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SPEAKERS

Mark Agostinelli, Ann Whitaker

M Mark Agostinelli 00:00

Today's podcast is brought to you by the Davis Companies a technical staffing firm with offices across the country. Some quick updates about Davis they wanted me to include today is that we've got some offices on the move, including our New Hampshire offices relocating from Nashville to Manchester. And our Marlboro office is relocating just down the street to a building they just purchased. So we are currently in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Georgia, as well as many Minnesota and Tennessee. I was wanting to say Memphis in Minneapolis, but it's the state's mark, keep it there. So check them out. They support this thing. today's podcast, awesome podcast, if I may add, thoroughly enjoyed it. With Ann Whitaker, probably one of my favorite people I've met through the business world. And I started out with the whole client vendor relationship piece of things. And then we've really just become friends over the past. I want to say five or six years I think we discovered on the podcast, we hit arranging, arranging a huge assortment of topics. But Ann's really cool. She's self described roll your own HR. She started in the fashion industry. And you know, years later founded a robotic tech startup. So hold on, because that's the kind of ride it was. I hope you enjoy the conversation. We really had a blast. I think Ann will be someone that we certainly invite back in the future just because she's so much fun to talk to, and honestly has so much good insight and has such a great holistic view of people careers and really connecting with the human spirit. Welcome to another episode of Beers and Careers. Today as I drink my drink of choice, today, the guest on the podcast is one of my favorite people that I met through the business world. And so on I'm so comfortable with you were probably the first call when I was doing the podcast for for from an outsider, right? Like someone not involved with Davis and Winokur. Is your official title, Chief People Officer.

A Ann Whitaker 02:21

No, no, my official title is head of people then called head of people

M Mark Agostinelli 02:25

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and culture, I think of you as a chief, I carry surgical, that's great. I just think of you as a chief people officer in my purview. And drink of choice for beers and careers was I'm going to say I think it was Mark, Mark and hands. Skinny vodka soda. I'm trying to be skinny vodka. So which is right up my wheelhouse. So I appreciate, I appreciate you helping me stay on the path. Stay on the path. So and thanks so much for coming on.



Ann Whitaker 02:53

My pleasure. Thanks. I'm really flabbergasted that you want to interview me?



Mark Agostinelli 02:57

Well, i i The inspiration for the podcast was people's careers and nonlinear career paths. But I also love just talking to interesting people. And I think I love how you are an HR person who described yourself not as an HR person. So I think Oh, yeah. I think that's like the perfect person to be on the bucket. So I'm interested in I got some rapid fire questions to ease us into this. So you know, favorite, what is an editor's favorite drink or libation?



03:31

So I think my real favorite thought this is a good one is my husband makes a really fabulous Martini martinis. Naki flat out but they're delicious.



Mark Agostinelli 03:41

Okay, excellent. Excellent. I do have a preference of vodka.



03:46

So he does a gin Martini. Oh, okay.



Mark Agostinelli 03:50

Okay, all right. See, I just assumed vodka that's a shame on me. Shame on me so gin martinis I dig it. I love cold bog actually like cold buckets straight just straight Kovach Yes. Nice. It's it's a little cow. Right? Keeps going



04:06

to kind of make it last a while.



Mark Agostinelli 04:10



Mark Agostinelli 04:10

Keep it together for an hour here. Man my I think one of my favorite questions and I know that sounds weird is I love to know what people's favorite curse word is. Fuck. Yeah, it's a common. Yeah, nouns and adjectives. They all work. Do you? I think I know the actual Yes, but you just let them rip to the right yeah, yeah, yeah.



04:30

Very non PC HR person. Yes,



Mark Agostinelli 04:32

same. Well, I'm not an HR person. I'm a very non PC person. That works for me. As the audience gets to know you, what's your favorite guilty pleasure?



04:43

Oh, no, of the late is. It probably sounds super tame but like curling up on the couch or in bed with my dog dose and Okay, having time to just read and then just to feel your dog just sigh and just loving being with you and best friend. Yeah, her energy's phenomenal. So what kind of dog? She is a black mouth car, but otherwise, she says she's a southern hound.



Mark Agostinelli 05:11

Okay. Big girl. Is she How is she? She's now 75



05:14

pounds. Okay, we adopted her exactly a year ago. She came with these papers that said, next week how XL is 35 pounds? Is that gonna be XL? XL.



Mark Agostinelli 05:28

Wow. But you're pumped about it. Love it. I love it. I have my wife and I have the exact same experience with a southern hand. How am I be strong because he's like a pitbull boxer lab, but he was 30 pounds when we got him there. Like he'll probably talk about at 45 like perfect. 75 pounds later Dean comes around to the door. So it's like, we're so happy with I don't think I would have opted for a large dog when I love it. So, yes. So what's the book of choice while you're reading right now?



05:58

Oh my god, what am I reading right now? Oh, I'm embarrassed to say I'm reading like a one of

Brene Brown's books. Dare to leave which actually has good, some really good stuff in there. Yeah, a lot of rah rah stuff but and I am dying to read the latest. Murakami. My favorite authors is the guy who wrote a Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wilde Junot Diaz, no actually got to hear him speak no lie a year ago it in Provincetown at 20 summers. Okay. So I kind of go between novels and kind of real stuff that you

 **Mark Agostinelli** 06:40

Yeah, I go through the same thing. Although I've been on a I've been on the real stuff. kick lately. That just I like find myself in wave. Sometimes. I'm like, I don't want to read anything that's remotely real. And then sometimes it's like, I just need practical stuff right now. And I can use so it's really it's real. Oh, I just read death by meeting by Patrick Lencioni. Have you read it of any Patrick's but so he's a title? Yeah. And you know, it's funny what the book is. The end of the book makes a case for more meetings. Oh, really. But it's just how they're structured. Okay. And he's a former Bain guy. But super practical novels are like five dysfunctions of a team, the ideal team player, he's been probably my I'm getting them. I'm getting the Patrick Lencioni MBA currently, because I just I dig his books, and they're very memorable. So yeah, that was the one I wrapped up last night. That's my new. It's my new thing. So for Bob and Brenda, you have to hear about all about that next week. On an agenda Yeah, we got to do we got all these things, all these things that we need more conflict in our meetings? What about what I am excited to ask you this question because I think you're well wrapped. But I think you have good perspective. Favorite quote, or what quote, are you living by these days?

