JAKE: And for the, maybe the first time in your life, think, what do I care about? Where do I want to have impact? Then you give that money away and you get this, you get this dopamine hit, right? There's a real chemical interaction in your brain, cause you feel good. And feeling good is addictive. I mean, we know that, right.

And so perhaps in that moment, you're inspired to be more thoughtful and deliberate about your own giving, free and clear of what your employers are giving you. And you've, you've, you've found something that motivates and inspires you to do good in the world. And you begin doing it.

CHRIS: Welcome to No Turning Back. a McChrystal Group podcast hosted by General Stan McChrystal and me Chris Fussell. Our goal here is simple to have serious conversations with serious leaders so we can learn from the best and navigate these complex times together. Thanks for joining us. Over the next several weeks, Stan and I will be embarking on a new miniseries called Slow is Smooth, Smooth is Fast.

This title comes from a concept in Special Operations where operators move more methodically and slowly to in the end, make fewer mistakes. I learned early on in the SEAL teams that the adrenaline and push during moments of crisis can create an unnecessary level of speed leading to unnecessary errors and ultimately costing critical time.

In this series, we're excited to hear how industry leaders are managing their pace, as COVID-19 continues to challenge operations. We're curious to hear how they are tackling unpredictability, being intentional in their leadership, and adapting to crisis as they unfold.

ANNA: This week, Stan speaks to Jake Wood, the founder and CEO of Groundswell. Jake's career began in the military, he was a Marine and upon leaving the military founded Team Rubicon, an organization that position veterans to help in disaster response. Most recently, Jake founded Groundswell, a nonprofit that aims to change charitable giving. As a part of the Slow is Smooth, Smooth is Fast mini-series of No Turning Back,

Stan spoke to Jake about intentional decision making. How Jake successfully grew and led Team Rubicon and had tremendous impact how he intentionally made career pivots and his current work at Groundswell and its efforts to disrupt corporate giving.

Overall, Stan spoke to Jake about how he thinks about evolving while remaining focused and competitive as the world changes around him. Jake is a fascinating thought leader and guest. We hope our discussion here is thought provoking and enjoyable. Thanks to Jake and his team for making the time, now over to Stan.

STAN: So, Jake, welcome to *No Turning Back* and thanks for joining us today.

JAKE: Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for having me on Stan. Good to see you again.

STAN: We really wanted to have you on, because I've known you for a number of years now, and we are in the middle of a series called “Slow is Smooth, Smooth is Fast.” And the idea is to

have people who have looked at things that, from the outside, can seem extraordinarily difficult to do, and yet they approach them with great intention. And they have great success in that, in that outcome.

And I'm going to start with a contradiction. When I think of a Marine, a ground pounder, I don't think of slow is smooth, smooth as fast. I think a forehead pounded on the door to open it and charging forward. And yet your work with Team Rubicon, and now with Groundswell, sort of contradicts that. So, where did that come from? Where did this intentionality come in, Jake?

JAKE: Yeah, no, it's actually a… you are correct. As a former infantryman, I don't think slow is smooth, smooth as fast, or any level of patience and intentionality, was, was the tactic of the day.

I kind of grew up in, you know, in the Marine Corps infantry. It's kind of the, the old violence of action principle, but it's funny, I first heard the phrase slow is smooth, smooth is fast when I went through sniper school. It’s a, you know, a phrase that's often recited, you know, particularly on the gun lines.

And, you know, I was, I was a decent shooter and, and as we were doing, you know, UKD range is unknown distance ranges, which there's an element of speed in target acquisition. Re-engagement too, that you would consistently hear the instructors talking about that slow down your breathing, practice, the fundamentals, your, your, your bolt manipulation and all of that.

But where it really hit home for me was on the stalk lanes. So, you know, one of the hardest parts or hardest phases of sniper school is the stalking phase. You know, where you have to, uh, you know, camouflage yourself up and stalk in from, you know, a thousand yards away in, towards, a couple of human targets, undetected and, and fire, a couple of rounds. And I failed my first two stalks. Okay. So, you know, you get 10 graded stalks, you have to have an 80% score in the aggregate by the time you get through.

