



Mark Asks, "I Quit My Job To Go All In - Why Am I Stuck?"

Transcript

Ryan [00:00:00]:

This is The Road to \$1 Million. I'm Ryan Daniel Moran. The road to \$1 million dollars starts with an idea. It starts with a thought. It starts with a simple concept and a willingness to go all in. Today I'm going to be hanging out with Mark who is starting a new business from scratch, but he's already gone all in. Mark has downsized his life, he's quit his job and he has decided to take the risk of starting a business by playing for the long term.

Ryan [00:00:33]:

He recorded this episode from his closet. He moved his office into the closet in his small apartment where he, his wife, his first born child, and the 2 that are on the way are all living. They're doing that in order to save money to simplify their lives so that he can go all in on the business that he wants to start. That mindset, that commitment attracted me to consider investing in Mark's business. I offered Mark that if he would go all in that I would help him, I would invest in him, and I would document the whole process here on this podcast.

Ryan [00:01:17]:

The road to \$1 million is filled with ups and downs and left, and rights and B, A, B, A select starts and you have to be willing to play for the long term and absorb the blows that will happen along the way. Mark has gotten one step ahead of that by saving money, reducing expenses, and committing to the long term.

Ryan [00:01:39]:

He has said to me over and over, "I'm willing to make less money in the short term in order to build a product and a brand that people really love." Today, you're going to hear me talk with Mark about the vision for his business and how he can accelerate his path to \$1 million dollars. When you're ready to start your road to \$1 million come join us at capitalism.com/1.

Ryan [00:02:09]:

So Mark, you're in this really interesting phase, which gets me all jazzed up because you have a young child, you have two on the way, and you just ...

Mark [00:02:20]:

From the same woman.

Ryan [00:02:25]:



And you just made the leap of going full time as an entrepreneur and your business isn't launched yet. Like, you're taking a risk here. You're recording this from a closet. You downsized your life. You are doing the typical Gary V, stop spending money, creating room in order to expand. It's a big strategic risk for you which is why I'm so pumped for you and why I'm as committed to you winning as you are.

Ryan [00:02:56]:

That might be a stretch. I know you're all in so, but, I really want you to win and I will do everything I can to help you win. So to start why don't you just tell me how you're feeling about all of this?

Mark [00:03:08]:

I'm better than you might think.

Ryan [00:03:12]:

Good.

Mark [00:03:15]:

To be honest, I have failed many, many times already, right? I'm almost 29. I've been at this entrepreneurship thing off and on since I was like 13, 14 years old selling graphic design on Digital Point forums and I've always wanted to be an entrepreneur. I've always wanted to have success in the entrepreneurship game and I've had mostly failures except for the times that I hitched onto people who already knew what they were doing and learned from them and then got to ride on the coattails a bit and gained some experience.

Mark [00:03:44]:

But in terms of things that I've started myself, every single thing has been a failure and the common denominator in all of them has actually been that I don't think that I tried hard enough or I didn't believe that it was going to be successful enough to the point that I actually went all in and I did all of the things that were necessary to be successful, which is painful because I look back and I see a lot of failures that I don't think actually needed to be failures and the only failure there was probably me.

Mark [00:04:10]:

And I'm just tired of that shit. I'm just tired of not going all the way in and I think the other thing is I've not really had something that I was truly, truly passionate about. And this idea for Ancient Strength, this vision for what I want to do for the world through this company and



through myself, it's the first time that I've worked on something that it's like effortless to care about, that I don't have to convince myself that it's worth my time to do.

Ryan [00:04:39]:

That's a good spot to be, man.

Mark [00:04:41]:

Yeah, and I feel like ...

Ryan [00:04:42]:

Effortless to care about, those are big words. It's really good.

Mark [00:04:46]:

And it's the first time I ever felt like that about a business. And so, I have a very supportive wife. We've been through a hell of a lot. We've taken chances before. We've traveled for a year in an RV after selling everything. We've moved to Ohio to go work for RV Share. We've left our childhood behind and our families and friends behind and done our own thing, and we've had a lot of crazy experiences.

Mark [00:05:09]:

And so, I just feel like If not now, then when and if not this idea, then what idea? So for me it's like I know that it's the time of my career, I'm getting close to 30, where I really need to start moving in the right direction if I want to make some major movement in the next 20-30 years of my life and I finally have found something that I really, really care about. So it just seems like the right time to take the risk.

Ryan [00:05:35]:

So, I don't know if you need to hear this, but I'm going to tell you anyway, 30s are awesome.

Mark [00:05:41]:

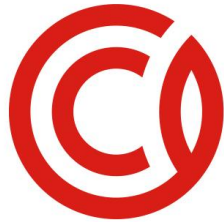
I can hear it.

Ryan [00:05:44]:

30s are awesome. Like, there's this phrase that I heard when I was in my 20s and I didn't believe it but now I get it, which is that you learn in your 20s and you earn in your 30s.

Mark [00:05:56]:

I like that. I like that lot.



Ryan [00:05:56]:

So, I need ... this is me giving you permission to be like ... you're 29 which means great you're about to start. So, I had a I had a mentor of mine tell me when I turned 30 ... because I was going through ... I was 29 and I was like I'm about to turn 30 and I wanted to call some of my mentors and be like, could you just remind me that 30 is young? I know you think it's young, just convince me.