 **Ann Whitaker** 08:03

There's so you don't have

 **Mark Agostinelli** 08:07

to okay,

 08:08

that like I've kind of stuck with for years. Yes. And actually because I didn't want to do them a disservice.

 **Mark Agostinelli** 08:15

You right? I love it.

 08:16

I brought them. I'll read them. Okay, perfect. I took because I'm a total techno dinosaur, but I actually took pictures.



Mark Agostinelli 08:26

Oh, oh. Oh, okay. So, your house, your office?



08:30

So excuse me. Okay, okay. So one of them is by Thomas saws, a Hungarian psychologist, psychiatrist. Every act of conscious learning requires the willingness to suffer an injury to one's self esteem. That is why young children before they are aware of their own self importance learn so easily. And why older persons especially if vain or important, cannot learn it all. The one that I



Mark Agostinelli 08:57

love, it's a good one. Who is that



08:59

homicides? Z a sec. Okay, good once he kind of buttoned a lot of common theories and modern



Mark Agostinelli 09:09

psychology. Okay.



09:11

Cool. And then the other one, this is more ubiquitous, but Maya Angelou. I've learned that people will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel. Yeah, that's something I totally live by. Yes.



Mark Agostinelli 09:24

That's so true. Those are both awesome. And that's what I was excited to ask because I knew you weren't gonna have like a standard, you know, like, well, the Maya Angelou ones obviously very famous. I've read that before, but I think that resonates. Especially the Maya Angelou one i nerd out on sometimes when I think about my wife in previous to this role, where I was really just an individual contributing sales rep. And I'm like, how am I making people feel? Because it's like, your whole goal is to be memorable, especially when you have no network and you're cold calling and you're like, Okay, so how am I memorable, and how am I making people feel? That was always something I tried to do. And then when I read her quote, whenever however all there was I was like, oh, yeah, okay, she's totally right on, they're not gonna remember what I

did for them or, or what or who I was, they're just gonna remember what I made him feel. So that's awesome. That conscious learning one? See? I'm have to ponder that. And that's it. That's a new one for me. But it makes sense.

10:24

I mean, it's basically at the heart of what we all know is ego gets in the way. Yes, yes. When you have a total commitment to maintaining your personality, your ego, your standing how people knew. And you shut down. Yeah, no room for new information, or opening or evolving to come in.

Mark Agostinelli 10:42

I've always known as that person, like, the open minded. I don't know if I'm doing it the right way. But this is how I'm doing it like asking for, you know, always willing and open minded. Has there been a time in your career? When you were more, I'm gonna say thick headed or more, a bit more in service of your ego, as opposed to leaving your ego.

11:04

You know, I think there's ways in which we're all in service to our ego. But generally, I think because I've always seen myself as kind of a weirdo. Thinking that I think, really differently than people and that thinking isn't going to be acceptable. Yeah, I've never really and that's been a disservice to me, because it's had me not trust my instincts are not stand up for what I believe, stand up for myself. So I think because I've always assumed that I don't know. WTF, yeah, I've wanted to learn from people. I've wanted to be corrected. I've wanted to, you know, sometimes to a fault. Because I think sometimes I was kind of subjugated myself, but I think yeah, women do. It's a product of, you know, people I was parented by the, you know, that some of the choices I made around bosses and stuff like that. So I'm really glad to be older. Yes. And kind of understanding that. I have a right to the way that I think and kind of works.

Mark Agostinelli 12:20

Yeah. Now that do that. Right, if you will. Was there Do you remember a turning point when it was like, I'm no longer doing this anymore? It was really reasonably real. Okay. Cool. Yeah. That's cool.

12:34

Take me to like 50 Fine. Yeah. Okay.

Mark Agostinelli 12:37

That's, I think, honestly, though, that probably is really good for people to hear like, because I think I know in my I'm in my early 30s, or mid almost mid 30s. I know that my group of friends and my circle, I think there's a lot of self doubt, and I think people think they should have it figured out by 30. So I think you saying that vulnerably and honestly is like, kind of gives people like a pool. Okay. And by the way, I don't have it figured out. I know, you know, okay, fair, fair, but I piece with it. And piece to like, just kind of a piece of it to me is figured out. Okay, good. You know,



13:09

I'll pick to that.



Mark Agostinelli 13:11

Like, I think like, you know, I don't think anyone's gonna totally figure it out. But I think is your if you can rest your head on the pillow and not be in turmoil, I think yeah, I'm gonna go ahead. That counts as figured out. Yeah. low barrier. I really low peace. Okay. Yeah. So was there what can you do you want to share the point? That was the turning point recently?



13:31

I was just a whole confluence of events. Yeah. I mean, it was, you know, I went through, I had a lot of terrible shit happen in the last year on my career. And I think that just, and then I took, I took four months before I started with my carrier Surgical Clinic really just needed to get to center and I think, you know, looking at things in hindsight, and kind of getting some more time away from them and getting some more input from other people who weren't involved or whatever. It's like, Yeah, okay. Yeah. And understanding what I wanted kind of going forward. And understanding that a lot of the things that I held, dear actually, were meaningful for me and for other people that attended those things. Unfortunately, didn't lead to the success of our company i co founded but



14:31

they're valid. Yeah.