And I failed my first. And it just wasn't clicking for me. And I couldn't quite understand what it was. And then I just, I just really began to understand this concept of slowing down and by slowing down, by being more deliberate and diligence in the decisions and the charting, the path that you're going to make through that stalk lane, understanding how the sun was moving over the course of four hours and your shadows were going to change and calculating that, it really began to click.

What’s interesting is when I first became an entrepreneur shortly after the Marine Corps, I actually reverted back to the infantrymen mentality. It was a pure brute force effort, you know, not quite literally kicking down doors, but as we were responding to these disasters with Team Rubicon, you know, blowing into these towns, doing all the work that we could little coordination, little in the way of, of, of process or operational planning. We are doing good work, but it, it wasn't sustainable. And it was never as much work as we knew we could do. And then we started to slow down and we started to slow down so that we could move fast.

Now, what did that mean in our context? Well, you know, in the actual, you know, disaster response context, it meant doing the appropriate coordination with local authorities. It meant

putting in place standard operating procedures, specifically in our case, the incident command system, and in many people, as we were making those decisions and implementing those things, you know, throwing their hands in the air. They were talking about how we were going to become the bureaucratic agencies that we loathed.

And I tried to convince them that, Hey, this process is what's going to actually allow us to move faster, and that proved true. And so now that I'm an entrepreneur again, Stan, you know, it's funny because I'm trying to strike that balance between, you know, slowing down and putting the necessary systems and process in place for our product and engineering teams while maintaining this, this door kicker mentality of like at sometimes you just need to get it done. And so it's just, it's, it's going to be a fun conversation for us to have.

STAN: Well, well, that's, what's so interesting because Team Rubicon, when we first met, the thing that I had heard about Team Rubicon was quality. And not energy, not enthusiasm, not anything, I heard that it was quality. And so maybe the word would be, would be maturity.

And so, take me back to the very early days of Team Rubicon, because what was the reason for founding it?

JAKE: Yeah. You know, Team Rubicon was founded by accident. So I, I always wanted to be an entrepreneur. I thought I would, I would join a startup when I got out of the Marine Corps, but I got out of the Marine Corps in late 2009, so the Great Recession was, you know, full force, and the job market was terrible. And again, I just got back from two tours. I was a sniper. It's not like I was going to drive up to San Francisco, and convinced Twitter to hire me because I had all these great skills. It wasn’t in the cards at the time.

STAN: Well, if you took your rifle, you probably could have.

JAKE: I could have convinced them the consequences of not hiring me, but so I decided I was gonna go to business school, take some time, wait for the economy to get on the upswing and, and, and learn some, some, you know, real transferable skills.

And then I got a rejection letter from Stanford in January 2010, and about a week after I got that rejection letter, the Haiti earthquake happened. And so, you know, again, just shortly after having come back from these deployments, I felt compelled to go. And so, along with a handful of other Marines, we organized a team of doctors and veterans to go down to Port-au-Prince.

We got there about four days after the earthquake, and really, for the three weeks we were down there, all we did was applied really the counter-insurgency principles that we'd learned in Iraq and Afghanistan to help these people. So small unit leadership, operational planning, risk identification, and mitigation, even down to a TCCC, you know, cause we were facing wounds, you know, we were treating people with these triaged clinics, crushed wounds, amputated limbs. I mean everything short of a gunshot wound. And by the way, we even saw some of those down there cause of gang violence. And so, it really started to click for us that all of these, call them soft skills, call them what you will, that we gained from our time in the military were applicable in a disaster zone. And we didn't really know anything about responding to disasters. Frankly,

we're lucky that none of us died while we were down there. I mean, you know, we, we, we thought so highly of what we did while we were there and I can look back on it now and I'm like, oh my God. I mean, we're just, we're just lucky that we made it.

But we came back with this idea that we would build the best disaster response organization in the world while operating on the simple premise that we would tap into the best human capital available, which were these men and women coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan. And, you know, fast forward now, 12 years, the organization scaled to 150,000 volunteers, we've responded to over a thousand disasters and crises along the way.

And, you know, if you really boil down what we do, and you'll appreciate this for the topic of the show, we take people that have often never met one another. We send them to a community that they've never been to, in the aftermath of a catastrophe, with all of the associated elements, limited resources, limited information, sometimes misinformation and disinformation, you know, all of the, the, the, the friction natural and in an environment like that, and we put in front of them, these, these really serious objectives, you know, life, limb, property, and the restoration of those things.

