Mark Agostinelli 00:00:20 Hey everybody. New podcast out with Todd Keller. Todd started his career at Davis, and we talked about the early days of his career at Davis, a time I missed, I must say. but, but then he moved into the talent acquisition function in corporate America and really worked on a various number of software companies until now. In his current home, he's running to, for a global manufacturer. So we talked a lot about that career path of the difference between working in a software company versus a manufacturing environment, and also, as anyone does these days, the impact of AI on all all things manufacturing and all things to Todd Taylor. Welcome to Beers and Careers.

Todd Taylor 00:01:02 Thank you for having me on this Wednesday afternoon. It's nice to be back. And I can actually see my old office space. And the window I used to inhabit from your new office, which is, you know, a mere quarter of a mile down the road. That's right.

Mark Agostinelli 00:01:16 How many years later?

Todd Taylor 00:01:17 Ish. Oh, God.

Todd Taylor 00:01:18 2000. 22. Yeah. Right around this time, 22 years ago, is when I exited. it was June of 2004. Okay.

Mark Agostinelli 00:01:29 So dropping a little hint here, but Todd used to work at Davis.

Todd Taylor 00:01:33 Yeah, a long time.

Mark Agostinelli 00:01:34 Ago. And we're going to get into it. Yeah, we're going to get into it. Hold on one real quick. Introduce yourself though.

Todd Taylor 00:01:40 I'm Todd Taylor. Yes, I'm the global head of talent acquisition at MKS Inc., which is a big manufacturer of semi component parts services, chemicals, photonics, you name it. We have a hand in manufacturing most of what goes on to any electronic device or automotive device that you might have in your pocket. Yes.

Mark Agostinelli 00:02:01 Chips. Chips. Chips. before we get into your background, some rapid fire questions. We are not drinking a beer because it's a Wednesday at 130. But, what is your favorite cocktail or drink? It is beers and careers.

Todd Taylor 00:02:16 It's really evolved. I'm much more of a beer guy in my later years because I'm pretty middle aged, but I used to be a very big and very specific about it.

Todd Taylor 00:02:28 vodka tonic guy was always top shelf. It had to be goose. And as I've aged. Kettle, kettle one. but yeah, that was my all. I really like a nice mojito in the summer. All right. Poolside. All right. I like that. I like the fresh mint.

Mark Agostinelli 00:02:42 do you have a favorite curse word?

Todd Taylor 00:02:44 Oh, I do. am I allowed to say.

Mark Agostinelli 00:02:47 You can say whatever you want here.

Todd Taylor 00:02:49 I mean, I, I grew up the son of a trucker. I think the f word is it was very much a part of my vocabulary. Early on. My mother was like, where did you learn that? I was like, oh my God. Dad says that, you know, I grew up in like, have you ever seen A Christmas Story and the saltier version of your father? Like, that was my dad. So, like, watching A Christmas Story was not like watching a movie. It was like reality television. and it was it was really funny because it's like, yeah, we we know about knocking the lug nuts into the street lights in the middle of the night and having your dad, Terry, you knew I was like, yep, I live that.

Todd Taylor 00:03:20 That's awesome. So yeah, I think the f word is, is, is sprinkled very, you know, very voraciously throughout our households still, my son goes, yeah, we don't say those words. Dad. And I go, yeah, good. Yeah. That's exactly that's.

Mark Agostinelli 00:03:34 Exactly with my kids. And I was like, you can hear it, but you can't say it correctly or 18 exactly. Then you can run your own.

Todd Taylor 00:03:39 Whatever you want.

Mark Agostinelli 00:03:40 Yeah. favorite do you have are you into quotes? Favorite quote? Yeah. All right. Cool. Sometimes I ask this question if you're like, no, I am.

Todd Taylor 00:03:48 I do like quotes. My wife will tell you ad nauseum, my man cave is sprinkled with, you know, inspirational kind of quips from a variety of different things, everything from comic book movies to, you know, fairly deep. You know, I am the storm moments. You know, the warrior gets approached by the page and, you know, my one of my favorite ones was actually Bruce Lee, which is be water, my friend, which is like basically means learn how to adapt.

Todd Taylor 00:04:16 Yes. you know, he he had given an example of, you know, if you have a glass, the water will take the shape of the glass. You have a tea cutter, the water will take the shape of a tea kettle. It's like wherever you are, you have to learn to be water, right? Me fluid. Be smooth, fit the environment that you're in. But know that you are fluid so you can move and you can change. Right. which is something that like it's so easy and so crisp, but I just I love that.

Mark Agostinelli 00:04:39 One and incredibly important.

Todd Taylor 00:04:41 Yeah, yeah I agree.

Mark Agostinelli 00:04:44 do you have a favorite book?

Todd Taylor 00:04:47 Oh, it's so funny. I read a lot of Ya lit now because I have little kids. Yeah. it was funny. I had always seen the Harry Potter movies before I ever read the books, and I. My son turned five and I started reading them the Harry Potter books. I really love those. J.K. Rowling's personal, you know, affinities.

Todd Taylor 00:05:06 aside, I always like Stephen King books. Okay. Grown up, I was a big I don't know if I would even call them horror because I did like the.

Mark Agostinelli 00:05:13 Thrillers, right?

Todd Taylor 00:05:14 More so, you know, it's funny, he had horror books like Cujo and it, like, those are definitely horror books. Misery was one of the first books I really picked up and loved, but I liked a lot of his, short story books like Skeleton Crew, which is where like Stand By Me comes from. O or some of the other movies like Shawshank Redemption is actually a short story, right? It's called.

Mark Agostinelli 00:05:34 I did not know that.

Todd Taylor 00:05:34 It's called no, it's not Marlene Dietrich in Shawshank Redemption. It's another famous.

Mark Agostinelli 00:05:39 I didn't know.

Todd Taylor 00:05:40 The model from, like, the 50s. Okay. Rita Hayworth, it's called Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption. Right. And that was the poster that he uses at the end to cover the whole. Yeah, that was one of my favorite stories.

Todd Taylor 00:05:50 But, yeah, those are our short stories. Some of those.

Mark Agostinelli 00:05:53 Oh, I gotta check this out.

Todd Taylor 00:05:54 Oh, they.

Mark Agostinelli 00:05:54 Realize.

Todd Taylor 00:05:55 Oh, they're really, really cool. Oh, really cool. So. Yeah. I would say King was right up there. and my mom was an English teacher, so it was funny because the more she pushed, the less I wanted to read. my brother has always been a very voracious reader, and he likes boring stuff like biographies and autobiography. I'm like, oh, he'll read about presidents in World War two and the Civil War till the end of time and completely entertained by. It was like you, you couldn't get me. Michael Crichton was someone that I read everything of in my teen years, that I loved everything. You get introduced to it through Jurassic Park. I actually think that's one of his mid-tier books. He had some really amazing books that got turned into probably some pretty crappy movies. Congo sphere. Amazing books like Can't put Em Down kind of books.

Todd Taylor 00:06:40 The movies are terrible. but the books were great.

Mark Agostinelli 00:06:44 I have to go back now because I didn't read a lot of those.

Todd Taylor 00:06:48 Those are I mean, a lot of them are very prophetic, too, because he predicted a lot of stuff about, gene splicing, cloning that he was 25 years ahead, 40 years ahead in some cases.

Mark Agostinelli 00:07:00 Yeah. At least.

Todd Taylor 00:07:00 Yeah. the, it's the Will Smith movie where he fights this. I am it's basically based on a, Michael Crichton book called The Omega man. Okay. So, like, there's a lot of, of popular movies that were books for 30 years before they ever became movies, and now they're just like, yeah.

Mark Agostinelli 00:07:21 And now you've put those down, you just read, and.

