I have to say you humble me, and I would actually say that the person I've become and the company Intuit has become is singularly because of us working with you and the McChrystal Group. And I mean that sincerely and I have many peers across the industries who would say the same thing. And so, you've really had a tremendous impact on all of us. And to go to the question you asked, I think all business leaders, including those in the Silicon Valley, know that it's inspiration plus rigor, if you really want to have a change and make a big impact in the world.

And for me, I can recall, like it was yesterday. I was announced in August of 2007, that I would be Intuit's fifth CEO starting January 2008. And at that time, we were celebrating our 25th anniversary as a company, and we were a very strong North American desktop software company. In fact, we were the market leader. But if we looked around us and we became contextually aware, a lot was happening in those years. 2006, Eric Schmidt had coined for the first time, the term, "the cloud." Social media and Facebook had just moved off of campuses and had just dropped the .edu and became a.com. Steve jobs had just launched the iPhone. Globalization was everywhere. And so, my predecessor gave me the best gift I could have ever gotten. He said, "Question everything." I want you to have a beginner's mindset and look at the landscape as if it's day one.

And so, I had the benefit of going out on a listening tour and I interviewed individuals at all levels inside the company and outside the company. And I asked them the same three questions. When you look at our company, what are the greatest untapped opportunities you see ahead of us? When you look at our company, what are the greatest risks that you fear if we don't find a way to address them, we may not have another 25 years? And what's the one thing I could do to screw this whole thing up?

And what was amazing was the consistency in the themes. To a person, everyone talked about the importance of becoming a cloud-based company, embracing social, or an open platform, adopting mobile devices, and becoming a global company. And so, in the first 100 days, we rewrote the company strategy and the magic was everyone felt they had their fingerprints on the strategy.

But then after that, a lesson that we were able to pick up from others that we admired is we democratized innovation. We trained all 11,000 employees on the design thinking techniques of how to have a hypothesis, run an experiment, shut it down if it doesn't work double down if it does. And we gave all employees 10% time, unstructured time. And I remember at the time it felt like we were going to just introduce chaos. But what we instead did is we unleashed magic. We

began to move at the speed and the velocity of a startup and we produced \$400 million in revenue in products that weren't in existence three years earlier.

And so, I'm proud to say that it was the magic of basically learning from others, getting the wisdom of others, to put their fingerprints on the strategy, and then for us to have the courage to lean in and say, let's let those closest to the customer actually create the magic. And that's what propelled us to the next chapter.

STAN: Did, did you, you know, you start that and it sounds easy, you know, you say, well, unlock innovation by doing this. What were the hard parts about actually doing that? Because a 25-year-old company making that kind of transformation, there had to have been some, some friction points.

BRAD: Oh, there were plenty of friction points. I'll give you several examples, but one is, it became pretty apparent that we were a proud company, and we didn't want to run from something. We wanted to run *to* something. And I remember that I was studying John F. Kennedy at the time. And his speechwriter had said that leaders need to be better than good communicators. They need to be translators of dreams. So, we had to paint the vision of a better tomorrow, but the rub was helping the employees know the part they played.

And the best example of that was when I rolled out, we were going to be a connected services company and the cloud was social, mobile, and global. The engineering team in TurboTax said, what in the world does a mobile phone have to do with doing your taxes? And my honest answer was I have no idea, but I know you're smarter than me. And if anything is going to work, you'll figure it out. Within six months, they introduced TurboTax for the iPhone and it is now the predominant way people do their taxes today.

And so, what I can tell you, the challenge was, was immediately to me... I didn't have the answers. I simply was able to get the team to help us see the trends, and then we empowered them to come up with the way to experiment and make it happen. The second thing was the organization also wanted to know, even though we were going to drive all this fundamental change, what could they count on still being the same tomorrow? Not just what's going to be different, but what will we recognize? Because we all signed up for this company. We loved its values and its mission. So, the thing in the change journey we had to emphasize is this will not change. This is the core of who we are, but these will be the things that do change and here's why, and those were the two challenges that I think we had to overcome is not thinking we had to have all the answers, being okay with ambiguity, and the second is being clear about what wouldn't change, so that people felt excited about the next chapter.

CHRIS: Brad... I want to ask you about, tied to that, like the moment in your journey as a leader where, I mean, I, I saw it happening at Intuit when you were at that level, and I'm assuming you'd been through it or learned it from others. I certainly learned this watching Stan McChrystal in uniform as a senior leader, observing leaders who realize there's no one else left to tell me what to do. And if I don't convince people to change, we might go away. Like that can happen overnight in, in the tech space, in war, you can just lose, even though you have every

comparative advantage you can imagine, which is what Stan did for us, forced us to redesign how we were doing business.