In a thousand times over the last decade, we've done that with the highest degree of, you know, the highest fidelity of outcomes. And so, it's actually been like this really interesting laboratory and leadership and crisis management. But really what we've relied on are the fundamentals of what we learned in the military.

STAN: I think that's right. Let's go back even further before you and me. And let's go back to the founding of the Marine Corps. I think it was in a tavern, right?

JAKE: As only it could be.

STAN: Okay. But if you think of what the Marine Corps has created, we think of the halls of Montezuma, that sort of thing, you know, the shores of Tripoli, but in reality, it's created a culture. I once went to a Marine Corps basic training graduation, and they had been through the cycle of training and parents were invited, and the young Marines who had just were now formally becoming Marines, they were out on a hillside and it was extraordinarily moving. And in a relatively short amount of time, these young people had been transformed into something. So, so when you talk about creating something like a Marine Corps, talk about the pieces and then connect it to Team Rubicon.

JAKE: Yeah. Well, I, you know, I, I do credit so much of what we were able to accomplish with what I learned in the Marine Corps. I was very fortunate to have been a part of the Marine Corps because I, you know, I define culture as that thing that guides decisions in the absence of orders. And that's so critical on the battlefield to unlocking speed and flexibility and resilience in the face of changing circumstances and hardship, same thing in the disaster zone, you know, when you can't get explicitly be telling people what to do, what decisions to make, how to even frame those decisions. It's your culture that's going to consistently guide them to the right ones. Not always but consistently, but it wasn't just the Marine Corps, like my indoctrination into what culture could unlock in organizations actually began at the University of Wisconsin where I

played football. So, I played football for a Hall of Fame football coach, Barry Alvarez, played on the offensive line. And you know, the interesting thing about Wisconsin is it consistently has one of the lowest ratings for its recruiting class, year over year, amongst the power five conferences, it doesn't compete well in recruiting, but it's a consistently top 15 program.

And the differential between its annual recruiting rankings and its actual performance on the football field is often one of the highest differentials in major colleges. And the difference is culture, right? And Barry Alvarez would always tell us, he's like, you guys wanted to go to Ohio State. You wanted to go to Michigan. They didn't recruit you because you're not good enough. We're going to whoop their ass this week on Saturday. And here's why we're going out to execute them. We're going out attitude. And we're going to control the things that we can control. We're going to focus on what we do best and we're going to, we're going to punch them in the mouth. And it was just, it was culture, culture, culture.

So, then I recognized this pattern when I got to the Marine Corps. And then when we started Team Rubicon, We were so, so, conscious of the culture that we wanted to create, again, going back to this, how do we trust a volunteer, sending them halfway around the world to make decisions that are also often life and death, and that could instantly discredit the entire organization early in our infancy when we couldn't weather that type of, you know, adverse incident, you know, it was going to be culture.

So, we were very conscious of it. What are the elements of it, you asked? You know, I think there's some simple things, right? It, it starts with principled leadership. You know, you, if you want to have a culture, that's based on, you know, high value, high ethics, it's got to start at the top and people expect to see those principles day in and day out. You can't afford to lose, can't afford to miss a step. I mean, it's vision, you know, it's, this is all kind of Leadership 101, but if you think about culture as what guides decisions in the absence of orders, you can't do that if they don't know where they're going. What are you trying to accomplish? It's that commander's intent.

And you know, from there it's, it's really interesting, because you can build culture with people early, you can be highly selective in the types of people that you bring in. They can reflect the values that you want to see, but you can't scale that way. So eventually you have to institutionalize this. You actually have to take that, that culture out of the people, and embody it in the organization itself, almost kind of dismember it from the people and incorporate it into like this, this myth of the organization.

And then you gotta, you gotta really understand what your values are. And when people ask me, like, what are the difference between those, those principles at the top and those values? The way I think about it is, you know, principles are universal human norms. It doesn't matter where you're born, people value things like trust, respect, integrity, you know, with almost limited exception. And we've been in the places where there are those exceptions, unfortunately, but values are how those things uniquely manifest in your organization. So, trust is going to mean something different at a bank than in the Marine Corps. Respect is going to mean something different in the McChrystal Group versus, you know, a local elementary school. And so, understanding how those things live and breathe in your organization is really important.

