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SPEAKERS

Mark Agostinelli, Bill Laursen

Mark Agostinelli 00:00

All right. Welcome back to Beers and Careers. I'm your host, Mark Agostinelli. And as always, the podcast is brought to you by the Davis Companies www.daviscos.com. That's D A V I S C O S.com. Davis helps folks find roles in engineering it and manufacturing and they've just launched a new website, which makes finding your next role, pretty much as easy as as can be. So check it out, talk to a Davis recruiter today, www.daviscos.com. During the podcast, we had Bill Larsen. Bill's a friend, someone I've known for quite some time now. But we get a, we get a deep dive into his background. He's currently running a contract manufacturing company president and CEO of a contract manufacturer in the greater Boston area, where we talk about his journey to get there and specifically about finding perspective, he really got out of his comfort zone early in life. And he really credited for making all the difference in the world. And I think if you're, if you're stuck in a rut, or, you know, looking for a little inspiration, this is the type of podcast for you. Because I think it really makes you want to get outside of your four walls. So Bill and I had an awesome conversation. I really hope you enjoy it as much as I did. And check it out. First off, cheers. And thank you, thank you for getting lost in the way here. My Can you believe? Can you believe that? The host gave you the wrong address? I can. Exactly. Exactly. Well, welcome to Beers and Careers.

Bill Laursen 01:41

Thank you. Happy to be here.

Mark Agostinelli 01:43

We're fired up to have you here. We've known each other now for it's got to be at least seven or eight years I would 1013 Okay, yeah, yeah, perfect. Perfect. Perfect. So yeah, let's let's kick it off and let the audience get to know you a little bit and then we'll we'll get rolling into it. So Bill Larson is the guest today for CEO and President of micron resolution Yeah, micron solution solutions. Yes. Perfect. got it wrong before it was used to the old name I think that's what it was



02:12

used to be formerly known as micron products.



Mark Agostinelli 02:15

Correct. Correct. What is Bill auctions favorite drink Coors Light. So we also this was not only like for today this is this is



Bill Laursen 02:24

a perfect so it. I mean, I like other things, but this is my go to



Mark Agostinelli 02:27

that's the go to move. What do you have any favorite guilty pleasures? Mr. Bill Washington.



Bill Laursen 02:33

Probably that same Coors Light.



Mark Agostinelli 02:36

Simple. My favorite curse word. F bomb F bomb. Classic. I think we now have a lot of data on this. Yeah, unequivocally. It's everyone's favorites. Cursor. Is it? Yeah. Fuck reign supreme. Yeah. It's the best automatic pa go. I



02:57

might add or Yeah, right. You know,



Mark Agostinelli 03:00

depending on the mood. Yeah. Are you a quote guy? You have any favorite quotes? Are you into that kind of thing? Not really not. Yeah. It's also somebody I've known for the podcast polarizing. Yeah, I'm a cool person. So I kind of thought it was a thing. Yeah. It turned out it just I'm a loser.



03:17

I'm not opposed to them. Yeah, no, no, I



Mark Agostinelli 03:19

know. I know. I just I found out that people. Some people vibe with them and some people don't. It's cool. What was your first job? Like first ever paying job?



03:28

I worked on a strawberry farm. No way. Yeah. 10 years old. Where? Mr. Grave strawberry farm in Lancaster, Massachusetts.



Mark Agostinelli 03:38

Very cool. Originally from Lancaster. I am 10 years old and strawberry farm. What was your job there?



03:44

I did two things. I planted strawberries. Yes. And then it takes like three years for them to turn into pickable strawberry plants. Really? Yep. And so it was a constant rotation of the crops. And then I would weed strawberries and pick strawberries.



Mark Agostinelli 04:00

Wow. Yeah. As a 10 year old are you starting?



04:03

Was my neighbor. Okay,



Mark Agostinelli 04:05

I was gonna say how'd you get into that?



04:06

Yeah, he was, uh, you know, it was a older guy, much older guy. And he was a teacher in the school system, retired and was a farmer. And, you know, was, was a good gig.



Mark Agostinelli 04:21

I was gonna say, that's pretty cool. I also I guess I wouldn't have been able to answer if strawberries were like, where people harvest strawberries from that's just fine. That was



04:30

a little strawberry fun match, you know, so lets



Mark Agostinelli 04:34

it rip. That's really cool. And then from there, take me through it. Like give me the idea. Now you're the CEO of a company. So it's, it's it's been a journey, but like, how did it how did it evolve from there?



04:47

From there? I ran the maintenance team for the Bolton fair. Okay, so the Bolton fair at one time was in Bolton. Yes. And basically there was a Oh, God, there must have been 40 acres or more property. And so we would basically maintain it and then get it ready for the event the boat and fair, which was a weekend every year. And that whole thing, it was like a mini business and the whole thing was predicated on the success of a weekend. So it's so 52



Mark Agostinelli 05:20

weeks a year for one weekend. I was



05:22

only summer. Yeah. Okay. Yeah, I worked in high school and then in college, but yeah, so but I had a crew, I had a team of like, five or six guys that did that whole teenage kids and we just, you know, cut down trees and mowed? Yes, and that kind of prep barns and stuff like that staging



Mark Agostinelli 05:42

that kind of thing. Yeah. How'd you become de facto leader?