Todd Taylor 00:07:23 I go, I go through. I mean, I have little kids now, so I have no time to read or energy, but like if I'm on vacation, like I enjoy a good book, you know, I got into The Da Vinci Code books, Michael Brown, like, I actually think The Da Vinci Code.

Todd Taylor 00:07:35 It's not the strongest book. He's got a one called Digital Fortress that I could not put down. Okay. and it was very ahead of its time relative to, you know, cybersecurity and some of the stuff that it talks about, but couldn't put it down.

Mark Agostinelli 00:07:47 I love this. Now I know to add Todd Kaler. There you go. Todd Kaler, before I go on vacation.

Todd Taylor 00:07:51 I would not even know. I actually on, on vacation. I like to read joke yearbooks. Okay. I hope they serve beer and hell was like one of my favorites. And there's a sequel to that, that I liked.

Mark Agostinelli 00:08:02 Was that. Tucker.

Todd Taylor 00:08:03 Yeah. Tucker. Carlson.

Mark Agostinelli 00:08:05 Tucker. Max.

Todd Taylor 00:08:05 Tucker. Max. Yeah. Tucker. Carlson might as well be the same guy. And who knows? Maybe it is. They've never seen him in the same room. but, yeah, Tucker Carlson probably fabricated 50% of it. But, I mean, even if he did, the other half is still, I mean, fantastic.

Todd Taylor 00:08:20 Laugh out loud, laugh.

Mark Agostinelli 00:08:21 Funny, laugh out loud.

Todd Taylor 00:08:21 Funny. I mean, it's a very misogynistic. And if you can put it aside, this is fiction. It's just a gag.

Mark Agostinelli 00:08:27 It's just a locker room joke.

Todd Taylor 00:08:28 It's funny. I mean, to read on your to to read on a beach is just like it's good for a laugh.

Mark Agostinelli 00:08:32 Do you like, like, the historical fiction, Ken Follett's and that kind of stuff?

Todd Taylor 00:08:37 Yeah. Some of it, I mean, I just again, I'm not a big enough reader to say that, you know, I'll glom on to something that's pretty good. You got to read. Yeah. I mean, I guess I'm drawing from you. Just rattled off drawing from, like 20 years of stuff. I mean, now I'll read more like, you know, I'm a big we'll probably touch on this, but I'm a big New York sports fan. So yeah, that's the Knicks. The Giants.

Mark Agostinelli 00:08:58 Right.

Todd Taylor 00:08:58 Here that. Yeah. It's it's actually hard.

Todd Taylor 00:09:00 It's hard to bear relative to championships outside of the Giants.

Mark Agostinelli 00:09:03 Especially.

Todd Taylor 00:09:04 Where you live. Yeah it's hard to. I just found it. Super Bowl parties for like a five year stretch where the Giants kept beating the Patriots. But, I like to read a lot of stories about the heyday teams, the 86 Mets, you know, the the Knicks from the 60s. those are fun books to read. But yeah, I don't I don't read a ton, I just don't I don't have the energy. Maybe one day I'll pick.

Mark Agostinelli 00:09:24 It up, but I totally get it. I got one more for you. What was your first job? It doesn't have to be W2.

Todd Taylor 00:09:31 Grocery.

Mark Agostinelli 00:09:31 Store. Okay.

Todd Taylor 00:09:32 stock boy in a grocery store right at the bottom of my street. So it was easy. I could walk there in five minutes. How old? 15. Okay. before my junior year in high school, and I loved it. I worked with a bunch of my friends. you know, you had to learn how to use the little clicker with the with the stickers.

Todd Taylor 00:09:52 It was a gas. We had a place where you could hide in the store room where it was, like built up. Later movies have made like a joke out of that. I don't know if you've ever seen, like, the Dax Shepard movie where it takes place in Costco. I think it's employee of the month. Oh yes, and they have this big hiding space, but it's literally like four storeys up and they have to use a cherry picker to get up there. I mean, we had that, but it was a ground level. It was just like you sat in a cube of cereal boxes, and that's where people, like, took secret breaks.

Mark Agostinelli 00:10:19 That's pretty cool. That's awesome. so you go, where did you go to college again? Remind me. Fairfield University.

Todd Taylor 00:10:26 Fear, fear. Fear the deer. Fear. Yeah. F you. actually, the number one place to get, job placement, following a college education in Connecticut.

Mark Agostinelli 00:10:36 Really?

Todd Taylor 00:10:37 And LinkedIn actually ranked it in its top 50 schools in America.

Todd Taylor 00:10:41 So it was really it was funny because I used to I got my I got my start in recruiting, and I don't know if you'll probably get to this at some point, but, my first real job on kind of selling anyone on anything or recruiting was in college. And I remember I used to position it as a baby Ivy. It's like, this is an Ivy that's no one's talking about yet. And I go, I got news for you. In 20 years, Fairfield will come up in the conversation when people are going, well, I can't go to Princeton or Harvard or whatever. It's like, where am I going to go? It's like, Fairfield is probably going to be your next tier of colleges that you're going to look at.

Mark Agostinelli 00:11:12 I've never talked to a person that's gone to Fairfield and didn't like it.

Todd Taylor 00:11:16 I was actually it's so different now. It's probably three times the size it was. The student body was about 2500 when I went there. And most of the buildings that are on campus now weren't there when I attended.

Todd Taylor 00:11:28 Okay. So they've.

Mark Agostinelli 00:11:29 So it's very.

Todd Taylor 00:11:29 Subsequently.

Mark Agostinelli 00:11:30 Made.

Todd Taylor 00:11:31 It an incredibly nice school. Like I loved it and I had a great time and I wouldn't second guess the choice to go there. The difference between going there in the 90s versus going there now couldn't be more foreign.

Mark Agostinelli 00:11:43 Yeah, apple and orange.

Todd Taylor 00:11:45 I mean, but what I hear from kids of, friends of mine who go there, as you know, kind of legacies. They're like, yeah, it's amazing. Like, it's such a cool place. And now they have top 20, you know, women's and men's soccer teams. They're good. The women's basketball team is a perennial top 25. I mean, they get some they get some renown for some of their sports programs, which they didn't when I was there. I mean, our biggest claim to fame was we won the Mac tournament when I was a sophomore. We went in as a 16 seed. We played UNC and we're beating them at halftime in the tournament and we're like, oh my God, it's going to happen.

Todd Taylor 00:12:22 And you know, eventually you know the other team having a seven foot four.

Mark Agostinelli 00:12:25 Center just where.

Todd Taylor 00:12:26 It's going to just drag. And we lost by like 15. But I was like oh my God. For a half we thought we were going to be the first 16 to ever be to one. Wow.

Mark Agostinelli 00:12:35 Glory days.

Todd Taylor 00:12:36 yeah, 1996. that was a long time ago. it doesn't feel like it, but yeah, it really is. When we look in the Wayback machine.

Mark Agostinelli 00:12:44 So you've obviously had a couple stops along your career. Give me the, give me the Reader's Digest version of I graduated college to MK.

Todd Taylor 00:12:54 Yeah. And it's it's gonna seem kind of weird because the beginning was weird. The the beginning. I graduated from college in 1999, which is when the.com bubble was happening. Right. And that's all anyone was talking about was the internet. So I'm one of those last groups of people who entered early adulthood without the internet really being a thing, like not being like it was.

Todd Taylor 00:13:14 It was something you could get as optional in your dorm room, right? Oh, so you could get bandwidth you had to pay more for. It was like, you know, like I never had it before. What difference does it make?

Mark Agostinelli 00:13:23 I remember Napster wasn't out there.

Todd Taylor 00:13:25 That was.

Mark Agostinelli 00:13:25 Not. Yeah. No, that came out.