And we're mostly just get it wrong after that, is that they build all the organizational dynamics in a way that contradict those values. So they'll say one thing, they'll say they value something. They'll say that their employees are like family, but then they don't offer a paid family leave. Right. Because it's going to cut costs, but you know, that that contradiction erodes the power that values have to guide those decisions because they instantly see them as discredited.

And then the fun part happens after that. So, the fun part there is then how do you scale that? How do you institutionalize that? And this is where the Marine Corps is just really, really good. It's those stories in those ceremonies and those artifacts that again, like take all of that and they, they embody it in something else. For Team Rubicon, that took a couple of different forms, similar to the Marine Corps. We made our uniform. Right. So that gray shirt that has become synonymous with, with our volunteers, not only does that physical item, the actual shirt that they wear become like an artifact that they hold value in.

We call our volunteers "gray shirts." We give them that same name and that's, that's akin to being called a Marine or a soldier for them. It's a, it's a part of their identity. We, we recognize these moments. You know, I think that's one of the things that the military does so well, are these ceremonies.

They, they, they take the time to pause and, you know, give out those awards or those "atta boys" or, you know, those moments that just have so much power. And then really the last thing that I think they do so well as the storytelling, right? You mentioned the halls of Montezuma, the shores of Tripoli, you know, the, the, the Army has their legendary battles in moments throughout time.

The way I frame this for people is when I was at the school of infantry, you know, and they were teaching us tactics, they would teach us, you know, what, what the SOP is to a close ambush. You know, they get up on a whiteboard and they would like draw some X's and O's and you know, this happens, you do this, here's the SOP. And that would take like three minutes and then they'd spend 30 minutes talking about the most famous close ambushes of Vietnam or World War II or Korea. Because they knew that they were talking to a bunch of dumb Marines in the moment that like one of us experienced a close sandwich on the battlefield.

We weren't going to remember the X's and O's maybe if we were lucky, but we were going to remember the stories. And in that moment, the stories we're going to guide our, our actions because we were never… I'll put it this way. We were always going to live up to the Marines that came before us. We were going to embody the spirit of John Babylon from Guadalcanal and we, you know, and we were never going to let the Marine Corps down. It was those stories that would guide the decisions and actions. I think the Army does that well, the Marine Corps does well, the best organizations tell stories.

STAN: Oh, I couldn't agree more. You formed Team Rubicon. So, the question is, did you form it to do disaster relief? Did you form it to give veterans something to do? If, if there was. A first objective, which was it?

JAKE: Yeah, man. It's that was a, that was a journey for the first three or four years. So when we formed, we were an international crisis response group and, and we were using veterans and then tragedy struck about a year later, my sniper partner, who was also an early Teaam Rubicon volunteer and heavily involved early. His name was Clay Hunt. A lot of people know his name. He ended up committing suicide in Houston, Texas in early 2011. And you know, this, what was true of Clay was that he'd been diagnosed with PTSD. What I think really drove him to take his own life was a lack of purpose and direction and, and like the lacking pride in itself, PTSD, you know, that exacerbated his PTSD or his PTSD exacerbated that - I'm not sure which one is which, but I think his PTSD was manageable. I think his lack of purpose was not.

And so, in the aftermath of that, we really started to see, and we, we we'd already begun suspecting this, but that Team Rubicon was providing those very things to veterans. And I think that his death was so emotional for the entire organization, but particularly for me, I was the best man out of his wedding, that became a fuel for what we were doing. And we, for a period of time, began to reframe what we were doing as we were using disaster response to serve veterans. Now, a couple of years later, we realized that that was wrong. That that was not, that was not in fact what the purpose of the organization was.

And there's a couple of reasons why we ended up at that. Some of them were, were at risk and safety. You know, you can't treat disaster response as a hobby. It has got to be, you know, the objective… it'd be like calling the military a jobs training program. Like, no, no, no, it's a war fighting institution that also results in jobs. But you know, we've settled on this fundamental belief that veterans were not the object of our mission. They were the agent of it. And I think too many organizations in the aftermath of 9/11 have framed veterans as, as victims or as have need of charity.