05:46

I don't know. Just did it did it? Yeah. It was just a kick of the knuckleheads.



Mark Agostinelli 05:53

 Mark Agostinelli 05:53

What an honor.

 05:55

So it was a high pressure job. We just because you had it was that weekend like it had to be done. Yeah, there was no so you had to work off. Didn't matter if it was rainy 12 hours a day. It was it was relentless. But

 Mark Agostinelli 06:08

wow. You do that through high school and college.

 06:12

High School and a little bit of college. Okay. But I also in high school for a while work for the Auto Workers Union for the Chrysler Auto Workers Union. No, I was a parts picker and packer. Okay, so my dad worked for the Chrysler Corporation for his whole career and he got me plugged into this.

 Mark Agostinelli 06:33

And that was where was that out of?

 06:35

It started on speed Street in Framingham or Natick? Yeah. And then it moved to Mansfield batts. Okay, so like, it's been three year to Mansfield.

 Mark Agostinelli 06:45

Very cool. I was just with a bunch of guys at a roundtable in Fort Lauderdale that grew up in Detroit during the Lee Iacocca day. Wow. So I just got my backdoor bar education of what was going on back then. But that's wild.

 07:01

That's why he was quite a quite a guy contributed to the automotive industry.

 Mark Agostinelli 07:05

Wild. Wow. So then, after college, take me through the take me to the laps.



07:10

So after college, I took a job with a company called net stall machinery a Swiss company. Okay. The first thing I did is I went to Switzerland and did an engineering apprenticeship. So I



Mark Agostinelli 07:23

went to graduate business. Business. Okay. Yeah.



07:26

And, but I was always mechanically inclined. Yeah. So I did an engineering apprenticeship. And then I was a field service engineer. I worked on injection molding machines for the first part of my, my job.



Mark Agostinelli 07:40

Oh, no way. Yeah. Okay. I did not know that about Yeah.



07:44

And then I was brought up to sales. The whole idea was, if, if I was really good, technically, it would make it that much easier to sell. And it turned to be true. Absolutely. It. It worked out really well. So I had a very technical sales strategy, to the point where my customers would have me quote for them. And I would quote, like, the best package I could find on the planet for the application. And the machinery we made was really high end. So we we only targeted things that kind of fit the machines. But you know, for the right application, we were killing it. So I would pitch for my customers to their customers. Like Hewlett Packard. Yeah, you know, Schlumberger and companies like



Mark Agostinelli 08:27

that. It was were you all over the world at that point in time or



08:30

at that time, I was responsible for the western half of North American sales for that company. That's



Mark Agostinelli 08:38

where we live in San Diego. Okay. Yeah. That's like the classic Massachusetts hosting spot of California. San Diego. It's such a weird like, when you gather and you go



08:47

there last week, what



Mark Agostinelli 08:49

are you really? Yeah, no way. So you were a recent college grad doing this. So you were like in your early 20s, mid 20s. went to Switzerland and then living in San Diego.



08:59

Yeah, I had to learn German because that was like in a back village of Switzerland. So



Mark Agostinelli 09:04

like, learn learn German or just nobody



09:06

spoke English. Well, I mean, younger people did, but I integrate, you know, right into the How did that go? It went it went okay. I mean, in the interesting thing about Switzerland is they do not speak like regular High German. It's a dialect of German. Wow. So funny story. So I arrived in Switzerland. You know, I arrived in Zurich airport, I had to take a train out to the village. I get off this train and I'm like, Okay, you're I have a notability apps. And this other guy gets off the train too. And I'm asking around like, Hey, I'm trying to find this, you know, my apartment was in Firebelly. Stross us Farbe Lee Street. And so anyways, and people are answering me in the numbers and the numbers are different in Swiss German than they are in High German. So I'm kind of like what so I You know, I at the time, I use cassette tapes to learn



Mark Agostinelli 10:03

German, but you were learning High German on this.



10:07

Anyways, this other German guy is also doing the engineering course. And you over years me because he's trying to get to the same place. And so he goes, Are you trying? Are you coming from the NetSol? You know, engineering thing? Yeah. So was paying in High German. I said I

don't just because I'm from Germany, and I don't either. So I mean, he had a fighting chance. Yeah. worked through it. But wow. Yeah.

 Mark Agostinelli 10:36

How long were you there in Switzerland for six months? Really? Oh, that's why I had to learn German. Yeah. You had no choice. Yeah, totally immersed in like a week.

 10:43

And it wasn't like I was in Zurich. I was like, in. I was like village in the, in a village. Yeah. In like the back of the valley in the Alps. Wow. Yeah. It was crazy.

 Mark Agostinelli 10:58

Did you recognize how cool that was? At the time?

