LISA: Find ways to get feedback. You have to receive feedback. Well, you have to encourage feedback. You have to surround yourself with feedback because otherwise it's hard to change. Most important moment of listening is the listening. When someone's telling you something, that's hard for them to say to you, but that you need to hear.

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: This week, Stan and Chris speak to Lisa Gevelber, the Chief Marketing Officer, Americas Region at Google, and Vice President of Grow with Google. Lisa has had a fascinating career. A student of Psychology, Lisa started her career at Proctor and Gamble, working at a variety of companies (some start-ups) before moving to Google in 2010.

She occupied the role of Chief Marketing Officer of the Americas Region and found great success, but didn't stop there - expanding her focus to be the Founder and Vice President of Grow with Google, which aims to drive economic opportunity for all citizens.

Stan and Chris speak with Lisa about the challenges of technology equality, how she is building trusted networks with community partners to promote economic opportunity, and about Lisa's personal decision to focus her career and build a team for a cause she believes in. As we've become more connected to technology during the COVID crisis, Lisa gives us much to think about - in how the entire world can benefit from the opportunities technology provides. Thanks to Lisa and her team for taking the time. Now, to the discussion.

STAN: Well, Lisa, thanks again for joining us. *No Turning Back* is a special experience for us, but today it's particularly special. We've been excited to have you on because you've got a background that's pretty unique. You are, I'm going to call it the yin and the yang of technology expertise there, and then people what it really does with people.

And I'll be honest with you, if I had ever been Chief Marketing Officer the America's for Google, I would have spiked the football, gone home, and never touched anything again. But you didn’t, and now you're doing your VP of Grow with Google. So, I'm going to start by asking you what is Grow with Google?

LISA: Yeah, so Stan and Chris, thank you so much for having me on the podcast. It's a total treat for me. So Grow with Google is Google's commitment to making sure that the opportunities that are created by technology are truly available to everyone. And I think the most important thing we are doing is focusing on creating economic opportunity for everyone. And we're doing that by taking a really big ambitious look at how do we ensure that the two thirds of Americans, which is 80 million American workers without a college degree, have just as good a shot at great jobs as those with a degree. And that hasn't been the case in our country until now.

So our Grow with Google career certificates, for example, are they're all about bringing the whole ecosystem together. Let's work with employers and change the way they think about their hiring. Let's work with higher ed and make sure that the students who are graduating are actually employable by giving them these skills for in-demand jobs. Let's work with local governments and community nonprofits, and make sure that these underserved communities are really giving people a chance to get into these good jobs by providing this Google training and this entire ecosystem of support and we're moving the needle and it's really incredible to watch when everybody bands together around this, you know, higher purpose of ensuring that we remove the barriers to good jobs for all Americans, right. Really, truly make an inclusive and equitable job market. Great things happen for lots of people and, and we're seeing it start to work. So, it's been an amazing journey and we're really just at the beginning.

STAN: Lisa, I'm fascinated by this. I, when I was young, I remember hearing this story that, "God made man and Sam Colt made them equal when he created the six gun. And then technology came, and at first, we thought this would be a great equalizer because everybody had it, but it's not that simple. In fact, it's much harder. Can you tease out a few of the obstacles that may not be obvious to people?

LISA: Yeah. I mean, I think there's… so technology equalizes a lot of things, for sure. Everyone, you know, can access now information about everything from their health conditions to how to get their homework done. But we got to make sure that everybody truly has access, and I think that's one of the most important things, and I know there's a lot of action happening in our country and in countries around the world to try to really improve that. You know, even in, in India, we started a program a few years ago called Internet Saathi, and we sent women out into the villages of India to teach people about the internet and show them how to access it.

And when you give a woman access to information, you help create a healer for the village. And so, this is really something we've been working on for years. And we, we trained tens of millions of women in villages in India. And so, I think there's still a lot of work to be done even here in our own country to make sure everyone has access. But I think once people have access to the beauty of the access to free information is incredible. Right. People change the quality of their lives. Like I said, health education, just being, you know, an informed citizen. All of those things become so much more possible when people have access to information.