And some of them certainly do. I'm friends with many veterans who need a real hand up and, and have really struggled. I think most veterans just need to be challenged. And if I were, you know, I'll, I'll, I'll give myself the opportunity to get on a soapbox for a second. I think that there's this really critical moment that we're approaching for this generation of veterans where there's two narratives that are battling, right: the broken veteran narrative or the empowered veteran narrative. And in ultimately, I think that writ large, this generation of veterans will become whatever that prevailing narrative is. So, if we tell them that they're broken, they're going to act broken. They're going to think of themselves as broken. And eventually that will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

But if we can win on this narrative of, Hey, yeah, you saw some shit and you came back and, and you might be hurting. You might need some help, but ultimately, you're a stronger person, and hey, our country needs you, and they're going to need you in the long run. Then listen, they're going to rise to the challenge because that's what they do. And so, I just think that that's a really powerful framing for me to think about how I view the world.

STAN: Yeah. I think that's very important. And you and your generation going to be key. I came of age just as Vietnam was ending and my father and brother fought there. And there was a, an idea that the Vietnam veterans were not treated well or fairly. And that was absolutely true. But then we came after the first years after 9/11 and every military member was a hero. And you, and

I know that that was an exaggeration, right. And now after Afghanistan is, is gone to where it's going or has gone, there's this frustration that maybe veterans did a lot that was in vain.

And I think we're going to have to get somewhere in the center that says, you know, we're not the first- generation, and we won't be the last, right. We did what we were asked, and we don't need to be exalted for it. It was our responsibility. And so, I think you've captured that.

JAKE: Well, I, I think you're, I think you're right. I don't want to boil it down into too simple of terms by saying we just had a job to do, and we did it, but at the end of the day, I think your framing of the first generation of young men or women to go off to war, and we're not the, we're not the first to come home. We should learn lessons from, from, you know, past generations that have come back, we should consistently seek to improve, but we should also look at what they did when they came home and, you know, World War II generation came back and built the greatest economy in the history of the world. And what are we going to do? We, we own our history still being written. So, what are we going to write?

STAN: You know, I think you embodied the idea of responsibility and so Groundswell in my view, in fact is a way to recognize what as individuals and as organizations, we can do about our responsibility to help others. So, describe Groundswell. When you took me through it, I was incredibly impressed with it. And so I think it can do an awful lot. So, so describe it for us.

JAKE: Yeah. I, you know, I guess to, to set the stage for it. So obviously I ran Team Rubicon for a little over a decade. And in that time, I raised almost $300 million for charity. And a, and I shouldn't say I like, you know, I was the CEO, but obviously I had a great team around me and, and couldn't have done it without the, the, the, the impact that was being generated by our volunteers. But we raised that from a combination of companies and foundations and billionaire family offices, and tens of thousands of individual mom and pop donors across the country.

So I saw all the aspects of philanthropy, what worked in it, and what didn't work. And a couple of things stuck out to me. One: companies always say that they donate money out of the goodness of their corporate heart and that they want nothing in return. And frankly, they're all lying and that's okay. I mean, they're saying the right thing, but they, they all have to get something in return.

Now, you know, that might be good will. It might be a little bit of brand recognition. It might get some, you know, some heat off their backs, you know, whatever it might be. It might be to inspire their employees. More often than not, they were hoping to inspire their employees often though, the decisions that were being made by the executives on how they would do that philanthropy or where they would send it, it just didn't inspire their employee base because their employees were diverse and had, you know, unique things that they cared about.

The other thing that always really chapped me, you know, we'd have, you know, we had 10 or 15 billionaires that would donate to us and they had advisors and consultants and foundations that would inform their giving and, and that's great. These are very generous people and they're very smart people and, and we could not have done what we do without them, but you know, these

moms and pops are given a more meaningful share of their income, but without any of the tools or tax advantages.

And I just didn't feel like that was right. And so, so using that as a, as a basis, you know, when I decided that I wanted to be an entrepreneur again, I was at first hesitant. Cause I didn't know if I'd ever come up with an idea that could have as much impact as Team Rubicon, but quickly settled on this idea of how do we democratize philanthropy?