 11:00

Yeah. Yeah. When the opportunity came up, I was like, hell yeah. So I would go hiking up in the mountains on the weekends and, and I bought like this crap, and have any money. Yeah, I was a broke kid in college. And I bought like a, like a delivery van was the only thing I could afford a little diesel. Nissan cabinet. Yeah. Couldn't get out of its own way. But I toured all around Europe in that little van. Wow. So yeah, so it was it was a pretty cool experience.

 Mark Agostinelli 11:32

Did it? Help? I'm always interested in this kind of stuff. Because I know you now with, you know, a family and yeah, running a company in the world and gets bigger. Do you think it helped you be successful in that job? Because you had your horse blinders on to the rest of the world kind of thing. It was just like work and then non work time and non work time? Yeah. I'm guessing your family wasn't visiting you that often at all? We're not

 11:56

Yeah, yeah. So super dedicated to the work. The Swiss don't put in power days, though. You know, like, oh, American. Yeah, to work. 12 hours, I had nothing else to do 12 hours a day, but they were like,

 Mark Agostinelli 12:08

eight 8.1? Like a max like, Yeah, shut it down.



12:12

Yeah, yeah. So they were pretty, pretty stringent on their schedule. But that being said, you know, I would, I could study all I wanted out outside, you know, standard hours. And I think the one thing or maybe a couple takeaways from that was a, like, when I first graduated from college, I traveled all around the US like camping. Okay, so



Mark Agostinelli 12:38

this is before you took the gig before I took the gig. Yeah.



12:41

So I got the travel bug, right. Yeah, I realized, like, wow, life is a lot bigger than where I grew up. Lancaster, Mass. Yes. Yeah, I went to college in North Adams, Massachusetts. And I like that, then I went abroad. So all these countries and, you know, had all these experiences and thought, wow, you know, like, there's so much more to life than what everybody I know, understands, like, how many people have gone global. And I had by the time I was 23, or whatever, right? So I really took all that in and truly appreciate like, cultures, global dynamics, because think about it. Like, I was the guy that really couldn't speak the language. It wasn't that I was, you know, less educated than anybody else or, you know, adult. But the reality is, I might have been perceived as that. Yes. So like, when I went when I'm here in the US today, and people don't speak English as their primary language. I think, wow, this person could be some rock star from somewhere, but they're here. They're right. They took the chance. So pay attention Perspective Perspective. Yeah. So that's one example. But you know, what I thought was magical about the experience was, I just took in so many different cultures and so many different experiences in a really short period of time. But I had nothing else to do.



Mark Agostinelli 14:03

You know, so the benefit of Europe, though, yeah, the benefit to Europe, 70 miles west, and you're in a different land?



14:09

Yeah. So I mean, I could drive 40 minutes and I was in Liechtenstein, drive two hours, Austria, four hours, you're in not even four hours, two hours, you're in Germany. And then Switzerland itself is, you know, there's a huge difference between, like the German part of Switzerland, the French part of Switzerland and the Italian. Right. So, and the Italians have the best, best perspective on life probably, but, you know, they're super laid back of that group, or that group. So the I think the Italian culture, you know, has a lot figured out



Mark Agostinelli 14:44

are you just saying that to me, because of my last name. I



14:46

just know you're Italian.



Mark Agostinelli 14:49

Just butter me up. You know, it's funny. I knew none of this about you. Yeah, well, which is why this this podcast for me it's been fun because I think I know these people and then I have mine and my Hey guys, do you speak? What do you call that Low German or dialect of German? Well,



15:06

it's Sri to do which is okay. That's the way I spoke. Deutsch is the



Mark Agostinelli 15:10

High German. Ah, yeah. Interesting. I didn't. You You know about me. I think that I lived in Australia for a couple of years after college doing something a little similar. You know, no less. Less work. Yeah. I was shocked at the English. It's an English country. Yeah. Speaking country, nevermind the dark, but like, they don't look at the world remotely like we do. Right. And I it's funny. I came with the same perspective as well. Yeah. And you hear about all this stuff on the news about the polarization of America. It's almost like, man, if we could just have people walk a mile in someone else's shoes and go in there is not enough. Yeah, no, you got it. Right. You got to kind of live there. And yeah, and being alone, I think, is another advantage. Yeah. Because you're you're, you're screwed to a degree when you're alone.



15:59

You ever read Matthew McConaughey his book Greenlight? I have not. You would love it. Really? Since you've Australia? Yeah, you gotta read it. And or audio book? Yeah, no, I'm,



Mark Agostinelli 16:11

I'm a reader. He.