Can you describe what that... and we've never talked about this, so I'm making assumptions here, but can you describe that moment where you realize, wow, there's really no one that's going to give me direction. I need to convince people that we have to change the story here, because there are real threats around the corner and that's going to be sort of an unfun part of my leadership journey. But if I, but if I don't take that challenge and I'm complacent, the whole thing could be a risk.

BRAD: You know, Chris, it's, it is one of those moments it's hard to pinpoint when you feel it. But it almost feels like the day you're announced you begin to feel it. Because sudden eyes turned to you and everything you do verbally, and non-verbally as being diagnosed by everyone in the organization.

So, they're trying to read the confidence in your words. They're not just listening to your words or looking at your actions, but one of the things that we had to talk about is a quote that I love. I think it was Michael Milliken said, if you don't like change, you'll lock your relevance even less. And I think it's this thing that change can happen to you or through you and it's your choice.

So, what we tried to do, was to try to help the organization literally process through a lot of open dialogue, a lot of courageous discussions, here's the "why" behind the change. And then ultimately here's the role you can play, and if we get it right, this is what it can look like. Now, what I can tell you is we didn't have certainty. I know I certainly didn't. So, we focused on velocity of decision-making. And the ability to course correct if it was wrong. And so, we refreshed our values and say, we fail fast so we can succeed faster. And we began to celebrate variation, whether it was overperformance or underperformance equally the same, as a chance to learn.

And I think that took some risk out of the system because everyone felt comfortable either saying this isn't working. Or, hey, I can step back, document what didn't work, teach my peers and they get back on the train again. And I think that's probably what helped us. And quite frankly, this is where the McChrystal Group took us to a whole new level. When you came in and engaged us and encouraged me to begin to not just have staff meetings with my team, but introduce a forum where we broadcast shared consciousness in the same facts across the organization that unlocked velocity in ways we could have never imagined. And that persists to this day.

So, I think it's the ability to give people the ability to make decisions, take away the risk of failure, treat it as an opportunity to learn to speed up the velocity of decision-making, was the way we got past that anxiety of, oh my gosh, I don't want to move because it's just too much change.

STAN: You know, Brad, your story just rings so familiar to me because when I took command of JSOC, and we have talked about this, I felt an imposter syndrome. I didn't feel like I was the

legitimate leader. And yet, the one thing that was very obvious to me is we were failing in the fight. Not because we weren't a good organization, but we weren't good for that fight.

There was a mismatch between what we were, we were producing desktop software in a time when the environment had changed. And so, as I wrestled with the challenge you did, I wasn't able to give a clear answer on what we needed to do, but like you, what I did was I said, I do know this: I know we're losing and we can kind of all see that.

And so, what we've got to do is, is take that as a liberating force that allows us to change because we know that we don't have to go anywhere to fail. We can stay right where we are, but, but, but if we move, you know, there's that possibility we'll succeed. How did you deal with the people who kind of wring their hands? There's a, there's always a percentage who go, oh, boss, let's not rush to failure. Or we've tried that before. How did you interact with that kind of mindset?

BRAD: You know, Stan, your, your example on, it seems like yesterday that you were sharing that with us, but it brings back the scar tissue I had before I stepped into the CEO role, when I was running our small business division that produces QuickBooks. And I can remember that we had planned a big organizational restructure, and for six months I had taken my staff into a conference room and we produced so many pretty PowerPoints that I can tell you, we could produce a book with it. And we came out, we unveiled it in an all hands and within six weeks it was clear: we had messed it up. And it was just not working.

And so, I did a town hall and I wanted to do a mayor culpa and I stood up and said, look, I really screwed this up. And one of the employees said, "no kidding." And there was silence. And then that employee said, "Brad, do us a favor. The next time, begin to talk to us when you have the questions and not when you think you have the answers and maybe we can help."

And that moment where many people see vulnerability as a weakness, it's actually a strength because then you invite others who may have different perspectives and different points of view and different experiences to help you come up with a game plan, which is what you reinforced with the model that you brought to the company that we still, we still use.