How do we make the tools that are available for the ultra-rich accessible to the average person? And how do we allow companies who have so much capital to make a difference in the world and are finally realizing that they have to do more than generate stakeholder value or shareholder value? How do we, how do we create a platform that does that?

So we're, you know, Groundswell is building a basic and an application that will allow users to have the power of a personal foundation in the palm of their hand. You know, we believe, you know, we've kind of say that we think everybody should be able to give, like Gates, get recognized, like Rockefeller and get taxed, like Warren Buffet. And we're, we're building, we're building that. It's like the Robinhood. You know what Robinhood did to Charles Schwab and Fidelity will do to philanthropy. But I I've been in the space for a long time. I've seen a lot of charitable technology platforms come and go. And that the highway of innovation is littered with their skeletons and it's because they didn't know how to get to scale.

And so, what we quickly realized was we could disrupt corporate philanthropy through the same platform. So, what we're doing is we're packaging this as a corporate benefit, we're going to companies and we're saying you should de-centralize your corporate finance. Give the power of that corporate philanthropy to your employees, give each of them their own personal foundation, put money in those accounts as a, as almost a component of their compensation.

So, if you pay somebody $100,000 a year and they've got a $20,000 bonus, give them a thousand dollars a year into a foundation that they control, that they can send to whatever charity matters most to them. And so, by decentralizing that philanthropy one they're empowering employees. They are providing real, meaningful financial benefits to those employees because more people donate to charity every year then contribute to a 401k. So, this actually will reach more people with financial impact, than they, than they already are in a company gets to learn real valuable insights about what their people care about.

I mean, as a leader, Stan, you know this, you know, if you don't know what makes your people tick, it's harder to lead and inspire and motivate them. So if, if, if you are. The last two years have been crazy, right? You know, this and leaders are expected to speak and act on every social issue. It's really hard to do that. And it's often a losing proposition. Like there's just no way to win, but you can win more frequently if you know what your people care about. If you have a roadmap for the values of your people as seen in what they're financially supporting, that's a powerful tool, a leading indicator that helps you navigate those moments.

So, we think it's a huge opportunity. We're trying to build an entire category. I'm quickly realizing that I'm unqualified to be a FinTech CEO, but fortunately I learned.

STAN: Do you think, Jake, that this is going to also create a habit in people who may not have been donors before when they, they get that first experience of, of giving?

JAKE: Yeah, we certainly think so. So, the whole aim of the way we're building the product is to make it habitual. You know, if, if, if you are forced to save for retirement, by contributing to an IRA where you kind of have to control your contributions into that, it's much different than if you have access to a 401k and you can just run a payroll deduction.

So, if you make this habitual, then, then people are going to do it. So, we're designing the product in that way, but, but also, we're encouraging employers again to just give money to their people, to give away so now someone who has never given to charity is told by their employer, "Hey, we just put a thousand dollars in your Groundswell account. Go give it away."

You kind of have to be a real jerk, not to log in and give that money away. It's free money to a good cause. So, what's that doing it forces you to go in there for the, maybe the first time in your life? Think what do I care about? Where do I want to have impact? And then you give that money away and you hit this, you get this dopamine. Right. There's a real chemical interaction in your brain because you feel good and feeling good is addictive. I mean, we know that, right. And so perhaps in that moment, you're inspired to be more thoughtful and deliberate about your own giving free and clear of what your employers are giving you. And you've, you've, you've found something that motivates and inspires you to do good in the world, and you begin doing it.

STAN: Jake, I'm a, a CEO of a company. So, I'm an employer. How do I get some kind of reassurance that causes that employees can give to are all things that, you know, ought to receive some kind of support?

CHRIS: Yeah, it's, it's, it's a, it's an interesting question, Stan. So, one of the philosophically, one of the approaches we're taking is that Groundswell is an investment in the diversity of your people. And what's going to be interesting for companies is what, let me first answer your question very directly. We'll do all of the vetting and compliance checks on the non-profits. So what we're going to use, big data, we're building a proprietary data set. We're scrubbing it of organizations that are on the Southern Poverty Law Center's hate groups list and, you know, things like that.

