

CHRIS: I think you're going to enjoy today's discussion that Stan and I have with a friend of ours, Paul Fipps. Paul's a fascinating leader. He started his early life as an infantry soldier in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne years ago. And then he leveraged that experience and the GI bill, went back to school, got his degree, and then went into the corporate space. And he's just accelerated over the last many years and spent the last seven years at Under Armour – where, amongst other things, was their Chief Experience Officer.

That's where Stan and I first met Paul and got to know him and have stayed in touch over the years. He is one of those really unique and discipline leaders, so stay tuned in this episode for the way that he walks through his leadership model, how he communicates his vision with teams, how he structures his view on communicating and coordinating what he's trying to accomplish strategically.

Not surprising given his background in the military and the exceptional milestones he's hit throughout his career. There's a very structured view on that and a lot to learn from a leader like Paul Fipps. So over to the discussion.

Paul, thanks from Stan and myself, for taking the time to join us. We've all known each other for years and we've watched your career navigate through different areas that we'll talk about today. But really looking forward to hearing from you, learning about the breadth of your experiences and, again, just thanks to you and your team for making this happen.

So, Stan, over you.

STAN: Chris, thanks. And Paul, I echo Chris's excitement. You know, since we've known you, you've had a variety of responsibilities, but one of them culminated in the job, Chief Experience Officer. And we grabbed onto that word “experience.” And I want to ask you this in two ways: the first is talk about your experience. Talk about from being a young man, just coming into the workforce and sort of what you got there. And then I'm going to ask you, so what does that Chief Experience Officer do and why is that important? Because that's a relatively new term.

PAUL: Sure. Yeah, it's a great question. And first of all, I just want to say, it's an honor to be here with both of you guys. You know, we have known each other for a while and what you, Stan, and you, Chris had done for our country, and I would say subsequent companies globally just can't be overstated. So, thanks for having me on this great show.

As you guys know, I started my career in the military as a very young man.

STAN: Not just the military. The Army.

PAUL: Great, great call. And I actually the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, specifically.

STAN: Remember we have a Navy guy here and we're trying to kind of correct.

PAUL: Very important point, yeah. That's a great point. So, started my career in the Army, as a young soldier in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. And was actually an M60 machine gunner, which I'm really proud of in 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 504, which I know Stan that, you know, you've had a lot of close history with the 82<sup>nd</sup> and, in those units.

But you know, early on in my career, I got to see what I would call, I always tell people, I got to see what great leadership looked like, and I got to see what poor leadership looked like. And, you know, I myself made plenty of leadership mistakes, and I think the military is a great breeding ground for learning about leadership and responsibility and you know, and growth.

And so, you know, I served two and a half years on active duty. And when I got out, I felt like I was a little bit behind, you know, my friends were graduating college, my girlfriend then, my wife now, was graduating college. And so, you know, I wanted to take the experience that I had learned to leadership and start applying it to business.

But I also want to go back to school. So, I attended the University of Baltimore here in Maryland actually, and went through school and I studied... my undergrad was actually Information Systems. And what was great about the military was, you know, it paid for all of my school, you know, post-graduation, I was also serving in the 29th Infantry Division in the Maryland National Guard while I was going back to school.

So, just a great culmination of, I think of leadership experience, but also global experience, you know, in the military, I got to travel, meet people, and it formed a real impression on me early in my life, around the benefit of understanding other cultures, understanding other people across the globe, and also understanding the power of diversity, and particularly diversity in teams.

And that really helped shape my perspective, you know, early on in my life. So, once I finished school... I went to work while I was in school for a couple of software companies. I would say you would call them startups today, you know, 10 to 50 people, you know, building some really cool technology that was, you know, focused on different industries. And then they ultimately got gobbled up by a lot of the large players that you would note in today's marketplace.

I then landed at a very unique company in the wine and spirits business in sales and distribution across North America. And that business was great because it was growing very fast, which gave me a lot of opportunity to apply both the leadership skills I had learned, but also the technology skills I had gained through school and some other experiences. And that helped me really make an impact on that company. You know, we grew that company when I started, we were, you know, about 900 million in revenue. And when I left in 2013, so, you know, most 16 years later we were six and a half billion in revenue. And so, we grew that business rapidly over those 16 years. And I got to play a huge part in that. I think, early on, I was recognized for, you know, leadership skills and an ability to really scale across and collaborate heavily with my teammates in different functions.

And so, one of the things I learned in that experience was actually taking on, I would call it the non-obvious roles, you know, the roles that many people would say, "I don't think that, you

know, tracks to my career.” And I would take those roles on, I think, because they were very challenging, but actually helped build a lot of the skills. So that was a huge part of my experience coming up through my career.