14:34

And I have like wine and my lipstick



Mark Agostinelli 14:42

it's fine. It's totally biodegradable. Who squeezed that? I was 100%. Me. Now. That's cool. That's really cool. I think that's it's a process to deal with that stuff. Which is which is Well, I was, yeah, I was gonna do things. Yeah, get through it. The physical. I feel like when we caught

up two years, two years ago, were you just learning boxing was four



15:16

years ago. I



Mark Agostinelli 15:16

wasn't really. Yeah, I remember you like the reason I'm bringing the boxing up is from your quote from a beginning of like the Thomas oz quote, yeah, I got out of that you have to be humbled to learn and right. Like, that's kind of what I took out of your quote, without seeing it in front of me. And like, I remember you describing boxing just being and you being so humbled by it. I believe people can do it for that long. Yeah. And I'd be like, and I was like, I never thought about how exhausting that would be. So that



15:47

sounds like you like you would golf but you're worried about your place where like, I think boxing and golf are similar that you just always suck. Yes. You do it. Yes. You're always gonna suck. And there's ways to improve. Yeah, there's like more things to learn. And



Mark Agostinelli 16:02

yeah, it's, it's like that. I mean, for me, the Vince Lombardi quote of like, perfection is impossible to reach but worth chasing. That's golf and sports. It's like, Oh, give it another try. But man, I almost really wanted to end it after my last round. You know, I mean, like, if you're like, Okay, highs and lows, but for some reason, I'm gonna do this again. So



16:26

Oh, here's another good quote. Yeah, Tyson. Everyone has a plan until they get



Mark Agostinelli 16:30

punched in the face. Especially if you get punched in the face by Mike Tyson. So true so well. So people I know obviously know your background. You want to give like the quick Reader's Digest version of your career process.



16:47

It's been a really long time.



Mark Agostinelli 16:52

Yeah, okay.



16:55

Ah, let's see us for like a three minute version. Yeah, cut it down. Even.



Mark Agostinelli 17:00

Yeah. 60 seconds is



17:01

fashion. Business School fashion again, although from going from retail, then after business school to wholesale. Then then high tech marketing in high tech. Back when there is a super computer. Yes.



Mark Agostinelli 17:16

Now you have one of your buckets.



17:21

And then what did I do after that? I went to Geneva came back all blah. Oh, that's the park sell huge part of my career. Yeah. I said, I don't know if you read that interview that I did in the Huffington Post. But I have not Yeah. But I gave a big shout out to Joe Landrigan, Bach, who was the founder and for gazillion years CEO of parks all over him for eight years. And he was a real,



17:49

real educator for me.



17:53

And then I went back again to mar calm, briefly. And then to MIT. Nope. We stopped with David Rockefeller, Jr. family office, very, very brief. And then I went to, to MIT to work with Rodney Brooks, kind of managing the computer science and AI Lab. Because I was basically yeah, executive assistant there. It was huge. He had a personal lab, and I was really, really fun working with his PhD students. Learning how to machine metal. That was really super fun. Yes. And then when he was stepping down, he said, you want to help me start a company? Yeah,

sure. I'd love to things that I love to kind of, I'm a generalist, I need to take all this stuff. Yes. So then he and Ken Zola and I co founded Heartland robotics. Yes. Which then four years later became Rethink Robotics. Okay. And so 10 years, you know, or as many as 150 people. Yeah, it was kind of started off doing everything there. Yeah. And morphed into, well, what I love to do best is encourage and nurture people. And so building the team was just it was just fabulous. Yes. It was a fabulous

 **Mark Agostinelli** 19:25
team. Yeah. Yeah, that's it. That's awesome. Yeah, it was

 19:29
just, it's a it's still a huge, sad thing. Yes. And again, when we talk about ego, we thinks demise, ego and hubris.

 **Mark Agostinelli** 19:42
At the root of it.

 19:45
Yeah. But And someday I'll be able to

 19:48
write about Yes, for a while. Yes.

 19:51
But in any case, it was just a treat. And, and then I had a very brief stint at another

 **Mark Agostinelli** 20:00
Local robotics company

 20:02
knew probably wouldn't work and it didn't. And now with my Karis, yes,



 **Mark Agostinelli** 20:06
which is kind of brand new.

 20:09
Yeah, we're about 37 people. Okay, closer, next month will probably be over.

 **Mark Agostinelli** 20:15
For people who don't know what vicarious surgical does. Can you layman's term it for us?

 20:21
So we are basically doing

 **Ann Whitaker** 20:24
robotic surgery control through virtual reality right now. So no big deal. About Yes, in technology right now.

 **Mark Agostinelli** 20:37
Yeah, still starting.

 20:39
It's a great, great team founded by Adam Saxon Savin Khalifa, and a really wonderful group of people. Lovely, lovely. And that was my, that was my number one priority, or what I did next was not really what the company was doing, but what kind of people were running the company or founding the company? And yeah, they kind and, you know,

 21:07
did they have really good intentions?

 **Mark Agostinelli** 21:09
Right? And are their hearts in the right place? Crazy. So MIT has been a pretty big part of your story now that I, which is kind of weird. You know? It's, and I think, did you think that's right? I think that's so true for so many of us in the Boston area. Right? I can't tell you how many companies Davis and myself work with that had? What was an MIT startup at some point? Or

what have I just was kind of like like dawning on Marblehead? I don't, because I don't associate you with MIT. You don't fit the MIT poll. That's really cool. That is really cool. I also love what you do you think you're in your sweet spot at Rethink when you are nurturing and encouraging people because I talked to a lot of HR people in my professional way. And very few of them, although you were certainly one of the few in this category. When we were on the phone, we would often make time to talk about the people we had placed years ago. Mark, have you heard from Eric, how's our you know, have you heard that he's doing because this is what he's been doing? You've kind of keep me up to date. And I was just like, oh, like, like, always hang up the phone with a feeling in my like God being like, like she cares. It's not like a transaction for her. And I think that was I think that's really what drew me to kind of love hanging out with you and be like, Yeah, and we should meet but we should probably do it over drinks, right? Like so we can hang out for a little while. So it was just I think the caring for people. It seemed to me, from the outsider's perspective, not knowing the the inner turmoil. I think at the time that you were in your sweet spot. Would you say that's fair? Okay. Yeah. Cool. Very cool. Woods that I want to talk to you about a time when, during your career path. That something came up really unexpected. Wasn't anything for you? Or would you have a different example? You mean, like along you're



23:18

never plan for this? Yeah. Oh, yeah. I



23:20

mean, what a what a fabulous. Accident.