CHRIS: Lisa, building on that a little bit, as you know, we split our time, my wife and I and our kids between our home in West Virginia in the Southern part of the state, which is very rural, and then obviously our office in the DC region. And so I've seen that from the other side spending a lot of time in that part of the state and in those places like that around the country that that really do have, you know, you can get a great access and then a mile the last mile, when you get into a more rural part of a community, there's just nothing, nothing there. What… through that lens, what gives you hope right now around? I mean, there's a lot of talk about. Infrastructure dollars, those programs. How, how do you see that lining up with all the work you're trying to do? And where do you see promising news?

LISA: Yeah, boy, am I optimistic that some of that stuff will get done. I really think it does matter to people. 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. We even announced recently a very cool career readiness program for the formerly incarcerated and we're super excited about making sure that everyone can access enough of these basic skills and also just start to get prepared to get a good job. And I think, you know, it takes both things: access, plus a little bit of training goes a long way in terms of helping you have the skills you need for today's jobs.

CHRIS: We've talked about this a bit in the past, but there's, there's so many parallels between the world that I grew up in and Stan spent years leading us…of trying to figure out how to have positive impact in these really complex spaces and the, the, one of the misunderstood or less, less understood aspects of that is, is identifying and forming true trust-based relationships with local partners that can do things that you can't. And nor would you want to, right. Because that community access and relationships that goes back generations many times.

Where have you found success at the partner level to be able to enter into those spaces and, and develop some levels of trust?

LISA: Yeah, it's so important. Actually, I, you know, I spend most of my days, these days actually talking to community partners. The other day I was on a call where an entire state kind of came together and we had the workforce development board on the call. We had the community college system director. We had the high school system and career and technical high school folks on the call. We had the employer group, like the chamber of commerce was on the call. And that's where I have the most hope, right? Like. I have seen so many times since the COVID crisis hit, entire communities coming together. You know, a lot of them rural communities, but even the states who are just saying, “Hey, you know what? When, when the COVID crisis goes away, we still need our people to have, you know, high quality skills to get high quality jobs.”

And it's so much fun that Google is helping kind of work with all of these groups. You know, we already had over 8,000 partners around the country and now we're seeing, like I said, all these partners starting to work together. And I think that's where the magic happens. Right. When the employers are talking to the education system and the workforce board and the technology companies like us step up and we all come together. I think that is absolutely where we're going to see the biggest strides made.

CHRIS: Can you talk a bit more about that? Because I do think the last 14 months has accelerated people's understanding of the criticality of connectedness and technology. What are some of the major takeaways do you think that will come from this? As far as the… perhaps state leadership, community leadership, understanding that this is not a nice-to-have, right? This is an essential. aAre there different types of conversations happening now than there were 18 months ago?

LISA: Oh my God. I think for sure. I hear it every day in the conversations that we're having. This whole idea that none of us is enough to do it alone, to make this difference alone. And I guess at some community seem to be better than others, but yeah we're trying to help catalyze. We're bringing people together. If you invite me to talk to the community college system, I want the workforce boards to come along. You know, what, what we want is to change the way employers think about hiring, and we want the educational systems to teach people the things they need to know for the jobs. I mean, as you see today in the metrics like the job fields that we teach in the Google Career certificate program, there's 1.3 million open jobs right now, but just from people train for them. And these are like in demand, like high growing, high paying jobs.

So, we just need everyone to come to the table because the employers need it. They can't get their growth. They can't, you know, achieve their goals. I think, I think it was Pricewaterhouse has a study that says something like 45% of CEOs say one of the biggest problems is you can't achieve their growth if they don't, if they can't find people who have the skills they need for the jobs, right. It's something that CEOs are worrying about over here, but, you know, the educational system is still figuring out how to teach it over there. And we're trying to help, and I'm super encouraged by some folks in educational system who are really stepping up. You know, we have a bunch of four year colleges who have said, let us build some of these career certificate programs into a four-year institution, which is pretty unheard of to take an industry recognized credential and, you know, bring it in.

And I think what they're realizing is that even for their graduates, having some of these core skills that they're learning to be… one of my favorites is the data analytics certificate we teach, right? Burning Glass just produced a study, and it says if you graduate today with a psychology degree, which is what I graduated with, you're going to make $39,000 a year on average. That's not a lot of money. You graduated with a Psychology Degree and you take a data analytics certificate on average, you're gonna make $60,000 a year, and you're gonna have access to hundreds of thousands of additional jobs, right? So I think it's pretty straightforward that's that some of these educational institutions are thinking, well, this is good for our students. Right. And it's good for us as a university. We can give credit for people taking these industry credentials.