That then led to, you know, building great relationships and a very strong network. And one of my best mentors was actually on the board of directors for Under Armour. And he recommended that I go talk to the founder and CEO at the time, Kevin Plank... I was able to land a really terrific role at Under Armour in 2014, a big leadership role. And Under Armour at that time was growing very rapidly. And so, you know, having come from a growth company and being able to apply a lot of the technology learnings, a lot of leadership skills and a lot of operational skills I had built, you know, gave me a chance to come into Under Armour and help facilitate a lot of that growth from a global standpoint.

So, I got to travel all over the world, create capacity for our brand to actually deliver to the customer and then that evolved over a seven-year history to the role that you talked about, you know, Stan, that was the culminating role of the Chief Experience Officer.

And from a Chief Experience Officer standpoint, you know, for us, what that meant was we saw, you know, kind of through the digital lens, we saw companies needing to compete on experience. And I think that's very true today where, you know, when you think about experience, it's what memory do you want to leave your customer with?

And for us that meant, you know, can we create epic experiences? And I think as a brand, we were doing a lot of work at that time around how do we actually organize our products and services? Bring them together and then create kind of this intelligence engine to understand our customer very deeply and become a customer centric organization and then organize those products and services so that we could serve that customer and meet them where they are?

You know, for example, we built a very large platform on what we call “enormous connected shoe,” where we actually embedded a chip in a running shoe, connected it to Map My Run. And so, and then really created a great experience over about a four or five-year period where we would actually coach you, using machine learning, into a better running form.

Now, the reason we solve that problem for our customers, it came from the insights of our connected fitness business and through data, we were able to say, “This is a real problem.” And you think, “Well, people know how to run. We're all human beings,” but the reality is what kept coming up, recurring theme through the data and the engagement with the customer was, “How do I run better?”

So today, if you buy a pair of Under Armour connected shoes, you pair it up with Map My Run, we will coach you in real time, leveraging machine learning and artificial intelligence. And so that brought together services with a product and meeting people where they are on their consumer journey. So that's when we went just overarchingly, when we talk about experience, that's kind of what we mean.

STAN: That's fantastic. And when I think about a leader, as you are, I think the journey matters for our listeners. You started as a machine gun or the M60 machine gun was called the "pig." As you remember, it's about 23 and a half pounds at fire 7.62 millimeter rounds, 650 a minute, but really the memorable experience is parachuting with it.

As you know, you're with a thousand of your best friends in the air and a number of aircraft, you're jammed with a T-10 parachute on, you've got a rucksack, you've got this M60 machine gun and a weapons container, and there is no way that you don't all go into the ground. There's no art to it. But I would argue that your experience, seeing things down where it's heavy and it's hot and it's dangerous, and it's difficult, gives you a sense of, "What does the customer need when they get a problem?" When they come to ServiceNow, or they come to another one of your firms and the people who work for you.

PAUL: Yeah, I think it's a great point. You know, if I match back that experience, and we could tell a lot of stories about making some real mistakes there, jumping out of the plane with that machine gun, and certainly as the assistant gunner as well. I think... what the frontline experience taught me as a leader and, you know, and I've been fortunate enough now to lead, you know, thousands of people and businesses across my career, it's taught me, you know, kind of that zoom out and zoom in mindset. You know, how do you actually get to the front lines and go and see, and really, you know, work closely with the people where, you know, they're servicing the customer or they're interacting with even some of the technology ideas that big companies come up with and is it really working is really driving the value for them?

But then also zoom out is to think about what are the trends that are happening and are we... is our vision and our mission and our value still aligned with where the customer's going, what those trends are? And I think that's increasingly difficult with the speed at which things are moving these days. And I know you guys see it as well and your, in your business consulting. I think the complexities are massive. And so, I think zooming in and really understanding what's happening there and then zooming out and being able to pull with your team, the trends and, you know, kind of combining those two things is really a skill you develop earlier on.

STAN: Perfect.

CHRIS: Paul, I want to get back to this idea of brand. We could spend a ton of time there. Before I do that, just a comment. When you mapped out your personal history, professional journey, your leadership experience... you're a walking testament. If you went back to 1944, I think it was, and the original GI Bill, which went by a different name. The idea of taking service members after World War II, giving them opportunity for education, so they could go on to apply their leadership skills. If you walk through your experience 80 years ago to the original thinkers behind that would seem like a dream come true.

So, it's just a really powerful testament to what large scale government decisions can do when interacted properly. So, you're probably too humble to think about it like that, but just an observation.