Mark Agostinelli 23:24

Yes. So like, 25 year old and is like fashion the whole way through? Yeah. And now you're like, knee deep and virtual reality. Is that like,



23:35

yeah, and I mean, I have so many different things that I wanted to do. I mean, I really sad that I, you know, didn't, you know, have the kind of, you know, whatever parenting and this is not about my parents, that sort of that but just in general that I wasn't kind of pushing me under age, I would have loved to have gone to medical school. No, yeah. And then later, as I got into my 30s, I don't want to go, you know, become a nurse practitioner. I really wanted to go to the the MGH health professions program. But, you know, I didn't. But I guess what I'm just talking about is there's just so many different I think this is true for most people, like so many different things. You I guess, though, there are some people who really, I guess I'm kind of jealous of those kind of people who are real singularity of purpose. Right. And I never had that. But



Mark Agostinelli 24:26

I do think it's because your singularity of purpose can manifest itself in many ways. Like if you

I do think it's because your singularity of purpose can manifest itself in many ways. Like, if you if people are what tends to drive you and I'm filling in the blank. So that might not be totally accurate. But it's like, there are certain professions, are there certain people whose purpose can only be exercised and in finite ways? Yeah, absolutely. Does. I feel the same. It's like, I don't know. Like, I like at this point in my career. I just enjoy the mechanics of the business world. Like there's some of that but I can nerd out on and our owner will say sometimes it's like, I don't care. If we were selling pencils, I could have fun. It's like I and I remember first hearing that when I was young in the business being like, what is he talking about? Like, but now I get it. It's like, it's the people you're dealing with. It's the challenges you're solving together. So I, I feel similarly to you, where it's like, I don't really know if this is the right thing to be doing. But it's what's working. And it lets me I'm exercising towards my purpose, which I think matters.



25:26

Okay. And you just said something, dude. It's just so clear, said people together. Yeah, that's yes. We all know that. We're just the want to just create community around us. And that's what makes us feel like we belong, and gives us the support to go out and be our biggest best selves. As a treat, actually to Meet Bob.



Mark Agostinelli 25:51

Yeah. So glad you got to do Yeah. Is that such a big impact on I mean, literally 1000s of people's lives, but certainly ours here. It's a rare thing to wear. In my experience. The cool thing about our job is we get to see so many different companies. I think I've given college you've been like, is this weird that my honor lets us do this kind of stuff. And you'd be like you've worked at a cool company is like I mean for a cool person. And it just makes you super grateful. At the end of the day, I'm so grateful for that do you have when you when you need to execute on like? So a few of these companies, you've been really at the ground floor, like one of the first deployment you found in Parkland, number one, you're number one in that, and then I like hairiest, you're still in the 37. Now, but let's it's it's really a startup. How, how do you build communities with executive teams, because that's part of your job, right? Like that is



26:48

really difficult. So at rethink, I did not have the wasn't empowered to build community at the executive level. I was empowered to do it at the director level and below. And I hate to talk about in hierarchical terms, but that's it, and I would say that at vicarious one of the things that had me joined was, I got a real sense, and it's borne out from Adam, that he genuinely genuinely cares about. People. Yes. And he. So it has to start it has to start there that I went back, you know, going back to talking about intent. And he has really good intent. Now. It's been he executes flawlessly on it. No, but he also, the other thing is learning. Again, I see an add on this initial sort of Bob. I am What am I to engineer I know.



27:53

Yes, yes. Okay. Think about that. And openness, right. Yes.

 **Mark Agostinelli** 27:58
So, for someone so yeah,

 28:00
yeah. So, so that, to me is promising. But yeah, people feeling that they are part of a community and that community has their back. That's the only way that people have been B. I have said this all over the place. 1000 times. But the word innovation is just like VC, you know? Ready? Wait, it does really say creativity. Yeah, creativity sounds a little too feminine. Yes. So I think that people can be their most creative when they feel safe. They feel someone's cheering them on, that their community have their back.

 **Mark Agostinelli** 28:38
Which is ironic, because you all you've worked recently, or in the last our entire time of knowing each other, let's call it the last eight years, nine years, you've worked in intense environments, with deadlines and VC money on the line, right? And so how, how, what were your strategies? Or what were your successes or failures, like, let's just talk about the balance of like, creating a place for people to be creative, which is safe and a world of balance, right? So if you can get into flow states, we talked about flow states on the drive here a little bit like, with short, we're gonna make money and hit our deadline, and there's pressure so like, like, what, how did you do that? Can you talk about that at all? I know, that wasn't a very succinct question, but

 29:24
I think foster that kind of environment and have people just loving their work loving their colleagues really, you know, coming up with creative ideas executing on that. But at the end of the day, if the people running the business aren't allowing for their own education involved, but yeah, all right. Yeah, it's not gonna it's not gonna work, right. So that has to be happening, you know, all over the place. Um,

 **Mark Agostinelli** 30:00
Like, what were some of the conversations you would have with the HR directors? Because I'm sure you had new people newly and management reason.

 30:08
I think for a lot of the newer managers, it's like leading by example. And then of course, it's the kind of people that you hire in Yes, right. Yes, yes. Then there's people that I wasn't able to hire. Like, yeah, yeah. And that I'm gonna say something really, really challenging here. But

VCs, in my experience, do not know how to hire. They hire based on pedigree, yes, you know, educational pedigree, or where you've been or who, you know. There's no real appreciation for seeing what's who somebody is beyond that



Mark Agostinelli 30:56

the school they went to interrupt.