And at the same time, our graduates will be more prepared, and make more money and get better jobs and better lives for their families if they do some of these industry recognized career certificate programs. And we have, you know, a bunch of schools who are doing this, we have, you know, Northeastern is doing it. We're about to announce another very big four-year institution, SUNY's doing it. Just a lot of people are talking to us about how can they do it. And even a lot of high schools are saying, "Hey, we want our kids to graduate already with some potential college credits." Cause a lot of people are giving college credits for our career

certificates and we want them to be employable. Because if two thirds of Americans aren't going to go to college and they need to get the skills they need for getting a good job while they're still in high school, and so we have the whole school systems reaching out to try to figure out how can they incorporate it.

And I think that's a very exciting time. Like these things are hard to change. Right? Talk about the education system and how employers hire and what are the prospects for, you know, the 80 million Americans without a college degree. Well, we need to change what those prospects are and it takes the whole system.

STAN: I think we could start by going back and looking at Franklin Roosevelt's rural electrification program, because what he did was, by putting electricity around the country, not just for washing machines, but for radios, suddenly the president could communicate with people who've never got to hear the president's force or the ideas that were important at the time.

Now there's a dark side to information technology because we've seen misinformation and we've seen that. But this morning I was on a on event with Jeff Sonnenfeld, the School of Management at Yale runs, and he gets about 250 CEOs on, and in a two-hour period, this group shares ideas that has focused conversations they could never do if they had to fly off to somewhere and do it. They can do it quickly. They can be honest. They're visual as well as voice. And it's almost the epitome of both efficiency and effectiveness. Now, if every person in America, not just CEOs, realize they didn't have to have the right answer to a problem. All they have to do is be connected to a network that has the right answer somewhere, suddenly we unlock so much.

So how do we make, because you're a psychology student, how do we make people feel like they're part of a network? How do we pull people into that kind of a community?

LISA: Hmm. It's such an interesting question. I think, certainly as you said, there's been so many moments now where I personally have reconnected with my family members far away through the, during the COVID crisis in ways that I never would have. You know, my family was getting together on Zoom, or on Google Meet and just being together is so special. We've celebrated every birthday, every special occasion, in ways that you know, we wouldn't have gotten on a plane to celebrate a birthday. And it's, it's kinda cute. My brother invented this thing that we do at birthdays in my family now called “An Appreciation Circle.” Um, which sounds like some, you know, team building, like, you know, corporate speak thing. But it's a really beautiful thing when you're with your whole family and it's your birthday, and everyone goes around and talks about the things they appreciate about you. And you realize just how special that moment is. And like I said, nobody was flying in for anyone's birthday in the past, right, but when we're at, we're all on video together, you have these, you know, moments of connection.

And I know it's true for me and for many of my friends, a lot of us are better connected with our friends over the past year, friends who live far away, then we, you know, we had. We, we all stopped being too busy and we all started really thinking about what mattered to us in life and, and these connections are what matter. Right? And so, thank goodness that technology is helping us reconnect with all these people, but it's on us to do that. The technology doesn't do it, right.

It's on all of us to step up and say, “Gosh, I deeply miss my connection to this person.I want to reinvest.”

CHRIS: I want to go back maybe to where Stan opened up, Lisa, and, and your decision to diving more into your sort of view on leadership here, your decision to pivot over into a different space inside of Google, can you talk a little bit about that decision? What was driving you because you had this range of options, you know, I'm sure, but you took a very mission driven, piece of the puzzle there.

And then I'd love to get into your leadership view on that, but can you talk a little bit about that, that pivot?

LISA: Sure. You know, I, I've been so lucky in my career to have so many great opportunities and, you know, learn from so many people and I think, when, when I was working in my, in my prior job, and this opportunity came to really think about how could Google, you know, make a disproportionate impact on the world in terms of helping create economic opportunity, you know, I had sleepless nights thinking about how do we do that? Like what an amazing thing. Someone's asking me to figure out, like, how does Google help create economic opportunity in the world?

Like that is a once in a lifetime thing. And I was doing it on nights and weekends while I was doing my other day job. And there was a moment when I asked myself, “I love my job. I love my team. I had actually had that team for almost nine years. And I couldn't imagine parting with them, but I said to myself, when I look back on life, like what would my personal legacy be? What would I want it to be?”