Todd Taylor 00:13:26 Within two years of me graduating. So I ended up on this hyper information curve that I loved. my first job was actually for Progressive Insurance as a claims appraiser. Okay. So I ended up getting, you know, going to Fairfield was good, but I had a liberal arts degree, so most people get recruited out of Fairfield, their finance majors, county majors, business majors. I was a psych major with a Spanish minor. My father's like, good luck with that. he's like, the good thing that you have is you can talk, right? And you can present. So he, you know, encouraged me to just get out there, find something.

Todd Taylor 00:13:59 He's like, it's not going to be the only job you ever have. I was able to land a job, you know, working in Fairfield County on cars that were damaged. I got to appraise Lamborghinis. I got to appraise Bentleys, I got to appraise every now. And I'm a car aficionado. So, like every car I would have dreamed of being able to touch and be near, I got to see very, in that first year out of college and then, you know, following that, I got introduced to a network engineering firm where they were looking for what eventually became the term sourcing specialist. it was more like a researcher than on candidate data, and I just took to it like a duck to water. It was. It was a lot of fun. And that's where I really kind of generated the love for recruiting.

Mark Agostinelli 00:14:42 And then from there.

Todd Taylor 00:14:44 You know, from there, that was New York. So it was very happening, very expensive. you know, I used to commute from between our White Plains office and Stamford, where I lived.

Todd Taylor 00:14:56 I always used to go into our Manhattan office pretty routinely, especially after we had a managerial switch. And that guy was like, get into the New York office. So that was pretty cool when you were 24. Yeah. And you're just like, you know, you're putting on your shiny shoes, your slacks. You're like, I don't make anything, but I look like.

Mark Agostinelli 00:15:10 I look like a million bucks.

Todd Taylor 00:15:11 Exactly.

Mark Agostinelli 00:15:12 And and the energy of the city. Oh my God. I mean, it was it.

Todd Taylor 00:15:16 Was it was cool. you know, it's funny now that people, you know, complain about inflation because it's like, no, I remember what it was like to pay $12 for a sandwich in 2001. Right? because I worked in New York, so, you know, ended up wanting to move from the Westchester area up to Boston because that's where all my buddies were, and actually was laid off from that same company that I fell in love with recruiting, because they were starting to downsize as part of the dotcom.

Todd Taylor 00:15:43 The clients started to go bust, so they started to go bust. And they actually ended up shuttering the the Andover office that they had. I ended up having to pivot, took a job with Sapphire Technology. Oh, yes. No longer exists.

Mark Agostinelli 00:15:57 But had a great run.

Todd Taylor 00:15:58 Oh my God. Had the the greatest guy to go work for. I'm drawing a complete blank on his name.

I still hear from him, literally. I mean, we worked together for, like, two weeks. He got laid off nine, 11. Happened in on my fourth day at that place. I was supposed to work in their downtown Boston office. They pulled that off the table. They're like, you're going to work in Uber? And I'm like, this isn't what I agreed to. And, I had also received an offer from Davis in that time. Davis, unfortunately, was 38 miles from where I lived. Right. And I was like, I'm not really looking to drive for an hour a day.

Todd Taylor 00:16:33 but I called, geez, I can't even remember her name anymore. I've blocked it out. Probably for good reason. but I called Bob's management team, and I said, hey, I know you made me an offer. I turned it down. is are you still looking for someone? Because the job I was offered is not really the job that was they had for me. Would you take me there, like, please start next week? And I was like, was there? And I started with, with Davis in October of 2001. Yeah. Because it was, it was, it was a month after.

Mark Agostinelli 00:17:05 The towers went down.

Todd Taylor 00:17:06 That was a month after the tower. I mean, so much is is obviously baked around certain milestones, right. And like that was enormous. Right. Because the market, which was already tumultuous because the.com bubble was starting to burst. I mean, it flatlined, right? And I remember, Davis Companies was in trouble at that time.

Mark Agostinelli 00:17:25 A ton of trouble there.

Todd Taylor 00:17:26 Were they they let a bunch of people go. I remember there was some significant heartburn about how did he get hired. But you're letting all these other people go. And I think I'm paraphrasing, and I may have invented part of this, but I think Bob was like said to someone who kept giving him a hard time because he's better and he's cheaper, right? And I was like, oh, well, that's you know, that's that's crazy. And you know, look, the, the things that we did, I thought I was going to do tech recruiting when I came here because that's what I knew. I ended up speaking Spanish. Eight hours a day, putting $8 an hour laborers into Parcel Direct right down the road over in Northborough. And I had a blast. I had a blast. Like, I actually had a margin of gross margin that was a head and shoulders above anyone else in the company, because I had a skill set that no one knew I had. And I was like, yeah, I can go give tours and I can recruit people.

Todd Taylor 00:18:14 And I learned how to identify a bad Social Security card and a fake, you know, fake licenses. And it was it was a trip. I mean, I had a lot of fun doing that. and especially because, you know, people thought I was the ultimate gringo. Like, no one thought that I could speak. Looking at me, I had a head full of tousled strawberry blonde hair. I mean, I looked like a boy band member, but they wouldn't take, like, the sixth man out because it's like, dude, you're not photogenic. You know that alabaster skin? but yeah, it was it was fun. And I remember helping at that time. I remember Jim Cahill. R.I.P., you know, he he passed away a couple of years ago, helping to land the contract at Benchmark Electronics. And I spent a lot of time with him trying to get some of the low level assemblers and technicians that they had, and we used to go to the skeleton crew Chelmsford office and run people through, you know, transistor tests and parts assembly tests.

Todd Taylor 00:19:07 And I just, you know, I was I had so much fun. And I think Bob was great because Bob really empowered people to say, figure it out, be creative. Like, we need you to help solve this gross margin issue, right. To keep the company open. And we did. I went down to, Jersey and helped open up staples. No, it's t fall t fall.

Mark Agostinelli 00:19:27 That's right.

Todd Taylor 00:19:27 And I went down there for a week because I spoke Spanish and I helped them open that first office down there. And, again, I was like, wow. Like what? What an honor to have your CEO when you're 24. Go. I need you to go down there and help them open that office. Like that was really complimentary of Bob at that time. It's like I'll never forget. I mean, Bob was very fatherly. My, When I left in June of 2004. So I'd been here for about two and a half years. my father passed away maybe five months later, and the entire Davis team came to my dad's funeral in Western Mass.

Todd Taylor 00:20:02 And my brother goes, that's the kind of company you want to.

Mark Agostinelli 00:20:05 Work for.

Todd Taylor 00:20:06 Right? He goes, and you just left them. He's like, just so you know, you just left that to go to this other thing that you ended up hating. And I was like, yeah, you're right. I go and to this day I mentioned that to Bob. I go, Bob, you know, like having you there because you were like a father figure to me in the office, right? And having you there to say, hey, man, like you're not at the company, but you're not not part of the family anymore, right? that was pretty cool.

Mark Agostinelli 00:20:27 That's very cool. Very cool. So did you. Is this when the pivot from agency to like, corporate happens?

Todd Taylor 00:20:34 What's funny is that job, that sourcing specialist job was a corporate job. Yeah. So I did the rare thing where I went.

Mark Agostinelli 00:20:39 From corporate.

Todd Taylor 00:20:40 To agency.

Mark Agostinelli 00:20:41 And then back to corporate. Okay.

Todd Taylor 00:20:43 I didn't have a problem with agency. I think the hard part was, is that there's much less downtime in agency. Like, you always.

Mark Agostinelli 00:20:51 Kind of done.

Todd Taylor 00:20:52 Well.

Mark Agostinelli 00:20:52 Right?

Todd Taylor 00:20:53 And you always felt very tethered to your phone because, you know, like, if you don't answer, that's a deal that might go out the door. A candidate who you can't get on, you know, billing soon. that was the one thing I was like, I needed a little bit more, I think structure of a kind of a 9 to 5 where I could put it away. Yeah. I'm also so Type-A that I'm like, commission. While it was good because I did pretty well here.