On the brand piece. I mean... growing up in the SEAL teams, I grew up not recognizing that the time inside a huge brand. You think of yourself as an individual, and then at a certain point you realize no, you're part of a much larger brand that has been created very thoughtfully and there's fragility there, there's strength there, et cetera. So just at the highest level, your thoughts, and we can go much deeper about ... what is a brand?

How do you create one? What does it mean to be part of one?

PAUL: Yeah, I think Chris, you know, it's really an important question because brands, you know, I like to say brands drive demand. I mean, that's, you know, just from a macro business perspective, your brand is going to drive the demand for your product or your services or the combination in our case, like we talked about the experience.

And I think in that moment, what it really means is, you know, the brand promise what your brand represents is the story that, you know, you're telling your consumer or your customer, and that's the story they're telling themselves. And they're telling them from their friends. And so, it's really important to understand, you know, what your brand stands for, what the brand promise is, what you're going to do, what you're going to deliver on with your product or service. Those things are always equally measured and they're actually supporting each other in the right ways.

I also think that, you know, your experience brand matters. Those experiences again, it's actually how we remember life, our experiences. That's why we talked about people want to compete on experiences because it's so powerful and memorable. And it's those experiences that create your stories, and stories are how people relate to companies, products, humans, services, and just it's how we relate to the world. So, the brand story, the brand promise is really important.

I think increasingly, a couple of things are happening and you know, and customers are demanding to understand what your brand represents on multiple layers, beyond what your product and service offers beyond, you know, your kind of your core shareholders or stakeholders in the commercial side and growth.

And it's into, you know, things like sustainability. Do you care about the environment? Do you care about giving back to the communities that you do business in? And what does your brand represent to bring all stakeholders along this journey? Not just, you know, not just your kind of traditional business stakeholders. And so, I think that's an important point. And I think increasingly customers want to understand, you know, are you serious about diversity, equity and inclusion? And are you demonstrating that? Not just, you know, paying that lip service. And how are you doing that? And so, as a leader, I think understanding what your customers expect from your brand and, you know, and the multi-layer and the complexities around brand.

And then lastly, I'll say that most customers' expectations have evolved to this day to have some digital connection to your brand as well, whether that's on social media and engaging with your brand there, whether that's, you know, in other places that, that you're meeting them on that digital journey.

So, to me, a lot of these things are culminating between experience and brand and the customer expectation into the conversation that we were having around digital transformation, which is, you know, really elevating quickly to the top of the suite C-suite agenda.

CHRIS: A quick follow-up, and then you threw out the digital transformation thing. So, we want to come back to that, because it's such an important discussion right now. But one more dive into... I'm trying to tie together some of the ideas you just threw out there on, on brand. We're clearly beyond the time where you just sort of said who you were, people liked it, they bought more of it and you kept feeding the machine, you know, go back, you know, decades.

That's now very much a two-way conversation and it ties to the digital nature, the conversation between who we are as a brand and now we're hearing from our customers. And can you talk a bit about that back-and-forth discussion and how do you listen to it? When do you know not to listen to it? Where do you feel like it opens opportunities or constraints? What are your views on that sort of back-and-forth dialogue?

PAUL: I think when you build the brand, and particularly a consumer brand, let's use that as an example. When you build a consumer brand, I think you have to be open to, in 2021, you have to be open to a two-way dialogue with your customer. And I think that, you know, all the mechanisms are in place today, Chris, to actually have that dialogue, you know, in social media, it's, you know, what does your brand stand for? And you have to be constantly listening to how the consumer and the customer are identifying with your brand. Because you know, identity-based branding is what you're striving for, you know, creating raving brand fans who really love your brand is what you're trying to, but why, because they make your brand better. They make your company better. They give you real feedback on your products and services. And if you can incorporate that listening and that learning into that model, or into that two-way dialogue, you end up making a better product, making a better service and giving them more of what they need in order to you know, solve their unique problems or create a better experience or help them along their journey.

So, I think that there's a... now what you incorporate in, right, from a customer standpoint is really important because there's articulated needs and things that they're telling you. And then your job as a brand and as a company is to find the unarticulated needs, which is typically where innovation comes from.

So, I think there there's, I think when you ask, like, "What don't you listen to and what do you listen to?" I think you listened to everything. I think you find out, you know, kind of what parts are true. I mean, one of the things that I've learned, you know, running large sets of data and, you know, large audiences, for example, in the connected fitness example with Under Armour, is, we had 40 to 50 million people engaging with that community every single month and telling us, you know, how much they were working out, how much they were eating, what their nutrition goals were. And so, we were helping them on their fitness journey and you know, in that endeavor people, people ask you for certain things or they, you know, make, make certain recommendations, but then they do things differently.