And the idea of bringing the immense impact of a company like Google to a problem that I personally cared deeply about, was so compelling. You know, I put myself through college, my dad was the first in his family to go to college. I never took, you know, my education or my opportunities in life for granted. And the idea that, you know, you could bring the resources of a Google to the table around economic opportunity, was something that I thought was so compelling to me personally, and just met my values. But I let go a pretty darn good job and a team that I love deeply to kind of go and pursue it.

And then I had to rebuild, right. We built the whole program, the whole Grow with Google program from scratch, from the bottom up. So, you know, we started from nothing, and the idea was how do we make the most impact to the most people in a way that really only a Google could do? And you know, then I had to find kindred spirits on that vision.

And I started finding the people who were also sleepless when they thought about the opportunity and got excited and compelled by it. And then, you know, we built the team one person at a time.

CHRIS: So those are all, I mean, we could spend a lot of time diving into this, what you did to make that happen. One of the consistent… like probably regular pieces of advice that I'll give to

young professionals is having the great ideas [is] not that big of a deal. Plenty of people have the great idea that doesn't, it doesn't go anywhere. Right? It's the execution. It's, you know, pretty common understand as you get more senior in your career, but that most people don't go from having that team they've been with for years and just things are on a great heading, to having to rebuild and convince people that this is worth executing.

So any key lessons on how, how you went about that? What sort of narrative did you have to share with others to make them understand - this is not just a good idea, we can actually have a real impact here?

LISA: Well, we're pretty data-driven place. I think, it even started with, having people understand some pretty basic data about our country that people didn't know, or at least a lot of people didn't know. Like when I told people around me that two thirds of Americans don't get a four-year college degree, two were very surprised because the people in their immediate universe - many of them had degrees. Right, and I think it's a good example of really understanding that the small world that we live our lives in every day, isn't exactly what it's like out and even in our own country.

And you know, that, I think really understanding that the barriers are completely different for people without degrees. And so, we brought kind of a lot of that data to the table, and then we just had to compel people that we could actually change that. Right. So, yeah, that's all fine and good. The world, you know, talent is everywhere and opportunity is not yet.

So, then the question is what are we going to do to change that? And the vision was always that we could not do this alone. When you have a big, crazy ambitious idea, I mean, I don't know of any that anyone's ever done alone. Right. And we were going to need to kind of catalyze an ecosystem. And so we started kind of with, with one experiment, one career certificate idea, which was, could we teach people IT support, without college degrees and get them into that field, because it's in demand. There's lots of jobs in it. That field is growing and COVID has made it grow even faster, and it pays well.

And we had done an experiment in our own company where we had brought in a small group, working with a local nonprofit of folks without degrees, and then placed them at Google and these IT support jobs. And the question was, could you go big on it? Could you, you know, make it substantial and bring it out to the world. And could you get employers to go along. So, we started one-by-one building and employer consortium of people who said, they valued the teacher… that, sorry, we built an employer-like consortium of people who said they valued the skills that we were teaching, that this was exactly what they would need for their own it support professional recruitment.

So, one at a time we started adding, you know, employers and then, you know, we put it out in an easily accessible way. Cause it was meant for working adults, people who couldn't sit in a classroom, you know, Monday, Wednesday, Friday at one o'clock, right. Needed to be for everyone. So, we put it up on the Coursera platform and then we, you know, invest in seeing how it would go and we've graduated over 50,000 people in the first two years, just in IT support.

And when we started to see it taking off and we saw incredible outcomes for those peoples. We said, you know what? We can do a lot more of this. There's other there's other in-demand jobs where we have expertise as Google, we can teach people. And to now we have, you know, for career certificates that we offer and there's 1.3 million open jobs in the U S right now, just in those four areas.

So, and now we have 150 employers who are hiring graduates. We have, we have several employers who've committed to hiring hundreds or thousands of these graduates. And so, now we're really doubling down and make sure that everyone can access these things. They're all online. They're easy to access. And for folks who need a little extra support in some of the underserved communities, we partner with local nonprofits and those nonprofits provide extra coaching. They provide an extra like cohort-based environment and they also help with job placement, which is really important. Right? So even if you have the skills doesn't mean you know how to talk about the skills, right. So that's been really key.