31:00

So I'm losing the train of thought, no, no, that's



Mark Agostinelli 31:02

cool. That's cool. That's alright, you wondered how, like, how did you like how would you tell someone who's newly director level or manager role, right, and now, I'm guessing that thinking of myself as a new manager, I'm gonna get results, right, I'm gonna, they've given me this opportunity, I'm gonna do my best to seize it. But at the same time, no one's gonna want to work here. If they can't have balance and let their creativity shine like that. Like, did you have to coach those folks? Or did you



31:33

go? Um, so I just didn't hire and people like, yeah, okay,



Mark Agostinelli 31:37

that's no, but just kind of hoping you're gonna say



31:40

yes or no. So that's still one thing I always remind people of is that leadership is not about power.



Mark Agostinelli 31:47

Yes, servant service, if you meet people who



31:51

think that it's all about, you know, how did they get into that role? And why did they have the right to do that? Or how did they earn it or whatever. Leadership is simply about, say, stepping

up and saying, hey, I want to be held accountable to achieving X goal. And then engaging your team to help you do that. So it's all about at the end of the day, as you well know, doing what you do whatever we do, everything's about relationships. Yes. And if you're not in relationship with people, and you're just, again, back to your word transactional, you're looking at everything as a transaction. Nothing's gonna

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Mark Agostinelli 32:41

happen. Okay. Cool. No, I, maybe, yeah, there's gonna short term, potentially, but yeah, but so it doesn't work. So how, so? How does an or has? Have you changed the way you hire for any company now with vicarious is that is a weird change.



32:59

It's never changed. It's never always awesome on first of all, someone intelligent. Are



33:04

they a quick study? Yeah, that's always you know, I don't care. I don't give a fig where you went to school, you'd say fuck



33:15

are you open? Like, are you psyched about? Hey, this is what I've accomplished today. I really love to learn about so and so. And when people are quick stays and they're open, they're gonna learn, right? So I would never bring in somebody with, you know, years of experience specific skill set? who's like, Yeah, I'm the Chief Moho. Yeah, this technology. And you guys are lucky to have me. Yeah, that's all I ever bring into a company ever, ever, ever. Right? So it's just always been like, always, I kind of always want check to do they have a sense of humor that engineers love you guys. There's a spectrum. You know, but there's always if I can find some way to connect with somebody, I know that they in turn are going to find a way to connect with other people. There's just like, no way you can get into somebody through however many channels you try, right? They're just not. They're just very much into their own thing. That's probably not gonna be a good

M

Mark Agostinelli 34:21

hire. So it sounds to me like you certainly have some obvious indicators when you're hiring and what you're looking for. Yeah, but you quick, but you quickly turned into also a gut feel. Always always



34:33

quite good. Yeah. And my gut has been 99% of the time spot on. And then but, you know, we

all have blind spots.

 Mark Agostinelli 34:44

I mean, I don't know you know, what I do know it was the coffin companies is a contract manufacturer at a Western pretty big operation like \$250 million company, so good sized company. And I remember going there a family owned business and never going to have Amway Business Roundtable. And he talked about the importance of making decisions based on your gut. And he's and I remember, this is Jim senior talking. At one point, he goes, your gut, sometimes you get it wrong, and he goes, but your gut will learn and it won't make the same mistake twice. And I was like, Ah, I got like that like, okay, that totally resonates with me, because I've definitely evolved. I think in the beginning for me, I was a little bit more X's and O's when I interviewed people. And now it's like, I ask people like, what was your first job? What kind of people and nobody like I want to just hear who they are and what they like to do. And you're you have a more succinct and open to learning. I'm learning a lot from our conversation even that I want to incorporate into our I've kind of tried to do it, but I don't think I've been able to articulate it as well. So I love hearing how people interview and I'm so it's so cool to hear that you haven't really changed the way you approached it in years. Forever. I

 35:52

just also have more confidence in myself. Yes. I used to be terrified to go in and interview people. Yes, right. Yes, I can expose that. I don't know about the technology as much as I should. Am I gonna? You know, am I gonna seem like an idiot compared to you? PhD.

 Mark Agostinelli 36:09
Right?

 36:11

And then, you know, over time, you know, when it's just human being to a human being. It can be really fabulous. I mean, I've had some interviews, or I've just really thought, wow, that was really fun.

 Mark Agostinelli 36:28

Yes. That yeah, then those are the ones where, so I've had only a handful of those in my career, like when I've walked out being like, this person is unfreaking. believable, like, and they always tend to be the ones though we're like, that's the person that is crushing it. Like, for me at least, it's like, it's like, okay, my gut must be on to something to a degree. That's cool. Do you? Do you have then, like, whether it be interviewing someone or you talked about your own path? Do you had some regrets along the way? Was there an opportunity you were so pumped about that you seize and then regretted taking right away? Like you mentioned the brief stint? Yes, technology committee, but you kind of knew that wasn't gonna work? Yeah. Did you have

another example of maybe something where you're like, This is gonna be great. And then if it I mean, obviously, heartland and rethink didn't pan out the way you want it to? But that was an evolution. Yeah, exactly. Right. It doesn't you sounded like you were at peace with that. So yeah. Was there anything along the way that you were like, didn't think it was gonna go like that?



37:27

Now, other than that, one that we mentioned before? Yeah, I think, in general, I would say that there have been interactions or, you know, situations. Yes. But as an overall, you know, commitment to something



Mark Agostinelli 37:42

wasn't. Okay. That makes that makes sense. I so what, what's next for Han right now? Like, what are you? You're, you're newly at vicarious. It will enable morphing to a larger role, I'm sure as as time goes on, but like, what do you what gets you most excited today about getting up out of bed?