Mark Agostinelli 00:21:15 Yeah, you must have.

Todd Taylor 00:21:16 even in a, in a downtime, especially at the age I was at before, you know, the inflation of the last 5 or 6 years. but that was almost not good for me because it was just like the. It's almost like that dopamine.

Mark Agostinelli 00:21:28 You can never just.

Todd Taylor 00:21:29 You can't. Yeah, exactly. You can't. I wouldn't have been able to make enough, and I would have chased it 24 hours a day. And, you know, I pivoted back into corporate America in 2004, 2005. And, you know, I've kind of stuck it out ever since.

Mark Agostinelli 00:21:44 Yeah. But like, but but then, like, when I look at your background, I see mainly tech. Right. And then this pivot to manufacturing like talk. Talk us through.

Todd Taylor 00:21:57 What's interesting about that is that, you know, if you talk to John Lee, who's MLK's CEO, he will not describe us as a manufacturer. He'll describe us as a tech company. And he's not wrong. I mean, what we make is technology that ends up being used in the process of manufacturing every major electronic device.

Mark Agostinelli 00:22:14 That very true.

Todd Taylor 00:22:15 Everyone uses. Very true. and even stuff like automotive. Right. It was I'm a big car guy, and I'm always like, chromium. Chromium is so fascinating because I'm like, is it metal? Is it paint? What is it? Is this come from.

Todd Taylor 00:22:27 It's like we actually own a company that manufactures the stuff that goes on to.

Mark Agostinelli 00:22:31 Wait, so what is the sales of. What is it? Yeah. Like is it.

Todd Taylor 00:22:34 Chrome is like a combination of like a metal and a paint.

Mark Agostinelli 00:22:37 Okay.

Todd Taylor 00:22:38 That comes together.

Mark Agostinelli 00:22:38 So they are spraying that on. Yeah. Okay. Yeah.

Todd Taylor 00:22:41 and we own a company that manufactures a lot of that stuff. What's hard is and I didn't realize this, like Tesla started to kill that because if you ever think of a Tesla, there's no grille on a Tesla.

Mark Agostinelli 00:22:50 There's no.

Todd Taylor 00:22:50 So there's no Chrome shine. Yeah. That's kind of why I don't like Teslas. I like the Chrome highlights on cars. and that's something that MKS does. So that's I mean even just a father spin off. But we also do stuff with photonics and optics. Yeah. Some of the most sophisticated laser systems that you're going to see used in the world, everything from medical applications through aerospace engineering. It's really fascinating. Semi is an industry that we're involved in.

Todd Taylor 00:23:16 But it's not the only industry we're involved in. So a lot of the the stuff that we develop and we manufacture goes into so many different things. It's like the I might be dating myself with this one, but, there was a company called BASF in the 80s. Yes. And they used to have these insanely compelling commercials, and they say we don't make the dress. We make the dress brighter. And I'm like, tell me more.

Mark Agostinelli 00:23:39 Yes.

Todd Taylor 00:23:40 And like, you get to the end. They never told you what they did. Right. They're a chemical company.

Mark Agostinelli 00:23:44 Right.

Todd Taylor 00:23:44 And it's like. But what a grabby kind of slogan. Right. It's just like I actually. It's funny, as I work with Davis as a as a vendor partner. Right? And I work with an employee, a digital advertising company higher up in the North Shore. You know, I go I kind of view MKs in that similar vein. Like, can we come up with something like BASF did in the 80s and 90s to get candidates talking about it in such a way of like, I don't know what it is, but I got to know more.

Todd Taylor 00:24:12 Right. Right. And it's like, that's, you know, for something that is very utilitarian, it's like, you know, look, manufacturing components or pieces of stuff, it's not always the sexiest thing, but it's like when you when I can tell my because my kids will ask. I'm sure your kids ask what you do and you go. I traffic and human soul.

Mark Agostinelli 00:24:27 Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Todd Taylor 00:24:29 when I hold up my phone and I go see daddy's phone, I go, yeah, we love daddy's phone. We play games. On I go. Well, everything that we do on it wouldn't be possible without a company like mine, because a lot of the stuff that goes into it, we have some part in helping to manufacture, whether it's the pieces of the chips or the the placement of the, you know, the containment systems that go into them, right, exactly. Testing it, quality control, etc., etc.. That's kind of cool because my, my kid who's, you know, almost seven, pretty smart to get him to understand that is like, oh wow.

Todd Taylor 00:24:58 Okay. Yeah. Because I've seen the insides. We've broken open a radio and you know what's in there?

Mark Agostinelli 00:25:02 I feel like I feel like the manufacturing industry, it's funny to hear you articulate it that way, because I it really resonates like I feel like as little boys or little kids, construction sites are just cool because you can see them and you know what's going on. And then as you're an adult, like, I have the same thing. When I started here, I was like manufacturing. I was like, I grew up in Dedham. There is no manufacturing. It's everyone's parents.

Todd Taylor 00:25:26 You just think of it as something that's done somewhere else. Oh, right. Yeah. Like cars. Like. Like you see the car assembly line and you go, okay, great. I don't know where it is. I just know that I have a car.

Mark Agostinelli 00:25:34 It doesn't happen here, but I feel like the. I feel like that same child as Joy. You get out of seeing a construction site once you get behind the doors of a manufacturing facility.

Mark Agostinelli 00:25:43 Like, no freaking way.

Todd Taylor 00:25:45 Kind of. It kind of is. Especially to see some of the robotic equipment that we use. And, you know, I hear interns talking about learning how to use a CNC lathe machine, their own parts to, to do some kind of project that they're like, what? It's very. I can never find CNC operators, period. I'm like, I got an intern in college who's learning how to use the lathe in the mill so that he can make a part for something that we're going to throw. I mean, we have intern to design things or fix processes that we end up building into production. And it's like, it's really cool to see, like, hey man, you're 19. You just solve the company, maybe $1 million in something that we hadn't looked at. Yes, it's Yeah, I agree with you on that childish fixation on, oh, it's cool to see how stuff gets.

Mark Agostinelli 00:26:25 Messy and it resonates to some and it doesn't resonate with others, but it's fascinating.

Todd Taylor 00:26:29 And for me, relative to landing there, I mean, some of it is opportunity, right? Like I came out of a software company that had reorganized. There weren't a lot of good leadership roles in some of the companies that I was targeting. I got a call from MKS and I was like, this is interesting. And it was really close to home. I was like, oh my God, I passed you guys all the way, all the time on the way to swim lessons, right? for my children. So it was pretty easy. And the team was incredibly ingratiating. and liked the outsider's perspective. They're like, okay, you're used to real rapid growth in tech. Show us how you can replicate that here. Yes, because time to fill is an issue. You know, we lag. And I was like, okay, you know, let's break down the process and talk about how you interview and play in offense versus defense and the ramp. Right. it's been fun to kind of Teach a company.

Todd Taylor 00:27:20 Kind of a new way of thinking about to which I think is far more consultative than, What I would say is traditional, reactive, kind of wreck filling. I was like, let's think about the skills that we constantly need, rather than just the wrecks that are open, because that way we can build pools and communities and start to talk to people and outreach proactively so that when we do have openings, we have a built in group of followers who are ready to to hear us. Yes. And that's that's a lot of fun.

Mark Agostinelli 00:27:47 What, what have been the things, I guess, from your tech experience, bring it over to manufacturing that you're like, man, I can't believe the manufacturing industry doesn't do this stuff.

Todd Taylor 00:28:00 Google's rule of four. you know what Google's rule of law is, I don't. So Google and this is a fun story. I encourage everyone to Google it.

Mark Agostinelli 00:28:08 Yeah.