STAN: That's great. Lisa, I'm sure that when you entered college, you got the opportunity to do that. You started centering studying psychology. You had a detailed blueprint for how you were going to become Chief of Marketing for Google and the Americas. And then with Grow with Google. But on the off-chance that you didn't, for the next generation, talk to those people in school now, maybe in high school or college, give them a sense of what your journey was like, where you made big decisions, where you might do it differently now, if you did it over, that sort of thing.

LISA: Sure. I said earlier, I've been so lucky in my career. Just all the way through, I had no idea what I would ever want to do with my life. And I certainly didn't see myself in the business world. I can say that. But I had an opportunity early in my career to go to Proctor and Gamble and I took it, and I think so many of the things that have gotten me to where I am today were fundamentally the result of people who invested in me at Proctor and Gamble.

And, I'm not even sure it's still this way, but when I worked there, it was a hundred percent promote from within, which meant that every future leader in the company had to be groomed by the company. You weren't going to go outside and grab some senior vice president of something from over here and bring them in. Like we had to build our own leaders. And I think that brought a lot of energy to developing your people. And because you couldn't build the leadership or the core marketing skills, unless you built it yourself. And they took it really seriously. And, you know, I, I tell my team all the time right now, like I learned to write a Proctor and Gamble. I didn't learn to write in high school or college. I learned to write a Proctor and Gamble because we were making, you know, multi-billion dollar decisions on one, 8.5 by 11 piece of paper. And that's what it was. It wasn't a 50-page deck, right. It was a piece of paper.

And that was a very painful process for me. I am not a naturally gifted writer. And what I learned was, I learned to clarify my thinking because a lot of writing and making a compelling 8.5 by 11 memo is about being clear on your thoughts. And so, I learned to think, I learned to write, and I can tell you that part wasn't very fun. Like having your stuff torn up over and over and over

again by your boss like literally in red ink. That's not the joyous moment. That is not the, “Oh, look at me. I learned all this stuff in college.” That is the, Oh dear. Goodness. I have no idea how to communicate what I need to say here. I need some help.”

And I got a lot of help. And that, that helped serve me well in my entire career. So I would say, go somewhere early in your career where you're going to get someone who's going to invest in you and get some really foundational skills that are gonna serve you.

You know, later in my career, I went to two startups and startups are super fun and, you know, they have an awful lot to offer. But when I get asked, I tell people, don't start your career at a startup. Like every everyone's too busy, nobody's focused on you. And you're less likely to have someone who's really going to teach you the skills that you're going to need for the whole, you know, rest of your life. I think, you know, getting some foundations under you early in your career is really critical.

And then I think, I tell people understand what you're good at because all of us have gifts and they're all different. And we all can do the most positive impact in the world when we lean on our strengths. Right. I'm one of those people, I just believe. Like you invest in your strengths, you don't invest in cleaning up all your weaknesses. And I think when you're young in your career, you don't really even know what you're good at. Because it comes easily to you. So, you just assume kind of, everyone's good at this. You don't understand that it's a unique strength of yours. And so I think, I encourage folks to think about like, what's fun for you?

Like, cause I think often where we're having fun, it's when we're playing to our strengths and you can use that as a tool to understand what you're good at and then you can lean into those strengths to, you know, make bigger impact.

CHRIS: Lisa, when was the first time that you recognize you were becoming a leader or felt the pressure of leadership. I know in the military that often sneaks up on people, especially in the special operations units where you it's such a tight-knit tribe. And then suddenly one day you feel a little more distant because you're actually having to lead this 20-person, whatever size element. And that can be a hard transition for folks. Are there, are there stairsteps in your career that, that you felt that pressure and, and made the turn?

LISA: I realized it probably later than I should have. I think it's easy to mistake kind of management of projects and people, with leadership. And I think, I guess one of my realizations when I was daunted with a larger team than I had, you know, had to work with before was, you kind of have to lead yourself first. Like you got to figure out what you are about. What, what are your values? What do you stand for? How do you want to show up in the world and how do you help others be their best selves?

And I think it doesn't start with them. It starts with you. And I think it, it probably took me longer than it should have to realize that. And then I think you need to cut yourself a little slack, because at least in my experience, leadership is one step forward, two steps back. Like, you starting to get going and it's okay, and then you realize you messed it up. And you have to think,

why did I mess that up? What would I do differently? And how can I continue to get feedback as a leader?