16:13

He spent time in Australia, like, right after high school alone. And, you know, changed his life. But nonetheless,

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Mark Agostinelli 16:21

yeah. When you don't have a support network around? Yeah, yeah. No, it changes the way you have to deal with things. Yeah, that's really cool. I also feel like I tell people now about my Australian experience, maybe this happened to you. And they kind of look at you like, I don't have the money or the time to do kind of some of that stuff. And like, I'm not gonna lie. I'm grateful. My parents, you know, bought me a plane ticket. But that was it. Like, now you got to figure this out. We're not funding you to have a fun time. But you can do it when you can travel when you're young, like, the inspiration for this podcast was about two years ago. And meeting all these people, they were in sales, we get to meet all these people. And you realize, you know, I'm in the staffing business, all I do is look at people's career paths. Especially five, seven years ago, in my career, no one had a career path, like very few people. Everyone takes us nonlinear path. And all these people that I started to interface with, like yourself that, you know, everyone's got a different definition of success. But like I consider all of us kind of successful, because we like what we do. And I think that's half the battle. Yeah. But they didn't plan on it. They didn't like have this magic crystal ball. And so the podcast was inspired. Like, how do I document conversations with people that are real? Yeah. And so people aren't freaked out when they don't see like, an obvious career path in their job. But I mean, I think if you can travel, no, I don't even think that. I think you should force yourself to travel after college or after high school.



17:50

Yeah. Or just at least get out of your, your vendors. Yeah,

M

Mark Agostinelli 17:54

even if you leave. You know, for us the Northeast. Yeah, absolutely. We've got offices in Atlanta, it's a different country and Minnesota



18:01

go to Montreal, you'll have a different language, you'll have a different culture. So respective, I mean, five hour drive.

M

Mark Agostinelli 18:08

So true. So how long did you do the field service gig for?



18:10

I did that for trying to think so. That was my whole stint there was like 93 to 97. So I probably did that for a year. Pretty. Yeah. Well, what happened was the optical media industry started to boom, which was CD and DVD. And so I I, I did feel service for that. But I I was I had a career

path, right. I didn't get a business degree to go to turning wrenches. Yeah, I loved it. And I worked all the time. So I was constantly traveling again. Yeah, I was never home. I didn't even have like a place

 Mark Agostinelli 18:55

this is while your home base is San Diego or no. So this was before San Diego infield, sir. Okay, I didn't have a home base.

 19:02

I didn't even have I we our home base for the company was in it was in Devon's mass, yes. But I didn't have like a, an apartment or anything. I was just constantly on the road. When I came back, I stayed in a hotel. So or with a family member. But so I worked all the time as a field service guy, and maybe I did it for trying to think I think it was 93 to 95. Then I switched in 95 to sales. I did 9596 97 in sales. Okay, so okay. But then you talk about odd career path I was being groomed to take over for the president is what he said. But the reality of the situation was, I didn't think he had the longevity in the company for that to ever be true. You know, so, because he really he was a great mentor to me. He was a Swiss guy. Yeah. And so now I can speak Swiss cheese ermine Swiss guy, you know, we just saw eye to eye. And so I got recruited

 Mark Agostinelli 20:06

out of that job, and headhunters man.

 20:10

And I got head hunted heart and it was an offer that was so good. I couldn't refuse it. You know, it gets way more money. It was. And it brought me back here. So I was in, in San Diego, married

 Mark Agostinelli 20:24

and you meet your wife out in San Diego.

 20:26

I've met my wife here. Okay, she came with. So she had roots in mass. She had roots in math makes it easier. Yep. And then we started to think about kids and, and her mom got ill. So like it, then that happened after the fact. But it ended up being the right decision. priorities changed. Yeah, so priorities change. So that brought us back to mass. But you know, like, we we love San Diego and love to go back there someday. But you know, family first, right?

M

Mark Agostinelli 20:55

Yeah. Little different weather situation. Yeah. Just a hair. Yeah. So you What's this new job you get recruited out of and into.



21:03

So I worked for this company called DCA, Doug Carson and Associates. And and this guy, very, very smart guy built a small little business out of Cushing, Oklahoma, which is nowhere Oklahoma. And he developed the what's called Disk description protocol. And so this is going back to optical media. It was basically the format by which every disk was made, so that every reader that could read a disk read it.