Todd Taylor 00:28:09 Google is phenomenal in that it was renowned as a very difficult place to interview, and it got known for that because they used to ask people all kinds of weird stress questions that were, very atypical, right? Like you're shrunken down to the size of an ant and you're thrown into a blender.

Todd Taylor 00:28:26 Like, how do you get out? Right. And it was supposed to be this test of almost like, ingenuity. And what they found was that asking people abstract problems to solve in an abstract environment proved exactly zero relative to your ability to do a job. Right. And that resulted in turnover. Right. So it's just like, wow. You know, they also found that everyone in their grandmother wanted to meet the candidate during the process. And many teams became, you know, known for that, like, oh, hey, you're going to go through eight rounds and then you're going to meet the team and it's like it's exhaustive. Right. And you, you couldn't get the data that you would get ends up being more consensus driven than qualitative. Right, right. So it's just like, well great. It's like, you know, you've probably heard the expression like, oh yeah, like to have a beer with that person. That also proves zero. It proves that they're fun to drink beer with.

Todd Taylor 00:29:12 Not that they can do the job exactly right. but what came out of all that data was once we got past the fourth interview, provided those four interviews were done well and there were a certain length of time, usually between 45 and 60 minutes. There was no benefit to doing any more interviews. Okay. Right. And I was like, ooh, like talk about a time saver. Because if you have companies that are want to put you through multiple rounds, have you meet with 3 or 4 people in each round, you could be spending 12 to 15 hours evaluating someone when all you need is four. and that was something that I introduced. You know, we've piloted it. it hasn't always taken hold because I do think people get very locked into. I've been interviewing for years, so therefore I know how to interview.

Mark Agostinelli 00:29:56 I would say, I would say probably also for like maybe not director level, but like I would say director level, not even.

Todd Taylor 00:30:03 Director.

Mark Agostinelli 00:30:04 I mean, I think you get to V, you get to.

Todd Taylor 00:30:06 VP and I think you have to flex with a couple more. Yeah, because there's more at stake. Right. But at the same time, you have to make sure that people are not going into interviews and winging it like there's a certain amount of preparation that has to be done. And I like to scorecard things, you know, you keep them very objective, right? You keep everyone on the same page about exactly what passes the bar and what does not, what is important to the company and what isn't. You know, what's a personal preference versus an absolute need? You know, those are the things that can be distilled from a properly run interview process. And I wouldn't say it's, you know, endemic of of manufacturing. I would say it's most companies, most companies tend to over interview people. and there's also, you know, the lower down you go and especially if the job is fairly repetitive, it's like you don't need tons of interviews to validate it. And it's like you've got to I think companies that do that are actually playing defense.

Todd Taylor 00:30:56 It's not that they don't want to hire people, it's that they don't want to make a mistake. And the problem is you're going to make a mistake anyway because they're people, right? You know, some people just interview phenomenally well. Some people don't interview well, and you pass on them and it's like, shame on you because they're awesome, right? Right. It's I think interviewing is much more science than it is art, and people need to appreciate that. And I think that there most companies waste thousands of hours, hundreds of thousands of hours a year, depending on your size, interviewing when they've already probably have enough data to make a decision. And that's I think that's something that I've helped bring. I'm rejigging how we train people to interview all over the world. for MKS, and it's a program I created called Interview Fundamentals. And it goes from a lot of the interview training that I've pulled together over the last 20 years, some that has worked, some that has not worked. Right.

Todd Taylor 00:31:47 but it's really to teach people to make, you know, job descriptions as engaging as humanly possible to make sure that your interview process is not a, hey, I'm tapping you on the shoulder. There's a guy here in 15 minutes. I need you to validate whether or not he can do what he does. It's like, no, you need more of a plan prep. You know, it's the difference between, playing pickup basketball in the park and playing league ball or playing in the NBA.

It's like, you know, Look, anyone who's played a pickup game in the park realizes if you're not playing with your friends, you're not getting the ball. Yes. Especially if you're playing with a bunch of other people who are clearly friends. in, you know, in an actual interview, you're interviewing with a team of people that, you know, and you should all have your piece of evaluating what that person's good at. Then you assemble that pie at the end, you know, whether it's a go or no go.

Todd Taylor 00:32:33 that's really what I like to infuse in any environment.

Mark Agostinelli 00:32:35 That I go that makes that makes sense. Have you read the book? Who? Yeah. Sounds like a lot.

Todd Taylor 00:32:41 Yeah, a lot. I mean, I think a lot of these philosophies have kind of blended together over the last several years. I learned a lot about structured interviewing starting in like 2014, and it really kind of got me into the. Oh, yeah, this isn't just like a reflex. You know, it's not like washing your car. It's like, no, there's prep that goes into an interview. There's, learning your own biases. Right? There's learning about other people's biases. There's knowing or distinguishing between what is they want and what does it need. You know, and that's generally where I am with hiring teams as I consult. I go, you know, it sounds like you really want that, but it doesn't sound like you really need that. And it's not available in the market, right? So do you want to wait six months, or do you want to train someone with a similar technology that will probably pick this up really quickly? Or do you want to wait those six months for the ideal person who may not be the right fit for your company?

Mark Agostinelli 00:33:30 it's it's an it's an interesting dynamic, Bob.

Mark Agostinelli 00:33:33 Always Bob impressed that upon me by being like, when you hire someone, I want you to envision you writing a check for $40,000, $60,000 out of your account to that person.

Todd Taylor 00:33:44 It's different when you look at it that way. It is different when you, but you still want to encourage folks to take risk. I agree because there's a there's a growth mindset that comes in where you go. I also have to scale my business, right. I can't hire everyone that's principle level expert at what they do. I have to train some of my own experts. There's a policy that Accenture came up with that's called, net zero hiring, which means they don't think of it like a pyramid, you know, standing straight up with the apex obviously at the top. And you should hire the bulk of your hires at the junior level. And the higher you get up, obviously the fewer of you there are. But when that level five person decides to leave, right, because there's not a lot of them, well, the level four person is ready to jump in and everyone bumps up.

Todd Taylor 00:34:28 So the person that you left at five now becomes the level one. And you backfill at the beginning so that you're constantly positioned in such a way as to, handle attrition without a lot.

Mark Agostinelli 00:34:39 Of pain next in line.

Todd Taylor 00:34:40 That's pretty much that's.

Mark Agostinelli 00:34:41 Pretty much that's next in line. Yeah. It's a, I've always felt in our, in our world, you know, our world is a very trainable skill. Yeah. If you can talk to people.

Todd Taylor 00:34:51 Absolutely.

Mark Agostinelli 00:34:52 It's a super trainable skill. So it's like how much grit does this person have? How much curiosity does this have. So I've always been like, all right what are the things I need in the person? But then how do I reverse engineer the questions to determine their level of that? Totally.

Todd Taylor 00:35:05 And you still have a gray area in you do that, you can't determine some of it's based on, you know, faith, blind luck. you know, I market I well, I always used to correlate, you know, like athletes, athletes make great recruiters because people who are really good athletes don't like to lose.

Todd Taylor 00:35:20 Right. Right. There should be naturally competitive recruiting is probably one of the best things I've ever been able to use my competitive grit for, because I wanted to be the best. I did not want to be the middle of the tier, or certainly on the low end. I wanted to be the number one producer on my team. I wanted to be the one that got all the praise and attention. Some people will say that that turned me into a massive egomaniac. For about 15 years. My wife would be like 15. It's not done. but I mean, again, that that competitive tenacity does make good recruiters. It's not a one for one correlation, but I would say that it's pretty it's pretty close. Yes.

Mark Agostinelli 00:35:57 Do you, do you, find that the recruiters who succeed on your team in a manufacturing environment at MCAS have a different component or makeup, or you look for something different than maybe in more of a tech focused company.