I think that's something that's, especially in corporate America, it's hard to get feedback from people underneath you, right? But you can only become a great leader if you're getting feedback. Like the, that whole 10,000 hours thing, right. Malcolm Gladwell kind of made it a common belief about how you get good at something if and you spend a lot of time.

But it turns out that the guy who actually did that study is a guy named Anders Ericsson. Yes, I'm a psychology major. And, Anders Ericsson says it ain't about the 10,000 hours. It's about 10,000 hours with focused feedback. Because you can practice all you want for 10,000 hours, but if you weren't getting feedback, you're not going to get any better.

And I think the thing that's especially hard about leadership, is you have to find ways to get feedback. You have to receive feedback well. You have to encourage feedback. You have to surround yourself with feedback because otherwise it's hard to change. And so, I think that's one of the key things that we all, we all realize. We can't just keep doing what we're doing. We can't just keep practicing, right. And I think that that's one of the challenges. I think it's just tough.

CHRIS: Any specific tactics you've learned there over the years? First, the way you describe the evolution, I think is, I would agree with whole heartedly. Stan and I teach a leadership seminar, together outside of McChrystal group. And one of the things that we always emphasize to our students, who are some undergrad and grad students, is you're not going to have the answers to leadership at the end of this semester. Right? You're going to have a framework in your head that you can start building upon.

And one of the things we try to leave with students is you have to constantly be thinking to yourself, what are my foundational beliefs? What's my left and right limits? So that when you're in a moment of pressure, and your ability to think rationally, you don't have the time. you're going to naturally fall inside of those boundaries and you'll look back and say, okay, I did basically, you know, fall within my framework, or I didn't and why did I fail.

And that's the other important takeaway is you're going throughout your leadership career. You're going to fail a lot more than you… micro failures all day long. Right? And you wake up every day and say, well, I'm going to fix that one, that one or that one. And by the time you're more senior, you've developed a capability set that doesn't come without a little bit of pain.

But on the feedback loop, any specifics as you've gotten more senior that you, you know, I asked these sorts of questions. I set this sort of tone. One of the common, pretty well -nown facts about the military is, the After-Action Review, the hotwash. And there's lots of different ways to do that, but you, something gets executed, the team sits around and, and one of the standard ways that good teams will do that as you start with the youngest person in the room, the most junior person, and you make them speak first.

The question is: what did we do wrong? What should we have done better? Not how did it go? And that sort of builds because if you start from top down, obviously it squashes the younger folks' willingness to, to speak out loud. So I'm curious how you approach that with your, with your teams.

LISA: Yeah. I wished we had After-Action Reviews, in the corporate world. I think, culturally that'd be a pretty, a pretty good thing. You know, I think the most important thing, which sounds silly, is when you get feedback, you receive it really well, so that people want to give it to you. I think that, a lot of, ensuring that you can get feedback, it's all about how you take it when it's given to you, whether it's invited or not.

And I think that's like a big, a big part of it. Whether you agree with it or you disagree with it, you need to hear it. You need to understand it and think about what part of it do you own and what do you understand about where it's coming from and what you could do differently? And that's hard. It's hard in the moment because your mind goes to, what about this? Or what about that? And you have to just not, right. I mean, I think it's the most important moment of listening is the listening when someone's telling you something that's hard for them to say to you, but that you need to hear.

STAN: Yeah, it's a great way to put it. You know, I've been married 44 years and I will tell you the best thing about my wife is she will tell me in a heartbeat if she thinks I'm out of step. And it hurts, sometimes it, you know, even after 44 years, you just sort of blow up occasionally. But the reality, if she whispered in my ear and said, "No, you're smart. You're right," et cetera. I would be off the rails most of the time, if not all the time.

What I'm going to ask you is how do you, and this is the final question, because this is for people struggling with leadership. How do you under great responsibility with great hopes for the goals you're doing, keep yourself sort of centered in on the rails? What are the tricks you use in your personal life to, to cap balance and, and still be energetic and whatnot?