M

Mark Agostinelli 21:33

Yeah. So logic and, you know, synchronization between



21:37

Yeah, it was all it was all basically the architecture of a disk and where the laser went to read and how, you know, how all this binary information was converted. And so the interesting thing was, so I was like, this is tired. You know, this, this technology, I mean, CD DVD was around for a while we were getting into blu ray. And I was thinking, so I had a buddy call me who worked for Technicolor, you know, like, yeah, speak up. Yes. And he said, listen, one of my friends is at Microsoft. And he heard that they forgot about copy protection for the Xbox. And he said, he gave me a name of a guy. So I call this guy up. And so here we are the company that makes everything playing everything. Yeah, I'm thinking to myself, I haven't we can make nothing play in it and nothing you don't want, right? So we can read. We know every verse about how to do this, we can reverse engineer it, to make it so it won't play in anything other than what you want it to play it. So literally, I call this guy from Microsoft. He's like, can you be here tomorrow? So I was like, Uh, yeah. So yeah, I'm in sales, right? I've never been to Microsoft before. It's like I got greeted by gods. Really. I walk into this these areas. And they have these are the the Rodriguez paintings, like in the office environment, really, which are like, I don't know, \$150,000 paintings. This is their workspace for the Xbox team. Whoa. And, and it was true. They didn't have a copy protection scheme. So I go back to the engineers at DCA and Doug Carson and said, Hey, guys, like, Can we do this? And they're like, Yeah, I think we could do it. And I said, Good, because there's huge penalties if we can. So if we say we can, yeah, we must. Yeah. And so but what was ironic is these folks from Oklahoma were hard working smart folks. But they are also very religious. And their religious put pretty serious constraints on their work time. Because they were involved with all kinds of their whole search social network was set up around the church, the community, so like, if you were on a little league team, you are on the this church, Little League team and they played against other church literally. Okay, so it's not like we have here it's like, cya. Yeah. So, so it was it was very narrow. So we were awarded the contract. It was it was, it was very intense. And we had to go to these meetings at these like secret locations. So like in farmhouses in like Ruckers, Ville, Virginia. They'd be like, Yeah, this is the meeting place in Reno, Nevada, and you name it, we had these crazy ways. It's because

they were paranoid that somebody was gonna sniff this technology, because they had like \$2 billion on the line, right? I think they at that time, we got engaged that 2 billion into it and a billion to go.

B

Bill Laursen 24:40

Did you ever sit there and I'm like, How did I get myself here?



24:45

Many times, and at the very end when we had to deliver, we weren't making it. So I literally I was in Oklahoma like, like doing all nighters testing circuit boards. That was part of the technology To deliver on time, and here I am the guy that owns the company and you know, his family, they're off doing whatever. Yeah. And here I am the schmuck measuring the board's making sure they're okay. Because I was like, if we don't do this, this guy's built a really nice living for himself, and someone's gonna take it away. Oh, yeah. So anyways, it worked out great, but it was heaven and

M

Mark Agostinelli 25:22

earth. Time. Yeah.



25:25

Exposure and results. And so he he made ungodly amounts of money on that. Really? Yeah. Yeah. I mean, for what he was, where his trajectory was headed. Yeah. Compared to where it landed.

M

Mark Agostinelli 25:39

Yes. Huge difference, right. Almost walked into a goldmine. Yeah, yeah.



25:43

10s of millions of dollars. And he might have had another couple million bucks left in that business based on

M

Mark Agostinelli 25:48

the run rate of that. Originally. Yeah.





25:51

So it was huge. Yeah. So. So that was exciting.



Mark Agostinelli 25:57

And then where did you go from there? Were you like, screw this up career? Can you hit me up?



26:01

He did not hook me up. So I mean, I did well, yeah. You know, especially for that age, but not not, you know, I probably should have met. So, so next job, job. Next is I got the job as the president of this company called M to engineering. Okay. So and that's really what I aspire to do is run a business. Yes. You know, so I,



Mark Agostinelli 26:26

when did you make that decision that you want to be a leader of a business,



26:30

I think what happened is I kept working for all these guys that ran businesses. And I thought, jeez, if we could just do this, that and the other thing, we can really do something here, but if you don't have the decision making to do that. And I never had the means to basically spy substratum or start one stuff, or I wasn't willing to take the risk to start one from scratch, I guess. Yeah. You know, and at that point, I had kids, or I had a kid. So anyways, so I took this job for him to America loved it. Swedish company. Not Swiss. Swedish. Yeah.



Mark Agostinelli 27:05

You love your Yeah, I



27:07

did. I do. I do. I and I like Scandinavia, because of my Scandinavian descent. Not that I know any of my Scandinavian relatives, but really enjoyed that great team mentality, really good leadership at the business in Sweden, the headquarters, and we had a great time growing the business like really rapidly. And what ended up happening was, so it was a great business for a long time. And optical media started to decline. And before the decline, you could predict it. And it was based on broadband. So like, you know, all the information was available to say that by 2010, you were going to be able to stream content. So why in the world would you buy a CD or DVD, mp3 was already out there, the whole Napster thing and all that. So like, the writing was on the wall, and a lot of people that m two are saying, Oh, well, no one's gonna want to do without their discs, you know, the physical medium, like, I don't like lugging around these. If you see my car, little thing like this,

 Mark Agostinelli 28:19
oh, my goodness, you know, like, like,

 28:20
why the heck would I lug around to figure this? And so I was like, I'm out of here. So, so I left and I joined. I went out on my own and had my own business for a while kind of doing the same thing. And, and then I had breakfast with Jim Coughlin senior who I love adore that. How did

 Mark Agostinelli 28:42
you get connected to him? i

 28:45
So my, I don't know how Yeah, connected

 Mark Agostinelli 28:48
to him. That's an honest answer.

 28:51
But I think the answer is that my sister in law, Trisha, yes. runs the 1540. Yes. Or detect together, right,

 Mark Agostinelli 28:59
which is, which is a local charity. Well, it used to be the March of Dimes in Worcester, correct? No,

 29:03
no, it was called the 1540. Connection. Okay. It has become detect together and it's all about it's all about disease detection. Yes. And it started as cancer awareness. And, and, and it started as cancer cancer symptom awareness. And now it's almost like any deed disease awareness, because it's yes, it's really the same thought probation.