So, these will all be legitimate charities, not engaging in terrorism or hate, or, you know, things like that. But there's still a, there's still gonna be one and a half million non-profits on there. And some of them, aren't just, they're just not going to align with the CEO's values. So now you have to answer this fundamental question. I pay this person a paycheck every single week or every two weeks. And, and they're spending that money however they want. They might spend that money on cigarettes. They might spend that money, you know, putting it in the donation plate at, at their church. But you can't tell them where to spend their money. What you're saying by implementing something like Groundswell is, "Hey, I'm Stan. I'm the CEO. And I have issues that I care about. I care about the environment, and I care about volunteerism." You can make the choice that all of the McChrystal Group's money goes to that, but you know that your people may not care about those things.

So what you're saying is, “Hey, you know, we've got 200 employees and if one of them wants to give to an organization that might make me a little uncomfortable, I value and respect my people and I'm willing to invest in what they do.” It's gonna be a bridge too far for some folks. Right. But what we're really trying to push is just this philosophical belief that if you're building the right team, one, they should align more or less to your values, at least kind of at the basic level of, of what you value. Maybe not the issues, but the values. So, you shouldn't be too nervous, but to get comfortable being uncomfortable, we live in a new world. You got to figure out how to, how to embrace what your people surely care about, the diverse perspectives that they have.

STAN: Yeah. Now I'm going to make you uncomfortable because we're going to talk about career intentionality and Jake, you and I have been talking for a long time. I think it's great that you're an entrepreneur. I actually wanted you to, to run for high office. How do you think about intentionality in your life, writ large, not Groundswell specifically, but what is Jake Wood's role in society? You know, you're a husband, a parent, you're a, you're an entrepreneur, you're all of those things, but how should somebody think about where do I fit?

JAKE: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I, I, I kind of fell into this space that I'm in. I never thought I'd be a social entrepreneur. Right. I wanted to be an entrepreneur. I was either going to go work for some Silicon Valley startup, or I was going to end up an investment banker at Goldman Sachs. And I know a lot of investment bankers at Goldman Sachs and thank God, you know, I didn't do that as much as I love all my friends there, I just, it's not the life for me. But social impact was never, was never part of the course, not deliberately. I just never, never thought of it. But here I am and, and I've, I've been fortunate enough to discover just how much impact I can have through, through entrepreneurship. And it's not just, you were running a charity or building a platform that raises money for charity.

You know, I try to be, I try to have impact even in just how I run my business. I try to offer the best value possible benefits that I can. I'll give you an example, Stan. Team Rubicon at the end of last year, you know, inflation's at all-time highs. It's, you know, if you're, if you're, if you're at the median income level in this US or below, it's a real material impact to your take home pay and your purchasing power and across the board. You've seen all these executives, even with bumper profits, offering the most minuscule of Cola adjustments to, to worker pay. We're a nonprofit. We have to raise our budget every single year. We had a razor thin positive net income in 2021.

At the end of the last year, we decided to give every single employee at Team Rubicon a seven and a half percent pay. Because it was the right thing to do. It was a tough business decision and it's going to make this year of really hard for us, but you know what, there's a right way and a wrong way to, to, to treat people. So, you know, I hope that there's, in addition to the organization impact, you know, that we can create or the products we can build. I hope that we can have impact just in how we think about running a country, and how we treat employees. Cause I think that what we're seeing now in this Great Resignation, Great Reset, Great Reframing, there's all these different words for it is that there's, there's emerging a new contract between employer and employee, and you'll have a lot of hardcore capitalists that lament that,

but I think it's a good correction. I think we have to find a way to make our economy more inclusive.

And so, I guess maybe I'm dancing around your question, but I just think there's so many ways to, to, to generate change in positivity. And I'm hoping I'm doing that through a ripple effect beyond the products that we're building, the teams that we're deploying. And, and I don't know what the next campaign for me will be. I mean, I hope we take this company public in five or six years and, you know, we'll have the liberty to make some choices, but we'll see what happens.

STAN: Yeah. I actually think you were doing exactly what you should do. You're thinking about things that make a difference. You're doing them in ways that you're going to be proud of. And as we talk, it's the journey, not the destination.

JAKE: Absolutely.

STAN: And so it's the people leave along the way.

JAKE: Yeah, absolutely.

STAN: Jake, you are a great American and a good friend. Thank you so much for your time today. Yes, it was a great conversation.

JAKE: Thanks for having me.