Right, because it's kind of human behavior. Even if you look at people's up, you know, in observation tests, people will say one thing and actually do another because it's just more natural. So, I think, the observation, the experimentation of what customers are telling you to tease out the articulated, and that's your job, I think from an innovation standpoint, to keep renewal around the brand, and the brand promise and the products and services you offer.

STAN: Paul, for most of your career and the last half of my career, we'd been in this increasingly digital world. And Chris and I remember from the fight in Iraq, there were certain commanders as signals intelligence became more available, they said, I want more SIGINT as it was called.

And you'd look at me and say, well, what exactly do you want to know? And of course, they didn't have a clue. They just say, I want more SIGINT because everybody else has got a bunch. Sometimes, I feel like as organizations go towards digital transformation, you know, they want to transform because the people down the street are transforming.

So, you know, because I don't want to be the only person that's not transformed. So, tell us a little bit about what digital transformation actually is and what does it require from leaders?

PAUL: Yeah, I think the way I think about digital transformation is you know, your customer has changed. The world has changed. I mean, you just highlighted, Stan, like the increasing digital world and we've seen it during the global pandemic accelerate even more. We can come back to that. But I think as your customer changes and has more options and more alternatives to your products or services, it's really important to understand how you're actually meeting them, where they are on that digital journey.

And that's a hard problem to solve because many companies, you know, for the longest time, the brand, we just talked about brand, the brands had the power, right? I could generate the brand promise. I could do marketing initiatives. I could create demand and I could get customers to come to my product and they would like it. And they would keep going back. And typically, I would sell that product or service maybe in a consumer environment through different channels. So, you know, however you got to market to get the consumer of that product in a retail store or some other location. And so, you ended up with this, like where the brands had, the power, the channels have the power.

For years now, the customers have the power and what's enabled the customer to have the power is that digital economy that we live in. You know, you can search multiple products and multiple brands with sub-second response time and get everything from price parody to features and benefits.

And we've done... we've been doing that for quite some time now. But when you build companies around brand, around product, around channels, organizing and changing the culture of your company to be customer centric is very difficult. And I think digital transformation is very much about customer centricity, understanding where to meet your customers in this new world.

It's about new business model innovation, right? There's lots of white space out there, but how do I take all of the strengths of my company and organize them, digital in a way that I can now meet that customer there? And so, I think it's a combination of customer centricity. I think it's organizing your data, your systems, your technology platforms, to service the customer in a different way around those products and services.

And then I think it's as a leader, trying to figure out: how do you bring the teams along to build this new business model innovation and create this white space? You know, as you guys referenced, I'm at ServiceNow, you know, just, very new at ServiceNow, but our CEO likes to say, and not likes to say, but he's quoted a statistic that's pretty compelling. You know, 30% of a company's revenue in three years will come from businesses they're not even in today. And so, when you think about that, digital transformation is about helping that new business model innovation to drive those new revenues that companies aren't even in today.

STANL Yeah, it's fascinating. And a few years ago, we worked with a client that did a range of financial and insurance services and they explain one of the problems. They said, we have a span of customers ranging from very young to much older, and they all want a different interaction with the company. The older people want a more traditional mail and phone.

Other people want something else. A young people want digital only. And the challenge was the firm couldn't be one or the other. It had to be all those things simultaneously that the customer desired, which was an interesting challenge.

PAUL: Exactly and I think that's where, you know, you see digital transformation rising on the, you know, the CEO level agenda.

And I, you know, it's one reason why I joined ServiceNow. I think ServiceNow is positioned really to help companies digitally transform in ways that other companies can't do that.

STAN: Great.

CHRIS: Paul, taking that... that's by the way, the best explanation I've heard of digital transformation, you should write a book or something.

You've seen this multiple times, especially in the spaces you've worked in and led inside of... how do you, I've been, I've been in systems where I probably been part of this. I've certainly seen it happen. The new thing becomes so much of a buzzword that the trickle-down from the leadership, it becomes the reason not to do the next thing. Well, we can't do that piece of our strategy yet because now we have to do X. We have to be in the cloud. We have to go through digital transformation. We have to do the reorg, whatever it is it.

And when you ask people, what do you really mean by digital transformation? They say, well, I don't know. I'm waiting to find out from the leadership. How do you, what lessons can you share that you've learned around not letting the next big, important idea get in the way of tomorrow's execution?



PAUL: Yeah, I think I've learned over time and learn through mistakes that I've made certainly as a leader, in some of those big change initiatives, you know, those are, I think typically an increasingly for leaders you're always leading change.

I mean, change is obviously the only thing that stays constant. And so, you know, when you build a big change in this, as you're rallying people around the vision, you're getting, you're actually sharing, you know, if you're a good leader, you're trying to get them to contribute to the vision across the company, not just within your individual teams, because everybody's got to own that shared vision to march to it, Chris.