So, I think that the hand ringing goes away when you make it our mission. Not my mission, but it's our mission. And you paint a very clear picture of the current state and the desired state. And then you say, how are we going to get there? And then all of a sudden people's energy tends to move away from what's wrong with what you think and more towards, okay, how can I solve that problem?

That's been the experience that we've had. Now, I will tell you, there's a technique that we adopted and I go back to, I'm a history buff. You know this about me, and I certainly know it about you. And I've read all your books. But I think about the Cuban Missile Crisis and the book *Thirteen Days*, and the fact that there was a period of time where some were trying to push the young president to say, we've got to go now. And the others say, hold back, you're missing the signals.

And I believe it was Bobby Kennedy who suggested the protagonist / antagonist sort of conversation, where he forced the Hawks to argue the doves point of view and the doves to argue the Hawks. And he led his brothers sit back and kind of process the information.

We've adopted that because what happens is it's okay for someone to say, "it's not going to work." And then another group says "yes." And what I want them to do is argue each other's points of view, because what typically happens is they get new data and they move a little closer to the center. And then I can figure out which one I believe and make the decision.

CHRIS: The Cuban Missile Crisis is near and dear to Stan... Stan and I teach it almost every year to our leadership seminar, because it's such a, a great example of in the moment, exchanges and, and, and moving personalities towards the decision. You said something there that, Stan, I'm going to ask you to build on, because I know you've been doing a lot of thinking, in the, in the risk space, Brad, you said people see vulnerability as a weakness. Stan. I know that's one of your core ideas that you've been going deep on. Can you, can you elaborate?

STAN: Absolutely. Because when you want to seem in vulnerable, you are unaware, open to diverse thoughts. You are prisoner of your biases. You have a tendency not to engage the entire organization because there's this idea that someone's going to criticize your poke holes in your plan. I don't know how many times I've seen people do a full plan and bring it out and not share it beforehand, just because they didn't want to hear the criticism of it. And yet again, you gave chills down my spine on the Cuban Missile Crisis because Anna and I and our new book have just talked about, about it. And that's in fact where the term "groupthink" came from the study. First, the Cuban of the Bay of Pigs, where they, they fell into a groupthink, and then as they avoided it with the antagonist way with, uh, the missile crisis. So, it's so critical, but a lot of leaders aren't comfortable, I'll say, or secure enough to open that kind of exchange. Why do you think you felt comfortable?

BRAD: Well, I had enough examples of me thinking I had the answer that didn't go right that I didn't have a lot to lose. But I also have come to appreciate that when you truly vet all sides of a decision, you at least go in with eyes wide open. And one of the things that I liked about the Cuban Missile Crisis analysis, and I can't wait to read this book. And I mean, that sincerely, is it gave the president, the ultimate decision maker, the ability to sit back and listen. And it gave him the opportunity to hear the facts from both perspectives. And then when they did force the sort of switching of the roles, he got to see who was swayed enough by listening to the other person's perspective that they moved. And it gave you just a little more understanding of where truth was versus passion.

Always say don't confuse passion for principles. Passion is the heat of the moment, the emotion, the principle is the thing you can really anchor in on like a moral compass. And so, for me, I would honestly say Stan, I tried it enough, the other way to know that that wasn't working. And so, I was open to anything.

CHRIS: That's an honest and vulnerable answer. I love it.

BRAD: I have my own Bay of Pigs, times ten.

CHRIS: I want to pivot to another topic that we have spent a lot of time talking about. I am standing in my home in West Virginia as we have the discussion. I know you spend a lot of time in this state. You come from the state. I would love to get into some specifics about what you're, what you're doing here. But taking one step back, as Stan said upfront you're, as you rolled out of the CEO position, and I'm assuming your bandwidth opened up and then got eaten by, you know, 10 other weird places you want to spend your energy.

You very deliberately decided to pivot towards a hard problem. And I would love to get your, your framing on that. How did you, and how do you think about... when you have that extra ability to look at problems, how do you triage them? How did you, how did West Virginia fall top of your list and becomes such a priority for where you're gonna focus the next chapter?

BRAD: Yeah. Chris, thank you for the question. And I know you, and I've spent a lot of time and I really love the leadership. And the example that you're setting right there in West Virginia is you're driving change and setting the example for others. It's it's a two-part answer. One is: how did I know there was another chapter in me that was going to be fundamentally different than the one I'd experienced? And then the second was. okay, if that's where I'm going, then, where am I going to put my energy?