M

Mark Agostinelli 29:24

advocation knowing your body. Yeah. So we're, we're big fans of



29:30

as am I, and it's magic. What they do. Yes. So and so I had breakfast with him one morning at what's now the series restaurant at the Beachwood Hotel. Oh, yes. Yeah. And he, it was a great meeting. I met him through the 1540 Okay, so I went to a 1540 event just as a paying patron or something. Yeah, Gala. And then And then we decided to have breakfast and that's how we met. But anyways, he's like, you gotta meet my sons. And, and so I did. And I wasn't looking for a job really. So, but I was sitting in the lobby of the of the company. And hadn't I was there. One person came up the elevators like, wow, this is like the best kept secret in contract manufacturers is 17.

M

Mark Agostinelli 30:25

This is 2012 17 bridon



30:27

17. Brian. Yeah,

M

Mark Agostinelli 30:29

that was there. But that was a cool building.



30:31

Yeah. So anyways, I was like, wow, like this. And I didn't even I didn't meet any of the boys, either the boys yet I didn't tour the facility. I just people popped out of the elevator and said that I'm like, wow, that's unusual as a guy that's interested in that knows the power of selling and all that. Yeah, I was like, that's pretty cool statement for this guy to make that just walked out of this elevator, whoever he is, right? I meet with Chris Coughlin, we just kind of shoot the breeze. And I go back again. You know, to meet him again. Same thing happens. Totally different persons, like in the lobby. They're about to leave. Like this is the best kept secret in contract manufacturing. So I was like, okay, these guys got something here. Yeah, like, and these people come to find out where from, you know, pretty major. One was a med device firm, and the other was in semiconductor. So I was like, she's maybe I should join forces with these guys. And I did as a sales guy, as a sales guy,

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Mark Agostinelli 31:35

not not to demean us as



31:36

salespeople. But what's funny is sales guy the whole time, right? I mean,



Mark Agostinelli 31:41

just like, it's like, yeah, we got a special title. Was



31:45

it a conflict? And they're, they're great guys. And they do a great job. You know, there was no confusing that. So. So that being said, it. I worked for the first three months for free. Because I was like, I don't know, man, like, the one thing I do know about family businesses. Is that, you know, if you're not in the family, yeah, you don't know what those family dynamics are. Right. And I have seen family companies where the family dynamics and not dynamics that I want to participate. And the columns are the type of family that you want to get their shit together. They have their shit together. Really good. Times about Yeah. And not only, you know, I I say the coffin brothers, but the Coughlin brothers are the coffin brothers, Chris and Jim. Yep, they are John de Carlos. Yeah, to love that guy. Love all these guys. Chris Palermo, CFO, the team. And the list goes on. Yeah. Alexis VA host.



Mark Agostinelli 32:49

It's an impressive it's an impressive it's a hell of a lineup. Also, when you're not working. And you're just hanging out? Yeah, fun group. A few of us salute. You know, like, it's not like



32:59

they give every employee a shirt that says work hard and play harder.



Mark Agostinelli 33:04

Yeah, it is. I mean, it's a good it's a it's why we've been such a fan of being a partner. Yeah,



33:10

yeah. How can you not be right? They're doing it right. Exactly. You know, and it isn't. It isn't a formula. It's, it's their spirit care. Ya know what I mean? So like, when I say spirit, it's like, you know, what your inner voice tells you to do? Their inner voice tells them to do very good things.



Mark Agostinelli 33:27

My My takeaway from the Coughlin situation as a, as a business person who had like an arm's length was like, you can culture trumps really everything. Yeah. Because, like staffing. For example, the business I'm in has some very not so sexy parts. Yeah. So doesn't manufacturing. Sure. And especially contract manufacturing, doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. You get the right culture. People love coming to work. It doesn't matter what you're doing. So that's what I took away from that whole,



33:58

ya know,



Mark Agostinelli 33:59

my experience with them. Yeah, that's really cool. So you did. So you were selling



34:03

from 2012 to 2018? The very end of 18 when I left? Yeah, very cool. Three years ago.



Mark Agostinelli 34:12

Very cool. And then you were like, I want to run a company again.



34:16

Yeah. But I wanted to the whole time. Yeah. And it probably could have happened with those guys. Like we we could have started buying companies and running them. But yes, but at the end of the day, you know what it's like as you have this belief system that you can do it. And then until you do it, you it's dark. It's dark. You know, it's tuk tuk, somewhere, you know, in the back pocket. So I wanted to pull it out front and center.