LISA: I'm not sure I do always keep myself on the rails. Let's see. I guess the thing I'm trying to do is remind myself what matters most. You know, if you can, take a step back the heat of the day-in and day-out and remind yourself what matters most at home, and then what matters most at work? What are you really solving for? You can get through a lot of crazy day-to-day shenanigans, and not get distracted by it and help your team not get distracted by it.

I think there's a, there's a rudder to really understanding your values and what you think is most important at any moment in time. On top of that, I try to keep focusing on it as hard as it is.

CHRIS: Do you think this year, I can speak personally, I think for, for a lot of us, has helped to bring that back into focus, because it's just been a wake-up call of the unpredictability of the world we live in and, you know, extended amounts of time with, with immediate family or loved ones. I think for a lot of us have helped, sort of re-baseline that tiering of priorities. It's coming into clearer focus for a lot of us.

LISA: Yeah, for sure. I think for, for me, I have two teenage daughters and, and, you know, the silver lining, if there was one in the COVID crisis was they ended up spending a lot more time with me than they, than they would have otherwise. So a gift for me. I don't know. I'm sure that's not exactly how they view it, but I've definitely valued it. We've had, you know, dinner together night after night after night and, you know, pre-COVID with school and extracurriculars and all that other stuff, you know, that was, that was a more rare occasion.

STAN: Chris said something at the beginning of COVID that, and we've known each other for two decades, been to war together. But at the beginning of COVID, he said, we're all going to measure our lives by what happened before COVID-19 what happened after, and then how we conducted ourselves during it. And I thought that was a really good reminder to us and people and leaders.

CHRIS: With a 12 year old, a 10 year old, I'm confident than when they're 27 and 25, they'll appreciate it this time we spent together. I'm not so sure right now.

Well Lisa, this has been a great discussion. I really appreciate your, your time and insights. And, you know, that the impact that your focus has had, I mean, what Google is doing and what your team is doing, we'll just continue to accelerate hopefully. I think it is, there's a whole other question here around the role and our position in the world, right? And you and I've had this discussion. There's a national security question. There's an economic question. That's so important. And we're going to have to start continue to bring these things together. So, I personally appreciate, especially living in rural West Virginia, a good majority of the year, really appreciate the work you and your team are bringing to the country and brought more broadly.

LISA: Yeah, I can say it's such an honor to do this work.

STAN: Lisa, thank you so much.

LISA: Thank you guys. Take care.

CHRIS: Thanks Lisa. Talk to you soon.

LISA: Bye.

CHRIS: So, Lisa, obviously just a, a really interesting… non-intuitive decisions as a leader. Like to your point of opening it, I mean, easily could have just spiked the ball and said, "All right, I did it." And she goes down, not just this non-obvious path of a really mission-driven path, but also a really hard one.

Right to, to go and say, "Now I've got to build the team. And I got to take on this idea that every, no one would disagree with, but I got to find the zealots that are really gonna to her point lose, sleep over it."

So that, I mean, I've known Lisa for years and so know her, her character and her focus as a leader. So, it's not, it's not surprising when you know someone like that, but it is from the outside, it's impressive when you see a leader willing to, to make those sorts of choices.

STAN: Yeah, I find that fascinating because we tend to meet people after they've accomplished an awful lot, and they've really sort of matured into themselves. And yet Lisa took us on an interesting journey, you know, psychology degree. Then she gets that formative experience of Proctor and Gamble. And, you know, it would have been easy to stay in the bureaucratic machine of a big corporation. And I'm sure she had been very successful, but she went to two startups, then she ends up at Google, which would be a challenging environment simply because it's such a new space and so much energy, and then she steps away from a job that had to have been extraordinary rewarding, and she does something completely different. There's no clear connection at the beginning with what she was doing back in college except she told me once she had worked in some inner city schools in Chicago so she got the idea of, of contributing.

But the lesson I take away from this: is well-planned lives aren't necessary. Well or carefully thinking people probably are, because they, they move opportunistically to good things.

CHRIS: It's, it's a great point. And I, you know, we mentioned with Lisa, when we teach the leadership seminar together, one of the points we try to make the students that I think is, worth considering, is we have this students of history, most great leaders I know are. And so, they're reading about Lincoln and about King, about other great leaders throughout history, but even great historians. It's hard to write the full picture, right? So, they tell the they did this and then this, and then this and this happened. And so, we remember this, well, that must have been deliberate, but you have to step back and remember that they wouldn't have described it like that.