Todd Taylor 00:36:11 I think I think anyone who does it well, and I always say there's no such thing as a good tech recruiter or good marketing recruiter.

Todd Taylor 00:36:17 I go, look, if you're a good recruiter, you're going to learn it. You're going to figure it out, right? And it's the tenacity that you can't teach people. Like you can refine elements of their approach. You can refine their ability to source for candidates. You can't teach them the tenacity. Either they're hungry or they're not. And I think the people that I've been fortunate enough to work with at other companies and at MKs have been hungry. They want their in their curious. Right. And they their people pleasing can be a good thing or a bad thing.

Mark Agostinelli 00:36:43 Yeah.

Todd Taylor 00:36:43 It's not because you walk a fine line, because I think a lot of what goes into talent acquisition is customer service, right? Like there's a service element to what we do. It's probably a majority of what we do. that gets you into trouble, though, because you can't be objective in an evaluative if you're two people pleasing. Yes. because you won't really ever tell someone the truth. Which is kind of what you need to do to be really good at recruiting.

Todd Taylor 00:37:08 You have to say, actually, I don't think this person's a fit. And here's why. Especially if a leader is like, oh my God, I love this person. It's like, you love them so much. You're not seeing their they're their faults, right? Or why this might not be the right fit. I always talk about recruiting as being not good or bad, which is something I think a lot of people get sucked into. It's fit or not fit, right. You know, it's like a suit of clothes. Either it's it fits great or it's too big or it's too small. But God knows if you're going to an important wedding or an event, you want to look good, so you want it to fit right. It's the same thing with jobs, jobs and careers. You want to make sure that the candidate is the right fit for what you're doing, and the more objectively you can evaluate that, the better off you'll be. Yes.

Mark Agostinelli 00:37:48 Now, as someone who's, Got a global footprint, a team around the world, I'm pretty interested in your perspective of, like, how you view the current state of, our local market vis a vis how some of those other markets are doing.

Mark Agostinelli 00:38:10 As it pertains to manufacturing, manufacturing talent.

Todd Taylor 00:38:12 Yeah, it's that's a really interesting question because I think that answer changes every five years.

Mark Agostinelli 00:38:17 Okay.

Todd Taylor 00:38:17 Yeah, I agree. And there's a lot of there's a lot of political ization that happens in that. Right? Like we've had presidents who are, you know, very global, economically focused, and they understand that it's a tapestry throughout the world. Like, we can't be isolationist anymore because we depend too much on other countries for certain types of goods and services. you know, we do have some heartburn over. We wish it was the America of the 1950s. You know, where you could go somewhere and work a job for 40 years and buy a house and, you know, support a family. And and that's not really how the it's not anyone's fault. It's just not how the world works anymore, because there's so much more communication amongst all these continents. That said, you know, there is a balance that needs to be struck. and, you know, as we are in a time of unfortunate war in the Middle East that affects, you know, the ability either supply chain.

Todd Taylor 00:39:10 I mean, the pandemic has affected. That's why I say five years the supply chain was affected by the pandemic five years ago. Right now, it's affected by a war, an unfortunate war, but a war nonetheless. and that makes the scales tip differently. You know, there's very, anti-China rhetoric that is, you know, propagated by our government and honestly, the rest of the world's governments, because, quite frankly, all all governments are kind of up to some nefarious things. Right. but, you know, we don't want to export chips to China that will help them get ahead of us in the AI race. Like, again, it's and it's this interesting give and take between everything now people look for what are the other areas that I could go. Manufacturing something on the cheap that is in China, you know. Is it Thailand? Is it Vietnam? Is it Korea? you know, and that's where people are expanding to. South America became very interesting for software companies in the last five, ten years because oh my God.

Todd Taylor 00:40:04 Brazil is the sixth biggest economy in the world, and yet there aren't tons of software companies that are down there. I mean, it's just it's so much of it is a like a, a current events list of what's popular in the world and what's not. And it does determine where can you produce whatever it is you're trying to produce in business for the least amount of money that will net you the most profit. Is that a good strategy? I don't know that it's a great long term strategy because I think it always changes. There's a good example in the difference between the leadership at Costco and BJ's. I don't know if you've read that article.

Mark Agostinelli 00:40:38 I have.

Todd Taylor 00:40:38 Not. Costco's CEO believes in paying people insanely livable wages so that they stay right in. The average tenure of a Costco employees is pretty extensive. It's I think it's north of 4 or 5 plus years. BJ's has the opposite. They treat their employees more like commodities. Right. And they're, you know, they're pretty much status quo on what they have to pay people, and they're okay.

Todd Taylor 00:41:00 With the ten years being low in the churn, that's just kind of part of their business model. but what they found is that Costco actually generates a higher average return, for their shareholders than BJ's does. And it kind of goes back to what the model around hiring was and the loyalty around their employees, you know. So as long as you have companies that are trying to generate the most margin, yes, people are going to struggle with that because the where the jobs are going to be is going to change. You know, India is not the panacea that it was 15 years ago. No, it used to be a three for one swap. You know, if you wanted to hire a software engineer in California and it was going to be, you know, $400,000 a year, you could hire probably 5 or 6 people for that $400,000 in India. Can't do that now. Now it's more like a maybe a one and a half.

Mark Agostinelli 00:41:46 I was gonna say it's not even 2 to 1.

Todd Taylor 00:41:47 No, it's not it's not 2 to 1 anymore.

Todd Taylor 00:41:49 And honestly, I like that. I mean, it's funny, I hear a lot of gripes from managers about, you know, everyone's so opportunistic and it's like, no, they're capitalistic. Right? I go, so that's what we've kind of imbued upon that. And I go, you know. People are tired of being taken advantage of, so they're opportunistic. It's what Americans have been for 100 years. And so it's it's fascinating. There's not a great straight answer to the.

Mark Agostinelli 00:42:10 No, I.

Todd Taylor 00:42:11 Guess, versus everywhere else. But I think it's just a shift of where can you do the work the cheapest. And that's where people are going to move to.

Mark Agostinelli 00:42:18 Right. It's funny, though, that when you're so you haven't had any plans to move in your tenure, right? I guess, have you had any?

Todd Taylor 00:42:25 we've opened new plants. You've opened just opened a plant in Penang, Malaysia. this year it opened.

Mark Agostinelli 00:42:33 Was labor a criteria for the opening, or was it really just what's the lowest cost to produce?

Todd Taylor 00:42:40 I think it's a little bit of both.

Todd Taylor 00:42:41 Okay. I mean, I'm never going to. I'm never going to say it's it's squarely factored on one variable. I mean, you could go, oh, great. You know, we can get to the moon real cheap. Let's throw, you know, a place on. That's not how it works. But I think they look at.

Mark Agostinelli 00:42:52 You look it's trying.

Todd Taylor 00:42:53 They look at availability of, Market talent, cost of local market talent, cost of standing up a plant. And then what are your long term prospects? I'm actually pretty bullish on what they're going to do there. The more I've learned about that part of Asia, but again, it'll have its challenges because again, I think the market is great sometimes for certain types of talent, and it won't be for others. That's true anywhere.

Mark Agostinelli 00:43:16 Anywhere, anywhere. Which is so true. How do you you're a great guy to ask this question because just because I think you've got a, you more than most East coasters have a decent, beat on Silicon Valley.

Mark Agostinelli 00:43:32 Yeah, but, like, how do you and and you now live in, I agree with, John Lee, by the way, about you being called a tech company. Yeah, that makes a ton of sense to me. I think, you know, the S&P probably calls you an industrial or a manufacturer because that's how.