So, starting with the first, I had stayed at the same rhythm I had had as a CEO for the first 90 days moving out of the role. And I realized that while I was just as busy, it really wasn't adding up to anything. It was a bunch of portfolio things as opposed to something with a singular outcome or purpose. So, I went on a vision quest. I went out and interviewed people who had already gone through the chapter I had to try to understand what, how did they come up with the next thing? 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. And

so, we've been investing in bringing Silicon Valley techniques and infusing them into the K through 12 and the colleges and universities to teach these young men and women, how to invent the next Amazon or into it.

We've also been looking at ways to strengthen entrepreneurship by bringing in people like venture capitalist to say, look at these amazing young moms. Put some investment in them instead of investing in California, New York, and Boston. And we're also leveraging the beautiful natural outdoors that we have, to create that tourism and potentially attract remote workers to move to the state.

So, it really was a combination of getting clear on my purpose, which is those who have given to me, I want to give back, and then figuring out what we thought the unlock was, which we think is education, entrepreneurship, and the natural resources.

STAN: Brad, I'm going to Ask it to get a little deeper in that because listeners need to understand just how hard this can be. And I'll go to my personal experience in a place like Afghanistan, where we were trying to help a badly damaged society recover from 20 plus years of war, we came in and we had financial resources with some talent and we did some good things, but we made some mistakes.

We got in a hurry and we threw money at some things, which in some cases empowered the wrong kind of actors in that case, warlords. And we also needed talented people as interpreters or different roles. And what we found was doctors and lawyers and technocrats came and took those roles. And we in fact were pulling legs off the economy of the nation.

Because we were paying a rate that they weren't getting in that essential role and they were doing something close to us and it, it felt good. And so, I say that because it's very easy to make a lot of mistakes when they're trying to help us society transform. So how in a place like West Virginia, where you've got some really incredible assets, but it's tricky business. How do you decide where to put assets and energy and resources so that you get lasting change?

BRAD: You know, Stan, this is still an experiment in process, and there've been some things that have worked and some things that haven't, and there've been some that have been excited by what we're trying to do.

And some that are saying, why are you paying somebody to move into this state when you could give me the money? And all of those are fair criticisms. And I stepped back. And the first thing that I try to think about is we need to be proud of who we are. And we need to be believers in who we can be. In fact, my coach, Bill Campbell, who was our chairman of the board and they wrote the book, *The Trillion Dollar Coach*, you know this very well, he used to say to me, "when I see you, I see two people, the person you are and the person you're capable of being. And I want to introduce those two people one day."

And so, when I think of West Virginia, I think of the mountaineers who chose to blaze trails instead of follow paths, when they actually settled the money, and they overcame all those

obstacles. And then I think about the rocket boys in the movie, *October Sky* who developed the rocket that helped the NASA program get up and running. I think of the women in *Hidden Figures* who were the computational analysts who helped get Neil Armstrong back safely. I think about the entrepreneurs that have cropped up everywhere and that's the DNA of an entrepreneur.

So, the first thing I want to do is talk about who we are. We don't need new people. We need to remember who we are and what we're capable of being. And then we want to grow the next generation, but we know that as a multi-year effort to grow the next generation and we're in a world right now where it's not the big who eat the smallest, the fast to eat the slow.

So, what we're trying to do is grow this next group of entrepreneurs. While we bring people who already have the skills into the state and then have them basically role model, the kinds of things that these young men and women can then also replicate, which is we can start around business as well. So, someone always reminds me, "Hey, you don't give somebody fish, you teach them how to fish."

And I think there's a third option. You can also stock the pond. And that's what we're doing. We're bringing in some assets while we grow our own. And ultimately, I hope that everyone will have plenty of fish to eat. Now, the challenge is we have unfortunately, a history of people having come in and made promises and then under-delivered, and it's created this scarce resource mindset.

Hey, you gave them something. What about me? And so, we're going to have to prove through some wins that if we can actually get these, both sides of this flywheel going, I think everyone's going to benefit. And that burden is on me and those of us that are working on it. And we'll either prove or disprove that, that hypothesis is right.

STAN: I'm going to ask you, and this may be unfair, but that's where I operate. I'm going to ask you as a technique that we used in the military called a pre-mortem and what you do is you develop a plan for an operation, and then before you execute, you get all the players together in a room, and you say, if we fail let's decide, right? Let's identify now what was it that caused us to fail? And you, you try to get junior people to say, "I think, you know, we don't have enough fuel in our..." you know, any number of things that, that will come out that hopefully you then correct.