They were like, “Well, then this opportunity came up. It just seemed like the right thing to do amongst 10 decisions.” And so, it's, we always, as we always tell our students, we, we like to remember the, the leader, the statue version of the leader. Like, of course they were going to make a tribute to that person because they were so brilliant in their, in their career path, but very few of them are. Most of them are just, they have a foundation set of principles and they're going to follow those, come what may. And of course, the great ones we, we write books about and study.

STAN: Lisa said something that also resonated with me. She talked about knowing who you are, identifying what your values are. I remember at West Point when I was young, they taught us values and they were epitomized in the term, “Duty, Honor, Country.” And I sort of, at the moment said, “I got it. All right. I understand.” And one of my instructors says, “No, you don't, and you're not going to understand this for many years. We're planting ideas that are going to grow inside you. And then at some point they're going to interact with who you are as a person. And hopefully they will allow you to understand who you are and what your values are.” And I do think it takes a bit of that planting early, plus a journey, before suddenly you start to really get it. And she seemed to, to embody that. Does that resonate with you?

CHRIS: It does. And you know, it can sound trite. If I was talking to my 23-year-old self, I would say, "You're being sort of silly about this," but it's so true that, and we explored it a little bit with Lisa, but if you look back and in your own career, I know for me personally, the most, if I list the most important five decisions I've ever made, you're making them faster than you can think about them.

Right. Cause they're just, they're critical. The pressure's high and it's that foundation, those seeds that were put in your head 15, 20 years prior by other great leaders and by if you've studied and establish your own foundation. And then you get through it and things calm down and you look back and you realize, okay, I stayed, I stayed inside of walls, and built on a moral foundation that I didn't have time to consider in the moment. So, I do think it's a really important one.

You know, another thing that jumps out and move with leaders like Lisa is, I know you and I, both friends and fans of David Brooks and his work, in his book on character, one of the things that stuck with me was, he, you know, he does case studies on some, some non-obvious leaders that some might not even be familiar with and one of the through lines that he describes is these are people who took on problems that couldn't be solved in a lifetime.

And you know, someone like Lisa is doing that. She's not going to solve this herself, but she is, she is moving the ball constantly. Right. And this is cause that's a multi-generational issue that she's tackling. Where if you stay in something like marketing and you have end of year numbers and you can say, I did it and I'm going to get off the bus. It's just interesting when you see leaders and, you know, you're tackling something that you won't, you won't solve in your lifetime, but you can advance it.

STAN: Yeah, it's an interesting idea because you and I also have talked to our students often about what do you want people to say at your funeral? And do you want them to say she was a great CEO? He was a great General or a great SEAL. That's really not what you want to hear. What you want to hear is Chris was a great person. He was a, a trusted friend. He was a good example. And in the moment when you're younger, as you look for grabbing the brass ring or other sort of finite accomplishments, Lisa made an interesting choice to go from the chief marketing job to something that was completely different and probably a bit risky.

And as you say, she'll never finish the job. And so, it's an interesting choice, but I think it's the one, not to talk about her funeral, but when they talk about, you know, things she accomplishes, it will be this kind of thread.

CHRIS: Yeah. And I mean, she, she mentioned it, you know, I don't, I don't think there's, I think it's a good way for people to frame up their own personal exercise on… she talked about her legacy. Like what, what is it that I would want people to talk about? And some of that I think is it's tied to, you know, releasing a little bit of the competitive ego that is in all driven people.

You have to hit a point where you say, and I think someone like Lisa has done that, to say, I am, I am not, I am doing this for reasons bigger than myself and not to show my grad school friends

or my peers in the business that I can, I can get the next promotion before they can. Which takes a long time to come to terms with.

STAN: Yeah, let me summarize this with wisdom from the movie, *The Outlaw Josey Wales*. And you can find the meaning of life in every Clint Eastwood movie, but particularly that one. And in a moment, he is the outlaw, Clint Eastwood, is burying a friend of his, who he didn't know well, but had been killed. And the only words he says over him, “I rode with him and I got no complaints.”

And I think any of us would be happy to have something like that said about us.

CHRIS: Couldn't agree more and if it makes you feel better, I quoted Josie Wells just yesterday.

STAN: Perfect.

CHRIS: Well, great discussion with Lisa. And thanks everyone for listening in.