Now the danger in that is, you know, once you get that, once you get those teams and those people and the whole company rallied around that initiative, that's where it's going to go. Right. So, that's good, but there's a danger in that sometimes I think is to move the whole company towards something that's very important.

And I'll give you an example. I think a lot of companies, and I've seen this, and I made some of this mistake myself, you rushed to getting onto a technology platform work or moving the company in a direction that's very necessary. Why? Because the trends tell you that that's necessary, because your business models tell you it's necessary. You want to scale faster, all kinds of reasons for you to make a move. An example, I'll give you as a move to cloud infrastructure as a service. So, move your data processing from, you know, from your data centers on premise to move them into cloud providers. And that was a huge initiative, you know, over the past, you know, call it seven to 10 years for many companies, because there's lots of ways to scale a business. There's lots of efficiencies to be had. You don't have to worry about all kinds of things like disaster recovery and all the things that you guys know come with that.

But if you orient the company too much to doing that work, you kind of end up working on the engine room, which is important. But you may forget about where your customer is heading. And I think when companies lose sight of the front end and organize around the back end, in this case, you know, moving to Cloud kind of workloads, and they're not focused on what is happening with my customer, because in the end, your customer doesn't care what cloud provider you use. They don't actually care what your data processing happens or any transactions. They just care about their experience, getting access to your great product or service in a way that makes it easy for them.

And so, I think, I think that digital transformation can get kind of, you know, in, in that world become one and not multiple parts of that. And I think it's a really important, call-out for companies is to make sure you're not doing too much work here where you're focused on the internals of the company and optimizing, and speed and data and artificial intelligence and processing and not asking yourself simply does the customer care? And if the answer is the customer doesn't care, then it's probably not as important as you may think it is.

STAN: Paul, that's fascinating. I'm going to slide toward leadership now and we talked about brand and the importance of brand to a company, but leaders often get associated with a leadership brand and sometimes people spend an awful lot of time creating one and polishing it.

And it may not be real. In other cases, it's much more genuine, but we all sort of have one. What is your leadership brand and how has it evolved over time?

PAUL: You know, it's a really interesting question. I don't think I would have been... I don't know if I'd have had this answer a couple of months ago, but as I was, you know, making a shift from one company to the next, I actually asked people who I've worked with, you know, how would they characterize my leadership? You know, people that were direct reports or partners, or, you know, just long term, you know, teammates that I've been fortunate to work with.

And I think overwhelmingly, you know, there's lots of characteristics and there was a lots of, you know, really it's very humbling experience by the way. I mean, you guys have probably had this before, both ways: good and bad. It's humbling. But I think I like to think of myself as an energetic growth leader, you know, I try to bring and energy to a process and a vision and a team.

You know, when you're a leader, I think one of the things you realize is your results don't actually matter individually. The only results you actually get are the results the team actually produces. And so, you know, at bringing the right level of energy at the right time and helping other people grow in their own career, but also helping the company grow because when a company is growing, you're creating room for everybody to actually learn, develop, and grow themselves. And so, I like to think of myself that way.

CHRIS: Paul, just going deeper into the... I couldn't agree more with that. And there's an interesting point ... when I talk to young professionals, I always equate it to, you know, six years into a military career when you realize. There's not a Sergeant to blame anymore. There's not a senior. You now have to take account for the platoons' capability or failure. Right. And then that just scales up. But that's a hard pivot for many to make.

Thinking about when, when Stan and I talked to groups just about leadership broadly, we do try to make the point consistently that X percent, a pretty healthy percent is transferable across spaces, across sectors, military industry, across different industries, et cetera. If you could go back now as a senior, very experienced leader, across multiple domains to that young, you know, 20-year-old machine gunner and say, okay, here are the things you're going to use for the rest of your life. What's on that list?

PAUL: You know, I think one of the things I learned, my leadership philosophy was formed certainly early in my life in the military. And the military is great a lot of things. I mean, there's lots of improvement in other areas, but one of the things I think I loved was some of the simplicity of the lessons that you learned that were drilled into you.

And I think from a leadership standpoint at that time, it was, you know, mission first, team second and self third. And if you kept those three in that order, typically things went really well. You know? I learned an early lesson very early on. I was actually, it was the M060 machine gunner, but we didn't have a squad leader, we didn't have a Sergeant in place. And so, I was filling in ultimately as the squad leader as a very young, enlisted person.

And I'll never forget, and I've been doing it for a couple of months, and I felt I was doing a fantastic job, and I went into the platoon sergeant's office for our, you know, kind of our daily meeting. And he said, listen, we have some accelerated promotions coming up. We can hand out, you know, two or three of these accelerated promotions. Who's worthy of a promotion? And I thought my immediate thought was, well, I certainly am. I've been leaning into this, you know, leading this squad for months and I'm certainly not the rank I should be.