If you were going to do a pre-mortem. I did some study on this back during the Depression and Eleanor Roosevelt had a signature project out there, in West Virginia that struggled.

BRAD: Yes.

STAN: What, what is the, pre-mortem now, not predicting failure, but what are the things, the vulnerabilities that you really are thinking about? There are several, Stan. I think, first of all, it needs to be an "and", not an "or." We have to grow and build capability on our own citizens and we have to help them see what they live in, so they don't leave and have brain drain where we

end up losing the generation. So, we have to solve that problem regardless of what we do with the remote worker programs.

If we can't stand the brain drain, then we're not going to have the legs to stand on in the future. The second is we have to be very cautious not to create gentrification in these host cities. If we bring these individuals in and they move into these small towns and they get the ability to take care of, or the advantage of the outdoors, but they drive up the cost of housing and everything else, then we've actually punished the native citizens as opposed to created good for everybody. So, we have to find a way to not have that happen. And we've tried to study all the best practices to avoid that.

And then last but not least is we have to be aware of our own antibodies. You know, we are a state that is proud of who we are. We are a welcoming state, but sometimes we want to keep what we've had and we don't necessarily always embrace the different. And I think that for us, we have to be welcoming and let everyone know that as a state, we embrace you for who you are, what you stand for, how you live your life, and we're going to learn from the gifts that you bring that are different than us. Those are the three things that I'll watch for. And I hope that we can course correct and prevent I'm sure there were many more, but those are the three that we thought about.

And I love the pre-mortem. You taught that to us years ago and we make that a practice that we use to this day.

STAN: That is great. Your comments... I hope listeners pay great attention because I think it's incredibly wise, I'd make one observation. When we were in Afghanistan, people would fly in outside leaders and they would go meet with President Karzai and they would pound him about corruption and, and it was true, but the reality is one time President Karzai looked at me and I said, you know, you really got to work on corruption.

And he says, I see, great big black four by four vehicles driving around Western contractors, getting paid a lot of money and living in hotels to tell us how to do things. Does that seem like corruption to you? And it was pretty powerful. And, and so sometimes things are subtle. And so, I think your observations are really right on.

BRAD: Thank you. It's a technique you've taught a Stan. I mean that sincerely and we tried to do a pre-mortem and as I said, there's probably many more things we'll discover along the way that we didn't anticipate, but this definitely is going to require effort and agility.

CHRIS: Having seen, you know, the two sides of this equation described here, I'm curious how your, just your reflections, because people look at Silicon Valley where obviously you've spent many years and you, you really understand at a senior level how that ecosystem works from, from undergrads at Stanford to incubators, to early round investors, all the way up to the big players out there.

But there was a Hewlett, there was a Packard, there was an empty city that nobody really paid attention to. And it's been a 60-year journey to create that model that we also take or take for granted now. So obviously as a, as one of West Virginia's newest full-time residents, you can see the potential for an amazing ecosystem here, all the stuff that you've, you've spoken about and more, where I would argue the states on its front edge of that 40-year journey. Right. But when you... are there lessons there that you're thinking about to create an effective ecosystem, because it's never going to be one solution where you're trying to get people to think about at the early stage and in five years, we'll be here, in 10 years, you'll be there. Do you think there's a comparison between those two?

BRAD: You know, Chris, I do, and I really appreciate the question and also appreciate the analog or the comparison to the Silicon Valley. But as I came back, and I began talking about that in the early 2010s, I began to see a glazed look, come back at me from a fellow West Virginians. In fact, some said, you've gotten California on us. Have you forgotten who we are and what we do?

And so, it made me realize that we needed to go study those who look a lot more like us. And so that sent us off or sent me off on a vision quest where I studied Ireland, who are our descendants, the Scots Irish, the Highlanders, actually settled West Virginia and our land had gone through the same exact thing where they had an industry that just take cratered out from underneath it.

They had brain drain with their best and brightest leaving. They had addictions at that time, alcohol and they came together, and they put together a plan, where they basically reemerged as the Celtic tiger. And then we said there has to be others. We studied Israel on India and France, and we study Pittsburgh and Detroit, steel mill towns and automotive industries, just like the coal mines that had literally just cratered and what are we going to do? And we took their lessons. But what I found was those examples began to resonate with my fellow West Virginians because I said, yeah, I can see myself in them and I can see that they're made of the same stuff I am. And they have dug their way out. Maybe there's a reason to believe.