38:04

I think there's a lot of there's a lot of opportunity there again, because the the intent is so good. And I only actually go into the office three days a week, right now, I'll probably change Yeah, going forward. But I find when I go, I just really, really enjoy my time there. Love my interactions with people get this, there's a lot that needs to be done. And you and I and the car on the way over here, we're talking about this one hire that I've been trying to make since even before I got that I think that will really be beneficial. So there's a lot of ideas that I have of ways that I things I think could be really beneficial to the company. And, you know, I'm having to really work it to say, Hey, I think I know what I'm talking about. Can you trust me? And but you know, we're only in two months, I have to work on building that trust, right. I I'm learning to be more patient. And so what I guess what excites me now is I just love being effective. Super effective. So I feel like here I will have an opportunity to be effective. And I have to be willing to take it in its right time. Yes. Yeah. So but another thing that's



Mark Agostinelli 39:40

better than worse. It's freaking summer. Yeah, right. Right. Finally, right. It's a new day. Best



39:45

time of the year in Boston. It is right now. Oh my god. I love my



Mark Agostinelli 39:51

.....

city. Yeah, come back in January. Yeah. So yes. Oh my god. And you and you've got it. Dial two, I'm so envious of your city lifestyle.



40:03

Yeah, so I can I can either walk



40:05

to Charlestown. Yes. Excuse me.



40:08

You have to Davis square. I'm just gonna be celibate square round square as far as Cambridge and or, you know, to Dover, and yeah, that's nice. Yeah. I'm out



Mark Agostinelli 40:20

and about which is a lot which is like yeah, so nice in this weather especially. So what do you what do you do in the winter? Do you just Uber over there?



40:28

No, I am not an Uber person under suck it up



Mark Agostinelli 40:31

and get on the team. Yeah, I love it. I love the team. That's how you do from Boston? Yes, hard. It's like anywhere else, I think. Well, I mean, I'm certainly biased. But I feel like this place is just, there's a sales. There's a sales guy that I big fan of he was a trainer to me when I was early on my career. And he goes, Boston is the weirdest place on Earth, because it's the only place in the city where you can get an AR T and no one will say hello to you. But if you strike up a conversation with someone, and you connect, they will genuinely be friends with you. Yeah, and you can go and it's like, it's such an it's such a hard place at times. It's just even you saying like, No, I don't take an Uber. I suck it up and put on my winter coat. That's how I heard that. That's so good. That is so good. Do you do you feel I'm interested in now kinda. You've got, you've got pedigree, maybe not VC pedigree. But you've got pedigree in terms of what you've done, where you've come from, and and now you're in a new, you're in a new place, and you're trying and there's new parties involved, and they've got things they want to do. And you've been tasked with doing things like how is that? How have you been managing the man, I can tell you, this is the way to do it. But also you got to let them kind of fail with you along the way if that's fair learn with you along the way. Because I because you're working with some, you know, some people who are at the very beginning of their careers, yes, very beginning. And

they've got ideas about how things are, but they've obviously brought you in because they wanted someone who didn't bring in someone just out of school. Right. Right. So how do you manage that? How's that been going?



42:11

Yeah, so as I said a few minutes ago, like you know, I'm only two months. Yeah. And right now it's just, you know, them getting to know me. And again, it's a trust thing. Yes. Yes.



42:33

A hair changes color.



42:37

We'll see. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. So



42:41

it is it's just about an



Mark Agostinelli 42:43

evolution of trust. Yeah.



42:46

Meeting with people one on one slowly, slowly. Hopefully, word.



Mark Agostinelli 42:51

I'm guessing too, right. Yeah. The end Whitaker campaign. That's so cool. That is so cool. Now. Like that was kind of those are the things I was most interested in. But I really wanted to hear from you. Because I don't know. And previous to Heartland everything. Yeah. Really terrific. Because even Heartland I didn't die by the time. Yeah. So before what were there any incredibly big surprises along your career before that? Like, what's the what's the juicy stuff that I've missed? Like, what did I miss along the way?



43:29

Nothing juicy. Mostly, just seeing someone kind of went her way through feeling super awkward and not belonging, and kind of out in left field

 **A** Ann Whitaker 43:47
in terms of the way I view the world, right, too slowly kind

 43:51
of going in. I kind of have some valuable stuff here. And it seems that some people appreciate it. So I think mostly, you know, what do you miss? Because, like, many years have a ton of self doubt, and inner turmoil and not standing up for myself and

 **M** Mark Agostinelli 44:10
I only know I don't give a fuck and like, you know, like for me,

 44:15
I do give a

 **M** Mark Agostinelli 44:16
no, no, I mean, I guess I should say that in context. self confidence. I know you care. I know you care. But like, you know what I mean? Like i i don't i You mentioned a number of times, like gaining self confidence over time. I just don't know that. I know. I just don't know. I don't I don't feel like you pretend to wear together. Like I think I think that's who you are. But I don't. That's interesting to hear.

 44:45
I guess I'm not the way that I thought I should be. Which is a whole lot more assertive. I wish like I wish I had like a financial free. Yeah,

 44:54
I could be like alright, back.

 44:57
You know, I remember I was was interviewing for one job, I don't know, five months ago or whatever, four months ago, and it was going along great. And we want to bring you in and like, so What's kept you guys from hiring for this role? Well, you know, we want someone who's real

data driven like you are talking to the wrong person, right? Because data driven is so now



Mark Agostinelli 45:22

we're just talking about hiring a gut.



45:24

Yeah, no, I'm not data driven at all.



Mark Agostinelli 45:27

Yeah. I mean, it's a



45:31

I wish, because I kind of feel like, you know, if I could speak, you know, more fact based and data driven. I would be more I'd have more cred.



Mark Agostinelli 45:42

Yeah, so yes, I get it. But at the same time, it's like, how many times do you sit with people when they just use the facts? Or they manipulate the facts to support their worldview? Anyone? Right. So it's like, you don't find yourself assertive? I think that's fine.



46:00

Oh, do you think I'm assertive? Ah,



Mark Agostinelli 46:03

I definitely don't think I definitely don't think you're like type B. I don't think you like passive. Yeah, I'm definitely I've never been like, Mark No, don't do that. Do this, this and this in this order. But you know, I mean, those are control freaks. There's like a spectrum of assertion, so Okay, that's interesting. So and, and early in her career was filled with self doubt.