And I should tell them that it's me. And that's what I did. And needless to say, I didn't actually get the promotion because I didn't keep those three things in order: mission first, team second and self third. And I learned a very, you know, kind of 19-year-old, lesson about, you know, really understanding what your leadership philosophy is and how to keep those things in order.

So that, that was a great lesson at that time, you know, when you think about going back to your 19- or 20-year-old self, Chris, but I think the basis of that leadership philosophy has always stuck with me and, you know, that's evolved as I've been, you know, as I said before, fortunate enough to lead, you know, teams the size of multiple thousands. And I think where what I've evolved that into is it's a leader's job to, if I were going back and talking to, you know, 20-year-old, Paul, I'd say, look: as you evolve that you have all that style. The first thing is, you know, providing clarity, as a leader is very important, particularly at higher levels because there is so much complexity. Things are moving so fast. The acceleration of change, I mean, we've seen it with a global pandemic. You've seen companies who have taken initiatives that were three years out on the roadmap and completed them in three months, but that has an impact on the team and, you know, and kind of... and how we're working together and how we're all getting through this thing.

But I think clarity is a really important part, clarity of your vision, your mission, your values, and really kind of incorporating that, And that changes. So, you have to be flexible because there's, you know, as things change, providing that clarity is important. I think the second thing I've learned is, investing in building high performance teams and I think many companies and leaders, you know, we're, so we're so quick to go after initiatives and we're so quick to grow our businesses and the next thing, but we're not taking the upfront work that it takes to build high-performance teams and specifically, I mean, things like a no-blame the effort.

Things like building the ties that bind. So, when, you know, by definition, if you want to build a high-performance team, it can't be high-performance the whole time, right. It has to there's peaks or things ebb and flow. And you have to understand that cadence as a leader as well, you know, when do you stress out the team and then when you give them time to recover? Because that's how we grow, you know, as people. And so, I think there's not enough time that goes up front in building those high-performance teams and really understanding: are you building a diverse

team? Do you have complementary skillsets? Are you just hiring people like you? And so that is a huge amount of upfront work that saves you enormous headaches, you know, when things get tough and when you're, when you're going through a major change monster or years down the road.

And then the third thing I think I've learned is, you know, this ability to, you know, is to take the clarity and take the high-performance teams and create this environment where massively talented people can do their best work. You know, particularly as an executive, you know, how are you clearing roadblocks for your team? Are you leading from the front when it comes to vision, but then taking a step back to make sure that they're getting the credit? Are you doing the things that matter around, you know, clearing the obstacles, the roadblocks, getting them the resources they need to be successful, honoring and recognizing and rewarding that success at the right periods at the right moment?

And I think talented people want to work in an environment where they're highly empowered and can do their best work. And I think that's the third thing I've learned from leadership standpoint.

CHRIS: Yeah. That's great, Paul. I do think the leadership is part art, part science, right? And it's the art part can be really hard, comes through experience, missteps, personal mistakes, watching others. But the science part, I mean, so many leaders I've worked with said, "yeah, I kind of learned that first year of my career." Or in bootcamp or whatever it is, because they are, they get... they reach a different scale, but everybody knows if you're leading a four-person team, you have to communicate with them. If you're leading a 4,000-person team, communication is just as important. The question is: how are you doing it?

And so, it's, I think for some leaders, as you get more senior, more pulled into the 50,000-foot level, it's easy to over skew to the art and forget the science, right? Somebody else will do the communication. No, no, no. You have to figure out how you're going to do both. So that's a really great breakdown.

STAN: Paul, I'm going to finish with one question that is a little bit different angle. This morning, I got up early and I did a class for a West Point group of cadets, and it was a course on ambition and they are spending an entire semester trying to study how much ambition is good. They look at military leaders, they're reading Plutarch.

Now they're reading a book we wrote, but if you were talking to young leaders now and you were trying to communicate to them: is ambition good? Is it bad? How much is good? What kind is good or bad? What would you tell them?

PAUL: Yeah, I think I've learned, I mean, I think ambition as a topic can be good if it's fueled from the right place. You know, I think, many people tend to, you know, that old saying, wearing your ambition on your sleeve is never good. But I think if you go deeper under, you know, what's generating your ambition, you know, what are the goals, the personal and professional goals you're setting out for yourself?

And are you really aligning those around, you know, your passion? And I know passion gets a lot of, a lot of analysis and dissection and buzz and everything. But I think from a passion standpoint, what I really mean is what are the things you're good at and what are the things you like to do?