But I'll click that down one more level. There's a misconception that many people have about entrepreneurial activity and venture capitalists. They think that venture capitalists invest in a business plan and the best that I've ever worked with don't even look at a business plan. They invest in the talent and some scrappy in-market evidence that their idea is going to work. And the reason why we all know is 90% of the startups fell on the first idea. But if they actually see that talent get up and dust themselves off, intellectually curiously diagnose the problem and then get back on their feet and try something else, I would invest in them all day long. And when you talk about that being the core, starting an ecosystem, and then you look at West Virginians who were built from that same DNA, I believe we can say, Hey, if Ireland can do it, Pittsburgh can do it, we can do it.

And it comes down to talent. And once we have talent, we produce good ideas and venture capitalists are looking for good ideas. So, the money will follow. And I think in the past, we've had conversations, which is let's get the money and everything else will work. And I think that kind of goes back to the example Stan was talking about. In fact, I find it's the opposite. If you

have the talent producing the ideas, the money will follow. And we don't have to create the wheel. Someone's already done it for us.

STAN: Wow. That was a great answer. I'm going to switch to almost pure leadership now because as you know, you need talent, you need money, but again, it typically begins with leadership. I'm going to link one word with leadership, and I'm going to ask you to sort of talk about that. And that leadership word in my mind is responsibility.

BRAD: Yes.

STAN: So, what does it mean to you?

BRAD: For me? I think, Stan, responsibility is recognizing that the focus needs to be on others and not yourself. You serve others before you serve yourself. You serve a cause greater than yourself. You are a part of a system. You're a link in the chain. And someone once said, there is no I in team, but there is a me, and my teammates are counting on me. And so, I think that is what responsibility is in a nutshell, is what is the responsibility that you bring to the mission, to your team, to your community, to your family, to the world, and what do you need to do to live up to that obligation? And that would be the way I would describe it.

STAN: Perfect.

CHRIS: Right. One final question, mate, because you, you mentioned, your coach, obviously, just a legend in the technical space and far beyond that. How have you taken on some of that role in coaching others? I mean, you've got a great friend and mentor to me personally, and I know I'm on a long list of people that seek your counsel, but I'd love to hear how you've transferred some of those lessons that you've learned from, from your coach originally.

BRAD: Well, Chris, you're, you're very humble because I have learned more from you, I assure you, my friend, that I could ever give in return, but I do love the friendship. And I think that's what friendships are about as you continue to grow and kind of feed each other. So, Bill truly live to serve others. And I always admired that about him and he never forgot where he came from, Homestead, Pennsylvania. And so, it was his example that inspired me to say, that's the person I want to be. And so, what I have tried to do is I have a hundred-point exercise in terms of how I allocate my time. 40% is devoted to the boards I serve on and the responsibilities that come with those duties. 30% is coaching and growing the next generation of talent. And the other 30% is philanthropic and giving back and building capability in regions that I think others may not be focused on. And so, when I think about what I try to do, I allot at least a third of my time to paying it forward.

And that is to coaching, either mentors and startups, mentoring a startup, being a sounding board to a friend, thinking about how I help the next generation of CEOs or meeting with students. And I try very hard to make sure that we're focused on the things they're wrestling with and try to help them think through that through inquiry, which is what Bill used to do.

Bill very seldom gave you an answer. Bill would answer a question with a question. And he would force you to go deep and introspective. And that's what I hopefully try to carry forward quite frankly, in his honor, because he did create so many other people and all of us have one aspiration to be one 10th of man, that Bill Campbell was.

CHRIS: Well, I'm sure it'd be obviously proud of what you've done with your career and Intuit, where he sat as the chair, but probably more proud with what you're doing in your philanthropic efforts. So, thank you for that.

BRAD: Thank you.

CHRIS: Look, we want to be... we don't want to take too much of your a hundred point scale here, so thank you for the time. Awesome discussion. And again, thanks for the work you continue to do on behalf of me and my neighbors.

BRAD: Stan and Chris, it was a privilege, and I have to thank you. I have to thank you for your service, both to the country, but also what you continue to do because all of us who follow you and your leadership techniques, we're getting better every day. You make all of us better versions of ourselves. So thank you, both.

STAN: Brad. Thanks for all you do. Take care.

BRAD: Thank you, Stan. Take care.

CHRIS: Not surprisingly great, great discussion with Brad who we've known for years. He's, he's exceptionally humble. Like every young, I think especially professional services organization knows, where they, where they started. Right. And then Brad was one of those unicorn leaders who understood the transferability of the whole Team of Teams model. And, so I, you know, we learned as much from him as, as went the other way, but, uh, it's been a great to stay close with him and just remained friends over the years. Just a really exceptional leader.