Mark Agostinelli 34:45

Awesome. Yeah. Awesome. How was that experience? Ben? Ben good. Yeah. So it's not perfect. Not meaning nothing is you know,



34:52

Chris Coughlin would tell you the same thing about the coffin company, right. So but you know what? What motivates me is all the things we just talked about. It's, you know, culture, it's being positive, it's creating exceptional experiences for your customer. And it's, it's that kind of

camaraderie you build between your, your crew, your team, and you know, the the people that you work with. So if you if you get that right, you really enjoy it. And it makes work. awfully fun. Yeah.

M

Mark Agostinelli 35:22

Right. It makes it worth getting up every morning for Yeah. Do you along the way? Are there any particular experiences like from earlier in your career field service, or that whole optical media beginning of that, that have really helped you in now?

i

35:41

That's a good question. Yeah, there's probably a ton of those. I mean, one of the things Yeah, I learned traveling all the time is patience. You know, think about it. If you're

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Mark Agostinelli 35:51

no way you're impatient,

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35:53

impatient, a little patience. But I've had to learn patience. Oh, my God. Yeah. So. And that's, and that's, you know, when you're traveling, think about how many people freak out about flying or getting, you know, getting outside of their comfort zone in terms of a bus or, you know, some somebody else driving something. And, and that's like, my happy place, you know, like, it's stressful, right. Getting to an airport. Yeah, getting through security. But once you're on the plane, and over the keys, right, right. You're gonna do right. So but that's also, I think, a lesson in life and businesses. You know, you have to say, with certain things, you know, like, it's, it's outside of your control, right? And you should be happy about that. Give up that control. And once you give up the control you, you kind of get it. Yes, you get it back. Yes. So you got to give it up to get it but

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Mark Agostinelli 36:44

a as obviously, someone who's you younger than their leadership, man, is that a hard thing to do? I think because you really. You have a lot of faith in the way you did it got you to where you are. Yeah. And so you think that that's the only way to skin the cat?

i

37:03

Well, that's one thing I've learned along the way to is, you know, we've had some, like, interns that have done some things. And I was like, Wow, holy smokes, right? This, this is so much faster, so much more creative. You know, like, this is better. This way. It's way, way better.

You're 22 Yeah, exactly. Like you are headed somewhere. Right? There's that, you know, that that, you know, I've learned along the way. I'm trying to think

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Mark Agostinelli 37:34

of that. It's hard to put it into practice, though. It's one thing to say you're gonna do it and delegate and give autonomy to another thing to actually execute on. What I've personally struggled with that for a while, especially about four, five years ago, in particular, because you get used to I mean, I grew up in an Italian family, it was pretty command and control. You know, like, you're just used to that way of living. Yeah, it's not how, you know, it's funny, I was just talking to a manager today about it internally, and it was like, it's, it's good if it's a strategy that works if you want to win the quarter, right? I'm trying to play for a few years here. Right? Like, it's a lot it's a long way to go. It's a long game, right? So I think it's it's funny, you mentioned the Coughlin family, and that experience so much because I got to go to a panel about family business. I don't let's call it four or five years ago, and Jim senior said he was like talking about raising the boys and making the decisions. And he said, You know, I learned at one point you have to give people enough rope. So that the break their leg, but not their neck. Yeah, that's exactly right. And I was like, damn, like, you know, just some statements. Yeah, always stay with you. And that's always been one when I'm like, in a challenging situation. Like, dude, maybe I just got shot. Like, is this person gonna get in trouble here or not?

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38:49

That was that was me with Brian Mannion? Yes. You know, so like, yeah, I love that kid. You didn't

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Mark Agostinelli 38:54

you gave him a vacuum. And he flourished. Yeah, exactly. So not a vacuum game space is what I mean.

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39:00

Yeah, I was gonna say I gave him I gave him that row. And there was times like, he's gonna break that leg. It's gonna hurt but anyways, yeah, it cost me some chips. But the flip side of that is when he hit his inflection point. Yes. Because there was a time right. And it happens. Like when you're when you're trying something new that you know, he was new. Is that his job? He was straight out of college? Yes. We hadn't been doing that a coffin. We've been kind of hiring people that were already baked into a roll. Yes. You know. So it's like, we can't afford to do that right enterprise wide. So I took a chance. And in the beginning, I was kind of like, oh, boy, we'll see. And after about six months, it was like on the fence. Like, I don't know if this strategy is gonna work out. And then he hit that inflection point. And, you know, probably about a year into his career and then he became

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Mark Agostinelli 39:54



Mark Agostinelli 39:15

unstoppable. It's like, it's another example of patients, right? You can't just test things over that quarter. To You gotta give it time



40:01

and as a leader, right? There's nothing more rewarding than that. I agreed, you know, because I didn't do it my way agree. Yeah, he did it his way. But you have to you have to be Jim Coughlin, you do and back and watch and be like, okay, you know, like, you have to, you have to be a person that believes in other people. So like, it starts with that, though, like, this is not anything for everybody. You first have to believe that that person that you're trusting in Yeah, has



Mark Agostinelli 40:27

the juice, and you have to have the intestinal fortitude to wait it



40:31

out. Exactly. But you shouldn't do that for somebody that you like, I don't know, right? Because chances are your guts, right? That that that's not going to work out? Because it's not going to work out for you. Yes, it worked out for them or anybody else who tries this experiment. Bob