Todd Taylor 00:43:47 The stock price rivals, you know, big e-commerce and software companies. So it's funny, the company I was at before this went through a massive boom in the last two years since I left. I'm weird. but then saw their stock plummet 50%. Yeah, and MKS has gone two and a half X since they joined. So. And that's impressive, as a manufacturing. But that's the thing. John Lee's right. Not really right. A pure manufacturing play, right? Just because of what it feeds. So it's the same as saying like, well, there's media manufacturing.

Mark Agostinelli 00:44:21 There's so few like true OEM manufacturers. Everything is connected like automotive.

Todd Taylor 00:44:28 Yeah, maybe like and even then.

Todd Taylor 00:44:30 But even Rivian is fascinating to me because like, Rivian is probably gonna sell more software than they will actual EVs.

Mark Agostinelli 00:44:37 I think Tesla's, for.

Todd Taylor 00:44:38 Example, Tesla is a good example.

Mark Agostinelli 00:44:39 Tesla's are vertically integrated.

Todd Taylor 00:44:40 But like they're going to develop robotics. Like I think they might not even be in the car industry in five years. Exactly. They may exit that completely and focus squarely on AI and robotics.

Mark Agostinelli 00:44:50 Yes. I've heard a lot of things that, all of Elon's companies really are in cahoots with each other. Oh, probably they all. They all have a master plan. But but we'll keep the conspiracy theories at bay. That's a.

Todd Taylor 00:45:01 Different.

Mark Agostinelli 00:45:01 Point, but I am interested. Back to your Silicon Valley roots. Just like, how do you see, And I'm not as interested in, like, your day to day life. And I don't mean that negatively just because I don't think yours and mine are tremendously different in terms of how AI will impact our lives. But like, how do you see AI impacting, your assemblers, technicians, inspectors? Like, do you do you see that from a labor standpoint?

Todd Taylor 00:45:28 I think from a labor standpoint, a lot of that will hinge on how, effective robotics become over time.

Todd Taylor 00:45:36 Right. So that's it's true of automotive is a great example, right. Because automotive changed how quickly you could actually assemble a car. And it actually made it a lot safer because you have you don't have people losing arms and legs every day, which they used to have in the 50s and 60s. it will affect us as we integrate more robotics and AI technology into what we're doing. I mean, one of the interns gave a presentation two weeks ago about how he ran a data set through, you know, an AI bot, and it spit out an answer that no one had thought of and said, oh, all right. Well, a great application of when to use AI is like, yeah, we've always done this in Excel. And I just asked him like, hey, can you take these hundred disparate data sets, put them in one bucket of data and then find me the anomalies. And he did it. And I was like, oh, wow. And like, you know, some of our leaders were like, oh, geez, never, never thought of doing that with those reports.

Todd Taylor 00:46:27 but I do think that AI will is here to stay over sort of short of pure labor plays like AI is not going to fix your roof, right? So roofer jobs are not going away. Plumbers, electricians, none of that's going away. Yeah. I do think that anything that involves some level of true technology, is going to evolve. and it's going to become a difference between people who know how to use AI tools and people who don't, just like everything else, right? Like there was people who could use the internet and people who couldn't use the internet. Right.

Mark Agostinelli 00:46:59 So true.

Todd Taylor 00:46:59 And I think it's going to be the same thing. It's going to be who are people who are just AI enabled, like they've smartened themselves. And you and I talked about this at lunch, like you're like, oh, what AI is your favorite? I was like, well, for what? For what am I trying to do? Right? Like, it's like I use ChatGPT for stuff. I use Gemini for stuff.

Todd Taylor 00:47:15 I use Claude for stuff. I use copilot for stuff. sometimes it's mandated by my company. Which ones I can use. We're Microsoft's customers, so we use copilot, right? But, you know, in my personal life, I don't use copilot. I use Gemini, Claude, and ChatGPT to figure out stuff that I'm interested in. So it's like, yeah, again, not a not an easy answer. No. Coming out of tech, it's very different because whoever would have thought that you wouldn't want to teach people to code anymore, right? Because right. Like software engineers are going to become one of the groups that can't get jobs like that. That was unheard of. right? Now you've got to have an AI engineering degree so you can learn how to refine what goes into the the smartness of the bot or the the agent. That's fascinating. It is. I do think it's going to come down to people who know how to use AI and embrace it, versus people who don't.

Mark Agostinelli 00:48:02 And I and the reason I like asking people like you this question is I had this guy, you know, we've got a varied customer base, right? So we've got some customers that don't have more than 500 employees ever.

Mark Agostinelli 00:48:15 and I know they're going to be laggards to the AI game. It's just how the world works. But like having you on. I had, someone on a couple weeks ago. Don Adams spent his last 25 years of his career, so at Bose. And I asked him the same question. He's like, I can't tell you. I see it on the floor yet. I can see it. To your point of AI enabled people in engineering and in quality operational data, but.

Todd Taylor 00:48:43 Right now you have to look at it as a tool rather than a replacement for, you know, there are certainly things that AI will replace. I don't think it's as doom and gloom as Wall Street likes to make it sound.

Mark Agostinelli 00:48:53 I that's kind of how.

Todd Taylor 00:48:54 I cut 30,000 jobs, because they can do it all with AI. Yeah.

Mark Agostinelli 00:48:58 Maybe. I think they're big.

Todd Taylor 00:48:59 Pieces of it. Well, and some of these companies have learned, oh, wow, we we really missed the boat on this guess. Right.

Todd Taylor 00:49:06 Like Amazon had a lot of heartburn over how many people it let go because it figured out that they couldn't use simply AI to replace some of those things. Meta had the same heartburn on them, which is ironic because they were the people. Like, I own a pair of meta smart glasses. Yeah, there are a lot of fun, to just like, tool around if you like to mountain bike. Yeah, like, hey, I want tunes and hey, take a video while I'm going and and, like, upload it to the cloud and post it on Instagram. You can do all those things from your glasses. Like, that's fascinating to me, but it's much more than a consumer kind of novelty. Yes. Right. Like understanding that, you know, an AI tool can refine your approach to generate, you know, 0.3% more margin on a supply chain that you need to juice, right? That's really fascinating applications. It's just I think everyone fears the the T2 scenario where it becomes aware and it starts to angle against humanity.

Todd Taylor 00:50:01 and that's happened to.

Mark Agostinelli 00:50:03 It, I think. And I think it will. And I think what's interesting about probably where we live in particular is one thing I picked up pretty quickly in my first like 5 or 6 years at Davis is like, this is a weird ecosystem. Massachusetts. You have MIT and Harvard, and they come up with ideas and a lot of it's robotics and AI, and it goes to 128 as as it starts to hit critical mass and they're like, Holy shit, we need we're making money now. We need to go to 495 like the companies follow a little bit of a thing. And it's always been not always a lot of it other than biotech in general. A lot of it is AI automation. It's automation and robotics. It's really the right thing to say.

Todd Taylor 00:50:40 Oh, it's a lot of what the machines are now figuring out for us. Like for me, the most interesting applications of the medical applications. Because if you can find a cure for cancer, because you can run a zillion different data points through something and it'll give you an answer in 25 seconds, like, oh my God, it'll probably help you identify an enzyme or a gene that is the cause of X, Y, or Z types of cancer like that.

Todd Taylor 00:51:01 That could be profound, that could be profoundly impactful over the next 15 years. And I think we are very close to that. mRNA vaccines from the pandemic is kind of your first example. the fact that that got figured out now, I'm not saying I'm not contributing AI to that. My guess is there were some tools that they use to model, vast sets of data that could prove that that would work. but it's the tip of the.

Mark Agostinelli 00:51:24 Innovation should happen quicker.

Todd Taylor 00:51:26 The innovation could be revolutionary relative. I mean, we might see people who can live to 150 years old in the next 20 years.

Mark Agostinelli 00:51:33 But I'm just surprised that as I walked through products of 10 or 15 years ago of autonomous robots and warehouse and distribution that we haven't seen it holistically. No, I thought it was. I thought it would be faster.