STAN: We the advantage too, of seeing him at one of the critical moments of his leadership. It's one thing to read a book about it or to hear about it later, but we saw him change Intuit to a different focus of the company and do it exactly the way described by bringing in the brains of the entire organization, unlocking that potential, and he made it sound easy. He did talk about the challenges, but, but that's a, that's a heavy lift.

CHRIS: Yeah. And he has a just, no, you're not, I've had the unique position to observe so many leaders and he's one, that's hard, he's hard to typecast because he does a lot of things really well. But he does have the... I, I remember being from the Navy when I started getting a little more senior and working in more joint headquarters, so working a lot with Army, then basically feeling like you're in the Army. One of the pieces of advice you get is always be wary of the Southern drawl general that says I'm not the smartest guy in the room because it means he's about to blow you up.

Right. So, because he's way smarter than you are. Brad has that sort of, he absolutely remains grounded as we talked about and where it comes from, but he has that sort of welcoming personality that I saw him leverage really effectively as a leader to make others feel comfortable, sharing their insights, feeling like they were part of a team, because while he's a, you know, living legend now in the, in Silicon Valley, he doesn't carry himself like that from this, from his tone, to just who he is as a person. And I think he's a really effective leadership approach that he takes.

STAN: I just remember, you know, we finished the interaction with him and, and we went in to tell him that we think we had a very positive impact here, and we think it probably made you \$10 or \$15 million and he started laughing. And he said it's more, more like a \$100 or \$150 million.

And we tried to renegotiate the contract, but he was, he wasn't having any of that, but it was his perception to know what moves the needle in an organization that I think is, is really impressive.

CHRIS: I've tried to renegotiate that many times in the last 10 years just never works.

STAN: You know, I wonder something also, Chris, he mentioned somebody I think we should talk about. And that was Bill Campbell. And I got really one opportunity to spend an evening with Bill Campbell and the bar that he owned. And he was magnetic in a humble, short of a way. And here's a guy who was a football coach who comes out to the West Coast and becomes the most respected leadership guru in an entire ecosystem. And Brad describes him, and then you talked about Brad's role. How do we find mentors? How do we grow them?

CHRIS: Yeah, it's similar. I spent maybe, you know, a couple of hours with, with Bill Campbell. But you can, he had that sort of chemistry and approach, uh, in working with people for those that aren't familiar with them, if you didn't work in, in the tech space, maybe a new name to you, *The Trillion Dollar Coach*, you should, you should be on your reading list, because it's insight into that space of mentorship.

You know, the, I personally think, it's a, it's an important area that isn't talked about enough in, like MBA programs, for example, I don't think you take a class on mentorship. So, we sort of leave it out there that it's going to happen organically, which for those of us that are lucky, it does. For some, I know they can go a long time in their career before, before they have that right mentor. I always encourage folks that are two years into their professional career. You know, who are you mentoring? And I think some younger folks think that, well, no one is, you're a mentor you're 48 years old and you should be mentoring others, not me. I know you, you, you have friends in college who you're, you're an order of magnitude deeper into the professional space and they understand, so you should always have two or three people that you're working with underneath you.

And I think at starting at a young age, you know, the military kind of forces this, but when you start thinking like that at a young age, you are better positioned to understand how to seek mentorship. Because you understand you can't just call someone and say, what should I do with my life? Right. Well, that's a long conversation, right? So how do I start to introduce who I am,

what I'm thinking about, so that you're better positioned to give me feedback, ask me questions that are relevant to who I am. And so I think personally, the number one thing that people can do to effectively seek mentors is to start mentoring themselves as early as they can in their, in their professional career.

STAN: I think that's a way also we should think about evaluating some of our subordinates. If, if you go across your organization and ask the question, who do you go to for advice? Maybe not just an answer to a question for leadership advice. I think you'll find some unlikely names will suddenly be triangulated between a lot of people and those natural leaders that sometimes operate below the radar level that are so important to the long-term development of your other leaders, and you should try to reward that. You should try to position them and value them like you need to.