Mark Agostinelli 40:46

always says Bob Davis, our CEO always says to me, they gotta want it more than you do. And I think you just articulated that to the nth degree. Yeah. Like,



40:55

I'll take, I'll take a beat player that's got the hunger and the grit over an A player any day that way, and I always will choose. I want somebody who's got to EQ that's on parity with their IQ. Yes, because I've also dealt with people with tremendous IQs and their EQs. punky. And they're not humble, they're not humble, and and they eventually figure it out. But it costs



Mark Agostinelli 41:25

you pay to be paid. I love how you say a lot of chips, because there is I've learned more recently. And I guess it's never an issue, but like are you willing to expend political collateral? I love it. You got chips. Yeah. I see. I told you we could talk forever. Yeah, wrap this up. Yeah, we gotta but before we do, I gotta tell you a quick Ryan Mannion thing that I'm going to end up with because it's unbelievable.



41:50



41:50

Okay, but he's in San Diego right now.



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Mark Agostinelli 41:52

Is it? Yes, he is. I still I still stay in touch with him vicariously through Instagram. And he's been? He came on the pot. Yeah, he's been on the podcast. If you were I know you've got kids, obviously, but and you mentored a lot of people and still do in your career? What like, what advice do you think you give? I think we hit travel, as you know, travel, get out of here. Get out of your comfort zone. And to give yourself perspective, I think the goal is to get perspective, right in that situation. Any other big nuggets of advice you might give a recent college grad, or just someone looking to do more that might be stuck in where they're at?



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42:29

Well, here we are talking about how we invest in, you know, young people. Yes. You know,



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Mark Agostinelli 42:35

the use of 35. Do I'm not that old. Yeah. Well,



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42:39

so just just say you invest in young people.



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Mark Agostinelli 42:43

Yeah. Yeah, I invest in all I mean, everyone really, yeah.



M

42:46

So but let's, regardless of age and experience, yeah. Best, inexperienced people. But any experienced person should look across the table and say is this somebody who believes in what we're talking about here? Because you can work for somebody who's an ogre, and you can be a rockstar, and you're going to be either stifled or discouraged, or, or, you know, you're just not going to rise to your best. Yes. So you have to choose your leader, as well as your leader has to choose you. Yes. And that's hard, because you don't know much when you're inexperienced or so true. But you got to use that EQ got to use that gut. So that's my advice. If you if you trust the person that's telling you that they're going to take you on this fantastic journey, go on the journey.



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Mark Agostinelli 43:34

It's a good one, take the trial, you find that as a person who leads leaders, it's easier for you to

it's a good one, take the trial, you find that as a person who leads leaders, it's easier for you to see it now than it was when they worked for you. So what I mean by that is like, there's certain people in the organization now that I know that are going to get there. Yeah, they were going to be successful, whether they were here or anywhere. Yeah. And I find that almost easier to spot at an arm's length than I did in the trenches with the person because I almost knew too much.



43:59

Yeah. I think, for me, it's a little bit of both, okay. It's like, you know, there's some people I see at arm's length. It's okay. But sometimes you have to, when you verify, it doesn't always pan out. Yes. You know, because, yeah, look at, look at digress. Athletics, professional athletes, there's some professional athletes that aren't that great athletes, but they tell a hell of a story. And guess who gets second round draft pick? Pick and it's, it's the person that has that whole package. It isn't always the best athlete. Yes. So like, you got to pay attention to that, too. There's some really good business athletes that don't have all the



Mark Agostinelli 44:41

don't do one thing incredibly well. Right. And they



44:45

may not also have be able to tell that story. Right. But yeah, and that's what's tough and that at arm's length. You can tell that but you have to have to poke a little to find out. Yes, who's who's really got the juice and who who seemingly



Mark Agostinelli 45:01

validate? Yeah, yeah. Well, Bill, thank you very much, man for coming. Hi,



45:05

pleasure. Cheers.



Mark Agostinelli 45:07

Am I quick Ryan man his story was he was an early podcast guest probably like he's got to be in the first time. Right and came on and I'm like, you know that can Questions section we did in the beginning. Like I'm still like, staring at my notes like, like, I've definitely gotten better at this as we've gone on and I was still such a rookie, then. Yeah, and um, I go what's your favorite? You're going through what's your favorite guilty pleasure? Like you said beer but nine and most people are like, you know, I love Ben and Jerry's pint of ice cream by myself, manually looks

across the TLB and goes threesomes. I remember like the hair on the back of my head sitting up being like you plug in rule. Like no one else's answer the question like that, still, to this day, the greatest answer to a podcast and



45:53

it's carved in stone now.



Mark Agostinelli 45:56

Oh 100 This is the second time it's been repeated. So I figured I'd throw it out in the ether man, man and the bill. Thanks again for coming on. And, man, I wish you only the best in the future. My man right back at you