Todd Taylor 00:51:47 It's not Jeffersonian, right? We were told when we were kids there would be flying cars.

Mark Agostinelli 00:51:51 Exactly.

Todd Taylor 00:51:51 That still hasn't happened. I'm still waiting. I know I really want that flying car for the commute, but at the same time, it's just like innovation will come much more rapidly over the next ten years than they probably have over the last 30.

Mark Agostinelli 00:52:04 Yes, that's probably.

Todd Taylor 00:52:06 Due to that compression module of like, you know, tech will double every exponentially. it'll be interesting.

Mark Agostinelli 00:52:12 It will be interesting.

Todd Taylor 00:52:13 And I can't.

Mark Agostinelli 00:52:14 But as a car guy, aren't you, like, hoping autonomous driving doesn't totally take.

Todd Taylor 00:52:18 Over, like, drive? Well, I mean, that's the whole thing. So it's like if you buy a certain trim, you can get the autonomous driving. But I have to start to say, is it worth it? Like what? I really use.

Mark Agostinelli 00:52:26 It. But I read that somewhere that like at some point people say in the next five years, autonomous driving will be undoubtedly so much safer than humans driving, and therefore the insurance companies will mandate it.

Todd Taylor 00:52:37 One would hope. Honestly, one would hope. I'd like driving to become a novelty, but it's like, would you? But we've all been. That's because we've been conditioned.

Mark Agostinelli 00:52:45 I love my kids now.

Todd Taylor 00:52:46 Like, my nephew has really no interest in driving a car.

Todd Taylor 00:52:50 Like, I didn't get his license until he was 18. Like, you and I were, like, chomping at the bit. And he was 16 to get the permit, right. First day you could get the license. You were in line to get the license.

Mark Agostinelli 00:52:59 But I think there's some of us. I would I'm gonna. I'm gonna assume you're in this category. I'm gonna take a leap of faith that, like, you'd like to retire. And maybe it's not a Porsche, but you want to buy some kind of car that probably has no computer in it that you can drive once in a while. I just don't want that to go away.

Todd Taylor 00:53:16 No, I don't I don't want that to go away. But like, I'm also a big tech geek. I mean.

Mark Agostinelli 00:53:21 I'd love to get in the car and just work or be.

Todd Taylor 00:53:23 On. I mean, I bought a meta quest three with some extra gift card money I had over Christmas and the fact that you can buy and I was a big baseball player growing up, so you could buy, software that will mimic taking actual batting practice and you can compute it to be like.

Todd Taylor 00:53:39 That's why I want to face vintage Dwight Gooden and learn how to hit. And that's like, it's real. Yes. So you're actually taking batting practice and you're learning how to hit. It's like that was, you know, you went to your dad's arm, got tired. Right? Right. Like how hard your dad could or your mom could throw. Right? And for how long? It's just like that was about what you got. You got, like, maybe 20 swings. When you're on a team, it's like, imagine being able to go out and I'm just going to be able to swing for two hours and I'm going to refine my swing. And that's all I get from AI.

Mark Agostinelli 00:54:08 And get feedback.

Todd Taylor 00:54:09 Oh my god. To get feedback on you've got.

Mark Agostinelli 00:54:11 I.

Todd Taylor 00:54:11 Know.

Mark Agostinelli 00:54:11 They've.

Todd Taylor 00:54:11 Got a loop in your.

Mark Agostinelli 00:54:13 Hockey stick handling and.

Todd Taylor 00:54:14 I've got I've got a bat that has that. I've got the mini bat that will tell you what your swing, you know, your launch angle is and it's just like, wow.

Todd Taylor 00:54:21 It's like, if I had had this as a kid, like I never would have needed to leave my house and I could have taken batting practice all day, right. Like, how much better would I?

Mark Agostinelli 00:54:28 That's cool.

Todd Taylor 00:54:29 Like, that.

Mark Agostinelli 00:54:29 Is.

Todd Taylor 00:54:29 That's pretty.

Mark Agostinelli 00:54:30 Neat. It is very cool. All right, one last question. That's, that's a zinger from back in the day when you were appraising cars. Which car did you love until you went and saw it up close and personal and you wrote it off? And which car did you hate until you saw it up close and personal? And now you're like, wow, that's a sick car.

Todd Taylor 00:54:53 All right, I was. And this will sounds weird.

Mark Agostinelli 00:54:56 No.

Todd Taylor 00:54:57 It's fine. It's. I saw a Ferrari, littered with bullet holes. Okay, so that very much changed my view of. And what was funny was the only thing that saved that driver was he was riding in kind of a low ride position where he was tipped back.

Todd Taylor 00:55:11 And then, like, if he had been sitting upwards like he was supposed to drive there, like he would have been shot right in the heart. Wow. Instead, he got shot in like the lower ribs because of how he had survived. And it's just like, you know, I had to see, like, there was a lot of blood in the car.

Mark Agostinelli 00:55:23 Yeah.

Todd Taylor 00:55:24 Yeah, it kind of turned me off. the things, the things that I would have never thought I would have found cool was I got to get in a Hummer when they first got kind of commercialized. Okay. and it was mammoth, and I was like, oh my God, people drive these in like suburbs. And it was huge. Because if you've never sat in a Hummer, there's a there's two seats in the front, but there's enough space in the middle that you can't even reach over and touch the person who's in the passenger seat. Like, that's how big. That's a wide military grade. Yeah, they're I mean, they're enormous.

Todd Taylor 00:55:53 And it's like, oh my God, imagine this packed with soul. Because you always think about like, I don't know, I always did. It felt like soldiers packed into an SUV. Yeah. Going to a soccer game. I was like, oh no, no. They got a lot of room.

Mark Agostinelli 00:56:04 There in the minivan.

Todd Taylor 00:56:05 To be able to, like, get their gear and hold on to their gear and like that was. Yeah, that was that's cool. That was the fun thing. That's cool. That's a Humvee up close.

Mark Agostinelli 00:56:13 That's really cool. What is Todd? Kayla's. I said it was the last question, but I guess I have one more. What is Todd? Kayla's dream car. Oh, man. Because you're a car guy, and I don't get to talk to a lot.

Todd Taylor 00:56:24 No, it's probably a 67 Camaro.

Mark Agostinelli 00:56:27 Okay. Cool. America.

Todd Taylor 00:56:28 Yeah. The real. Yeah. The real old, you know, the the rear wheels are slightly bigger than the front wheels.

Todd Taylor 00:56:33 people didn't care about gas mileage. You had the souped up, you know, V8's that were manual. Yeah, yeah. Those are those are kind of neat.

Mark Agostinelli 00:56:42 Now, if you got a car like that, would you get like, the power steering put into the car instead? Yeah.

Todd Taylor 00:56:46 Yeah, yeah. Look, there's some modern amenities that just make brakes more comfortable. Brakes, brakes and power steering. It's like if you've never seen. Most people don't know what power steering actually does. Oh my God. So your power steering goes out and then you realize, oh my God, it's so impossible to drive this car without power steering. And I remember my father being like, that's how.

Mark Agostinelli 00:57:03 I grew up. That's how. That's why your arms are turning.

Todd Taylor 00:57:06 The wheel was like a chore.

Mark Agostinelli 00:57:08 Well, I really appreciate you. Appreciate you coming on, sharing your background and your story, but also waxing poetic a little bit.

Todd Taylor 00:57:14 Happy to be back. You know, next time, hopefully we can we can do another podcast.

Todd Taylor 00:57:18 Yeah yeah yeah. And I'm happy to 100% happy to pontificate more.

Mark Agostinelli 00:57:22 Thanks again.

Todd Taylor 00:57:23 Man. Thank you sir.