And if you keep it, like, it's a pretty simple formula. And if you can find those two things, if that passion is fueling your ambition, and you're constantly raising the bar and setting it higher then all you need along the way is the resiliency, because you're gonna fail, you're gonna fail fast. You're gonna make mistakes.

So, if you're coming it, you know, if you have any ambition without that passion or, you know, kind of however you define that, I think you're not going to be resilient because you're going to be orienting towards the wrong things and your ambition, you know, that will run out pretty quickly. So I think that's how I would think about ambition is, you know, am I really centered on my passions? Is that fueling my ambition? Part of that, by the way, is, are you bringing other people along the journey? You know, sometimes people get ambitious and they want to go by themselves, and I have never actually done anything of any note by myself. So I think, I think, you know, that that kind of ambition is good if it's fueled by the right purpose, your own purpose and your own passion. I think it can be dangerous if it's fueled by, you know... extraneous things that you think are important.

STAN: Absolutely.

CHRIS: Well, I love the saying from another friend of ours, Brad Smith, who was the CEO of Intuit, who always says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far go together." So, it's a great way to sum up that point.

Paul, we'll wrap up. I'll turn it over here to Stan in a second, but just wanted to, again, finish where we started by saying thank you. You've been a leader we've all learned from over the years. It's great to see you in a new position that will obviously continue to serve those around you in the market you're inside of now. and the lessons here are terrific for us and our listeners. So, thanks for the time.

PAUL: Thank you guys. It's been a real honor and a privilege.

STAN: Absolutely. A long way from 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 504. I started in the First Battalion 504th, many years ago as well. It is great to see the journey and what you've advised people to listen to: mission, team, self. I mean, people don't have that tattooed on their forearm because if they can follow those things, everything else sort of comes from it.

And so, the idea that we are all trying to be something better for a pretty good purpose really resonates with everything you say. So, Paul, congratulations on all you've done. Have a great experience in the new role, and I know you'll bring that to others. Thank you.

PAUL: Thank you guys. Been a real pleasure. We'll talk soon.

CHRIS: Great discussion with Paul. You know, as we noted there, we both known him for years, um, from our time working with him at Under Armour. And it's great to see him go on to the next thing, but I've never had the time to have that thoughtful of a conversation with him and really got a lot out of it.

One of the things that I'll offer some thoughts but would love to hear your reflections on is the branding idea. And what he was saying was, at least what my takeaway was, branding has shifted and will continue to shift into a relationship space. What are your end users... what relationship do they have with you as an organization?

And he sort of ran the gamut, like what's your, you know, what's your position on the environment? What's your... how do you treat your labor? A whole host of things. Well beyond just does the t-shirt fit correctly. What was coming up in my mind when he was walking through that was my time in the special operations community, watching you and your leadership team transition the brand of those forces in a way that I wasn't aware enough at that level to even recognize until hindsight. From one of this is the best product on the shelf, and you're when you need this this is the only one out there to buy sort of thing. It's an imperfect analogy, to one that was driven by when people fast forward, 10 years or however many years, the brand of that organization became one of relationship and trust.

And this, if you need insight, if you need someone to share valuable lessons, if you need someone to think through problems with you, that's where you're going to go. It's not just pull this off the shelf for these sorts of scenarios. Does that analogy make sense?

STAN: It does. And sort of my journey... I remember being up there when we McChrystal Group we're working with Under Armour and Kevin Plank gave that briefing that day.

And it was that high-tech, very high energy briefing that had "Protect this House" and all kinds of motivating things. And that's sort of the way I thought about brand. Ceate enthusiasm and you have Under Armour logo on there. But then when you hear Paul talk about it, it is very different. It is that relationship.

It's sort of, it's not Under Armour now, which I happen to wear, it is Under Armour, which is my Under Armor. I have a relationship with a running shoe that tracks my fitness. I have a relationship with the lifestyle that Under Armour creates. So, this more inclusive, more embracing idea of brand, to me was just fascinating.

And the fact that the digital world not only allows this, but it seems to demand it to be effective. You can't just sell good "Xs," whatever they are and expect to be effective.

CHRIS: Yeah. It's far more than part of me would expect, you know, someone in Paul's position to talk about those, those things, like the connected shoe, et cetera, as a way to sell more shoes.

Right. Once I've got you hooked on the device, like, why else would you buy another shoe? But that he didn't mention that at all. He was really talking about how do I... How do we best serve our customers? What do they need from us? And how do we pull them into our ecosystem? And it's connectedness, it's us helping them when they need it. It's getting training advice. And of course, the knock on effect is yeah, I'm going to continue to buy your product. But it's a much more relationship-based idea than I would have expected from someone in his position, how he described it.