46:26

Yeah, that's why I'm like a super goof. I'm still goofy. Yeah, who



M

Mark Agostinelli 46:30

isn't? Who isn't? So did you expect? So you obviously didn't expect to have this career that you have today? Oh, no, no, no, no. No way. But you are?



46:39

Yeah. Yeah. And I am really much more suited to Yes. Smaller company. Yes. A place where I can be, you know, coaching, mentoring. Sort of, again, just cheering people on. So when I first interviewed officially with Adam, he said to me, like, where do you want to be in five years?



47:07

What did you want to say? What was like?

M

Mark Agostinelli 47:18

Me with me with a vodka soda. At that point. I don't care. That's, that's too funny. That's too much. You're just enjoying it for the game of itself at this point.



47:31

Yeah. And again, I'm enjoying it because I do love being effective. Yes. And I do. I just love watching things happen. Watching things grow helping people grow. Yeah,

M

Mark Agostinelli 47:46

yeah, I think when there's almost it's almost better to have a mountain of opportunity and being struggling of which opportunity to choose than having just a few of your specialism like, I think that's so interesting. Do you find that the engineers you talk to? I'm gonna say engineers, but I'm gonna, I'm gonna retract that. Do you find the people in the world? You talked about how you would never hire someone who's like, I'm the best at this that there ever was. You should be lucky to have me. Do you find that there's a lot of people, certainly early in their career that aspire to be that person. Or do you think people are okay, being generous? Because I because I kind of mixed okay. Yeah. All right, cool.



48:26

5050. Yes. Yeah. I mean, there are some people and I was talking earlier about that. I kind of wish I had that singularity of purpose. Just so people it's like, they just there's like a linear path. ativy Yeah. And they probably actually, you know, life throws stuff at you, but probably when you're that fierce about what you want to be is that is that narrow thing and probably attain it. Yes. You're kind of dealt with that in a way. Yes. I'm glad that's not my path. But I'd say it's consequent down the middle of okay, people.



Mark Agostinelli 49:01

Yeah, it's good. Yeah,



49:01

I just committed to that one.



Mark Agostinelli 49:04

Versus versus open minded and yeah, that's it. I just always I mean, I went to school and got a liberal arts degree, right. So I'm like Uber generalist. Yeah. Like what Judo school for? It's like well, I learned a lot about a lot of fun little about a lot you know, like I don't know a ton about one thing so I always interested to hear your I mean, you've interviewed a ton of people and some of the top engineers that are finding institutions in the Boston area produce I just got too eager to hear how that works. From your worldview standpoint. Do you? Do you struggle ever? Or how do you handle the balance of it all? Meaning like, I find the and I know, obviously wants to be excel in her professional life, but also her personal life and there's so many facets to both. Do you find yourself sometimes leaving, you know you've juggling a million balls at once, but sometimes just leaving a few balls to the side to focus on a couple of like, how have you had bounce rate, you have a son who just graduated from college. Correct, but cheers to that. Yay. Yes.



50:08

So oh, I didn't miss it. It's not a valid



Mark Agostinelli 50:12

thing in Germany, you could potentially be prosecuted for something like that.



50:17

I have to stay. It's all kind of worked really well together. I don't feel like I've left anything out for maybe. Probably the only thing I've not done enough of is like rest and sleep. Yeah. Um, but I feel really happy about how I've parented my son. And incredibly happy for him. Yeah, how he's gotten to age 22. And I've always, you know, made time to do the things I need to do, which is I have to exercise. Yes, that would be just a disaster for everybody. And I have a lot of I have not a lot. I'm rich with a husband with friends. People around me who keep me a true to my own self centered and question me. Yes. So I think I just have the support in my life to do what I want to do.





Mark Agostinelli 51:30

Yeah, that's awesome. So I feel lucky that what do you do you always feel like it was working in that way? Or like, even early on your career? Was it going like that? Yeah. Yeah. All right. Let's



51:41

come to me



Mark Agostinelli 51:42

later. Okay. Cool. So there's hope for me.



51:45

Yeah. That's Yes. Yes. No, I



Mark Agostinelli 51:47

mean, I feel like it's right now. But sometimes really good stuff. I



51:50

mean, I love your face. You're happy.



Mark Agostinelli 51:51

Oh, I am. I mean, incredibly happy and grateful. And I, you know, I'm



51:55

an amazing, boss. Yes. Sounds like you have a really



Mark Agostinelli 52:00

wonderful way I do. Very lucky.



52:03

And you have things in your life that you love to do, and you do them.

 Mark Agostinelli 52:07

Yeah, that's kind of what it that's kind of itself. But no, yeah, I just I, I think sometimes I'm really critical of myself, which makes me feel like Man, you're really dropping the ball on this. But then when I stand back from a situation like that, it's not that bad that you're just freaking out over. I think that just more tends to be a personality trait. And we gotta get you sleeping. That's not rest.

 52:31

Do you tracking like, sleep? How's

 Mark Agostinelli 52:33

it going? I'm a nerd about this stuff. I caught me in a really sensitive subject. Because I was I have a whoop, whoop, which is a startup in Boston that will Ahmed runs. But it tracks your sleep. And it changed my behavior significantly.

 52:50

Yeah, I mean, it's like, you know, writing the Queen Mary or whatever the heck it is like it's like it's it's little little steps.

 Mark Agostinelli 52:57

Yes. It absolutely. Yes. It's hard to have. Has your behavior changed at all wearing your? Yes. What's the biggest thing?

 53:07

Um, I guess I think you and I talked about this definitely. Staying off of screen

 Mark Agostinelli 53:15

before bed an hour? Yes. Yes.