CHRIS: Yeah, it's um, it's interesting timing because of a friend of mine who has actually works out in, in the technology space in San Francisco, just sent me this article that was sort of making the rounds in, in their world. And it was a commentary on the show that I've only seen once on a flight, but it's getting popular, *Ted Lasso*. It's about this. The premise... is it's a comedy in American football coach who goes over to coach a soccer team in the, in the UK, which is like this hyper competitive space, obviously the coaches there get brutalized, but he does well, I think. And it's, but he's got this sort of goofy people-connectedness sort of personality.

And so, it's making the rounds now in an interesting way in the leadership space out in that environment, Silicon Valley, to say, look, here's a person that doesn't understand the game, but understands people. And I think some of what Brad was saying, and some of what we saw in Bill Campbell was, you know, Brad was saying, I don't, I don't know how that technology is gonna work. You figure that out, but I believe in you as a person, I believe that you have the right idea somewhere inside of your team. And here's how it's going to map into, into what we need to do in the market. So, I think the timing is right for more of that conversation to start, start bubbling up.

STAN: Yeah. It was funny. He talked about in what you invest in. Last night, I had a veteran who we both know, served with us in the counter-terrorist forces and he has started a company a couple of years ago and he's got this great technology to make the interaction between police and people who are stopped by police, less friction-filled and less likely to result in violence.

And it's all try to help and you know, I agreed to invest in his company last night without him asking. And I'm not a venture capitalist that can move the needle on companies. But I can't judge... I can judge his idea. I can't judge his technology, but I can judge him as a person. And so, I didn't have a single second thought or doubt about investing in somebody that I know has the passion and the values that, that I think are important.

CHRIS: Yeah. I think that's probably a wise investment knowing, knowing the person you're talking about. You know, the other area that we spend time on there, and Brad was going to a pretty deep level is, is, you know, his efforts here, back in, in West Virginia, his home state. We can talk a bit about that, the specifics of that, but you've been through that as well.

So, I'm curious your view on, and I tell all my senior friends, they get out of the military. Like you're gonna, you're gonna have way more opportunity than you think. So, be thoughtful about, you know, if you do your hundred point exercise, Brad's very disciplined in that, you are as well. Be thoughtful about where you're going to start applying your energy.

How do you, what struck you about his, his commentary there on really diving back into such a hard problem at a point where, honestly, Brad could be doing whatever he wants with his life.

STAN: You know, courage. And I love it because to be honest, Brad could donate enough money to get his name put on an art gallery or a building. And he would say, okay, I checked the block with philanthropy and helping, but what he's really doing is he's understanding the problem. He's understanding that you've got to get this careful balance between bringing outside talent, new ideas, but nurturing the talent that's there building the, the long-term infrastructure.

I think it is ambitious. I think it is courageous. And I think it's essential and people who've solved hard problems before are the kinds of people who are best suited to help solve hard problems again. And so, I'm heartened, and I think he should be held up as an, as an example to all of us that we shouldn't get a by just when we finish our major task in life, we ought to try to touch something that, that takes a lot.

CHRIS: Yeah. And it, you know, it's, it's really interesting for someone, that he and his wife both right, their seniority and all they've done and the hard work they put in. And Brad and I, we've spoken about this a little bit offline, you know, when you go into that sort of space or in the military, you say, I'll, I'll take on that task force role or whatever it is, when you go into those challenging environments, you know, going in, this is going to upset people.

No matter what, somebody is going to hate me for something by day three. Right? Because as soon as you see the complexity of the problem, you start pulling one lever, it disrupts another one, and so there's a, there's an eyes wide open approach that you have to appreciate with someone like Brad and Alys.

No. This is just the right thing to do. And we're going to get beaten up in the press about something inevitably, but we believe in the mission so deeply, where no, one's gonna, no, one's going to yell at you for your name on a museum, right? That's easy. It looks cool, but you're really not putting yourself into the arena.

STAN: Exactly. And, you know, he has none of the arrogance. Sometimes we, we used to see in the military and government, somebody would be successful somewhere else, like a business person would come into the Pentagon and I am going to fix government because I've succeeded in business X or a military person retires and was successful and is going to go fix business or go fix schools in the city.

And it's all context. You go into these very different environments and the ability to shut up and listen, to learn, to understand what is a certain way for a good reason, but also to be willing to

take on hard problems where hard things that maybe need to change, do change. And there's a maturity and a focus that that has to be there for that to work.

CHRIS: Couldn't agree anymore. So excited for his future, he and Alys both, but they're what they're looking at doing for West Virginia and their career moving forward together as a team. Awesome discussion. And we look forward to next time here on *No Turning Back*.

Thanks.