STAN: You know, it's funny in our course up at Yale, one of the things that jumps out at me is just how much Yale gear the average student wears. Nowhere else have I ever been do people wear as many shirts, sweatshirts, shorts, everything. It seems like everyone is coming in with something that is celebrating the wider university. And when I first started teaching up there, a decade ago now, I was surprised about that, but in reality, a good organization that can make your identity be impacted by what they also provide, whether it's a university you go to or a club you're a part of, or you name it and you, you willingly fit yourself into that ecosystem, has a really powerful sway over it and, you know, even some, you know, Apple computers or something does some degree of that now.

CHRIS: Yeah. It's interesting. We didn't talk about us with Paul, but just coming from like the units that you and I both served in, or the Yale analogy, the importance of that sort of tribal connection with an image, right. You know, in the SEAL teams, you're not, as a young person going through training, they're not going to wear a ball cap or a t-shirt that has the Trident, the SEAL warfare insignia until they've earned it. Right. And if they see their, whoever, you know, someone at college wearing one, they'd say, Hey, you know, that represents a certain thing. Ranger tab, same way. So, it's really interesting. Just that sort of... at the end of the day, it's just a thing on a t-shirt. Right. But it really does have deep meaning once you're a part of that, that affiliates you with other like-minded people that have been through a similar forging.

STAN: It's a brand that you have embraced and you've paid a price to do it. You've gone through BUD/S, you've done really tough stuff to become a SEAL. And there is this pride in it. And so, you want to, you want to display that. I mean, if somebody is a SEAL, they want other people to know they're a SEAL, you know how it is. I mean, why wouldn't you? Why would I go through all that pain, if I'm not going to get sort of the, the respect and awe from people.

CHRIS: Yeah. That's funny. anytime I'm back in the communities where... the cities where the SEAL teams are and same thing in the Rangers or wherever, when you're in it, you think you just sort of blend into society.

When you come in as an ally, so that semi outsider, it's just so obvious. You walk into a restaurant and you see three people in a family. Like they're clearly all in the SEAL teams, but those guys are all Rangers. Just ... what they're wearing, the way they carry themselves, it just jumps out.

You know, another thing that, that really struck me in the discussion with Paul was the, you know, when he mapped out his personal history of being a machine gunner in the 82nd, all the

way to where he is now, and you know, you've been so heavily involved in the idea of national service for, for really, since you got out of the military, but he's an example I think of I mean, he's the top of the bell curve, but that core idea of what can you do with that base level of training and character building that comes out of the military or other ways ... parts of the service ways to serve the country and then, you know, put an education on top of it and put the future.

What Paul has done for the country for those work around them is exponential because the programs that were we're put into place, you know, generations ago, and it was just a really powerful testament to what we can accomplish there.

STAN: And I think it's... should be a good reminder. We didn't just do something for Paul. We did something for the nation. I mean, you give somebody a hand like that, an opportunity. It's not a gift. Nobody made him a senior executive. What they did was they gave him an education after he earned it, he served in the military, he earned that education. And then, you know, it pays for itself many times over.

CHRIS: Yeah. And it's an easy one to forget, or sort of put in the history books as this post-World War II thing, but the effects are real. And, you know, it's an area I think we can continue to invest in and improve on as a nation. A final point that jumped out at me, which is not surprising for those listeners that have served, but this sort of blocking and tackling, like when we asked him about his sort of leadership theory, he's thought that through top to bottom, and I'm sure it's, he's written it down and revised it over the years - which was not a set-up question. You know, it was very spontaneous part of the conversation, but really impressive to see like those early lessons you learn about leading four people than eight people, then 30 people, et cetera. I mean, there is top of mind for him today as they were, when he was in charge of, you know, three people in a machine gun team.

STAN: Yeah. It gets down to how organizations develop values and vision and all this. Individuals need to do the same thing. Sometimes you need to sit down and decide what are your values? What are your leadership practices and behaviors? And just write them in and then look at them and see if you're being honest with yourself. And if they are, do you stick with them?

CHRIS: Yeah, it's one of the challenges I think for leaders anywhere to... good leaders, have a natural awareness, switching roles, switching companies, Paul's doing this as he moves through his career to sort of remind people: here's who I am. Here's the vision. Here's how we're going to map it in. You have to remind yourself to do it when you're in the same position or organization for an extended period, because you forget, wow. There's, you know, 30% new people here that... weren't around for this a conversation 18 months ago.

I think his revisiting of that as a good reminder for others to make it part of their own operating rhythm.

STAN: Well, I think we're going to hear more from Paul.



CHRIS: No doubt. Thanks to Paul and his team. Great discussion. Look forward to having you here next time on *No Turning Back*.