 53:18

That's huge. Hey, guess what, now I have more time to read

 Mark Agostinelli 53:22



Mark Agostinelli 53:22

and you read and you read nightly? Is that a nightly? That's part of the process. I want two weeks straight of reading, which with its four and a two year old is that's basically a miracle. Yeah. Even if it's like six pages I counted. That's awesome. That's, that's really awesome. The that's, that's one of the hardest things to do, though. It's kind of bounced asleep, because it's the easiest thing, especially when you get excited about something. You're like, oh, man, it's already 11. And I forget, but five. It's like I was supposed to get eight they said, but you can't do it. So no, that's cool. Oh, which leads me to a question I missed in the beginning, which is kind of the canned questions, but I'll go back to it. Now. What's the weirdest thing about your daily routine?



54:08

I think the weirdest probably is in this this sounds like when people say you know, what's your biggest weakness? Oh, I



54:16

I work too hard.



54:20

I really have to do some form of exercise. Yeah, yes. It's just and yeah, I get up super early to get to a bags class or to a yoga class or, yeah, I just it's, yeah, I have to move. And I like to I walk a lot too. I mean, that's



Mark Agostinelli 54:38

Yes. Which is the benefit of your lifestyle faster. Living in the city. Yeah, being able to get



54:43

places on on foot,



Mark Agostinelli 54:44

which is so awesome. I definitely started working out for probably the wrong reasons of being like, I'd seen that so many people had like, daily exercise early in the morning. They all tended to be very successful. I was like, well, if they're doing that I should do that right like my Yeah, ignorant mind. And then I realized the same thing about myself. I'm like a dog who has to be walked around me, my wife, mainly my children. It's like, did you get your walk today, Mark? So I, I'm with you on that. I'm totally with you on that. And I got through this cute circuitous route, but it's accounts right?



55:22

Oh and same confession. Yes, I'm like super into skincare. Super, super interesting care.



Mark Agostinelli 55:29

So what's the weirdest thing you do for your skin? I spend a lot of time on it. Yeah, it's Cliff like, what is that cream? Yeah, constantly. Like it's our it's like our biggest organ. I'm the worst about it. But yes. So I mean, what would you like? We're kind of we're getting close to the end here. But not but I want to know, like, Are there I think someone in your role really, you've seen so many career paths happen from a technical but also professional standpoint? I think I'm hoping that people that listen, this podcast will be from all walks of life in general, like it won't be just, salespeople won't be just technical engineering people. What advice do you have? Or what like if you were talking to a recent college grad, maybe not yourself. But a recent college grad, or someone who maybe was early in their career, but really struggling to know if they like it? Right? Like you started in fashion. And now you're running human resource departments? How? What advice would you give them more? How do you have if you had to give a graduation speech? What would your message be?



56:38

And they would be try to stay out of your head and follow and I never I hate that thing. What was it follow your bliss or follow your but I think it's more when something excites you go find out about it. Yes. So always make sure to that you feel good. And here's where that got part comes in. You feel good about the people that you are signing up to work with, you know, or the that you feel like, I'm not sure that this is something I want or don't want in my career, but I kind of feel like I could learn something here. Or I really, maybe it's like the thing that the company sells or the service that it gives or, you know, whatever, yeah. People, people, but Well, I kind of look up to that person. Maybe I can learn something from them. So I think it's finding people from whom you could learn or situations that are exciting to you, and maybe a little bit scary. But I think that there's no way that when you're young, you can know what your beliefs are your quote. In other words, way over us passion.



Mark Agostinelli 57:59

Yeah. Yeah,



58:01

know that. But just follow the excitement. Follow the buzz in your gut that says something that kind of looks interesting, right? And as long as your gut also says, oh, and it also looks safe, and like it might be a place where I can feel mentored. Or at least supported. That's probably a pretty good

M

Mark Agostinelli 58:20

Yeah, good. A good start. Yeah, yeah. I think I think I hate to follow your passion thing. Because it's like, it like, forgets to mention all the hard work and failure and sucking that up. Like, whose job doesn't suck a percent of the time? To time? Maybe 25. Like, there's always a point your job that sucks. Yeah, that's how it works. Yeah. I also don't like sending meeting agendas. But we got to do it. But it's it doesn't I don't get up in the morning. Oh, here we go. So I'm with you on the follow your passion thing is.



58:54

But, um, but I do like,

M

Mark Agostinelli 58:56

I have a passion for living. And I follow that passion. So I would say I, I could say a tongue in cheek, I guess.



59:03

And also thinking about what, you know, what do you want to look? What do you want to affect in a positive way? Do you want to bring along with you? Or how do you want to think instead of saying, Where do you want to be in five years? You're thinking like, how do you think you could make things better for someone or a group of people or whatever? Keeping that in mind? Like,



59:32

how can I be a part of making things

M

Mark Agostinelli 59:34

better? Yes, yes. And that can happen



59:38

and that's individual and that's like, I'm talking about real small you personally. Yes. Like, oh, I'm gonna go for a company that's going to create a cure for cancer.

M

Mark Agostinelli 59:49

Right, whatever. But that's bounce. Yeah, that's and knowing you're really saying know yourself, know what works for you.



59:56

It can get can you're not going to know that



Mark Agostinelli 59:59

I guess I'm saying you're, you're saying pay attention. What I'm hearing is synthesizing pay attention to the things that are making you high on life, and just try to do a little bit more. Yeah. Yeah. I love it. I love it. And I think that's a perfect way to wrap it almost you have any other wise words that we need to impart? Yeah, that's fine. You get another. And thanks so much for coming on.



1:00:22

Thank you, Mark. For



1:00:24

how many years now?



Mark Agostinelli 1:00:27

I guess we're I mean, I've been here for going on 10 nine or 10. So I think probably seven. Yeah, probably seven, seven. Yeah. I mean, when I finally came out of the cocoon.



1:00:39

Always, always when I get off of a phone call with you whenever I'm always



1:00:43

jazzed. Oh,



Mark Agostinelli 1:00:44

thank you. Thank you very much. Right. Well, I tried to make you feel good. Maya Angelou. Right. So well. Thank you very much. And thank you all for listening.