Ryan [00:06:27]:

And this was Josh at BioTrust and you know BioTrust is ... they did \$100 million supplement company in in 12 months. And he says he's like, Ryan ...

Mark [00:06:37]:

Did you say \$100 million in 12 months? Wow, wow.

Ryan [00:06:39]:

Yes, that's correct. His book is going to be called 12 Months to \$100 Million.

Mark [00:06:44]:

Yeah, maybe we should change the name of the podcast. Are we shooting too low, here?

Ryan [00:06:48]:

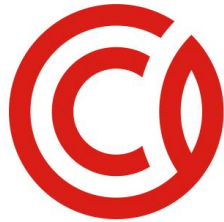
Road to \$100 Million, maybe. So Josh said to me, "Ryan, I didn't even start BioTrust till I was 38." And even that is young. Like, even that's young. So I mean ... so you're 29. You're about to start. You had a great decade of learning, and I'm just telling you that, because like, you've got to be okay in that sense of like I had all these failures and learning opportunities. Just because you've been doing it a long time, that's great, but all that was just fuel for what's next.

Mark [00:07:30]:

Yeah.

Ryan [00:07:30]:

No, I mean I was talking with Trevor Blake recently who said the highest percentage of successful entrepreneurs are when they're in their mid 40s. The entrepreneurs who start in their mid 40s because they have all this life experience, they have all this network, they have some capital now. They don't have ego anymore. And so I mean you wrote down that you didn't try hard enough.



Ryan [00:07:55]:

I think it's more that you just had a bigger ego when you were in your 20s and now you've reached a certain level of humility where you can effortlessly care about something and know it will be successful because you don't need it to edify you and give you status. You are living in a closet so you don't need the accolades anymore. So that's ... when you don't need them anymore then you can win. But I'm talking your ear off. I just, I don't know if you needed to hear that, but I wanted to ...

Mark [00:08:27]:

I think I do. I think that because I've been at this since again 13, 14 years old, I look at my watch and I go, geez, it's painful to not tell yourself, "Gosh, you should have done more than you have by now." Not that I haven't achieved things that I'm very proud of or have had success in certain arenas, but I think there's always this nagging feeling of, gosh, I think I could have done more.

Mark [00:08:50]:

And so I think it's ... I definitely need to hear that to remind myself that it's okay. I'm still super young and if I double my life I still won't even be 60 yet. So that's me. Look at a guy like Mark Sisson in his mid 60s and he looks literally incredible and he was like 50 something when he started Primal Kitchen. So never too late to start.

Ryan [00:09:11]:

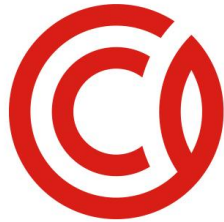
You've got lots of time and fortunately and unfortunately for us, our close mutual friend is Mark Jenny, who was a gazillionaire when he was 9. Okay, like, the guy is inhuman and unfortunately for our egos we compare ourselves to Mark's genius but also, fortunately for us, he is our friend and our example, and he's a wonderful human being, and the fact of the matter is Mark's career took off when he stopped needing accolades.

Ryan [00:09:48]:

When Mark started building companies where he wasn't the face of it and he wasn't getting all this status and throwing parties and his career took off and he gets to do whatever he wants now and he gets to be the magician behind the scenes and now he builds massive companies and doesn't care if he has ... He would actually like it if he had less than 100 Instagram followers.

Mark [00:10:12]:

Oh yeah.



Ryan [00:10:13]:

And so, I think there is a real correlation to that. In your 20s you care about status, so you chase status behavior rather than actually creating value. Once you hit 30 and up, you stop caring so much. And that's when you can really do something amazing.

Mark [00:10:33]:

It's so funny that you bring up Mark Jenny because that's so true. He was my first real mentor. He's the first entrepreneur for real that I went to go work for and to watch him do his thing and learn from him, it was like, oh my God, and this guy is how old? Oh my God, I'm garbage in comparison. It definitely makes you feel like that when you're with someone like him.

Mark [00:10:52]:

But it's also incredibly inspiring and I've learned more from him than probably any other person in terms of business. You would be a second. And I think that there's something to be said for that too, and all the lessons learned and the friendships made too.

Ryan [00:11:04]:

And I learned the most from Mark too, so we are we're barking up the same tree here.

Mark [00:11:08]:

That's funny.

Ryan [00:11:12]:

So, I want to go into Ancient Strength now, because I think you're in the mindset where you need to be. And also, you should recognize, Ancient Strength, because of your mindset is probably going to be a big success. And it might be a failure, and it's okay if it fails. Like, as someone who wants to invest in your business, if I go in it with you, I also understand that it might be a failure, and that's OK.

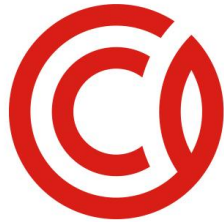
Ryan [00:11:43]:

It's like, we're in this to take a risk to do something really great and meaningful and if you play like you're okay with it failing, you probably won't. When you play like it has to work and you can't fail, then you're going to hedge and then you're going to fail.

Mark [00:12:04]:

Yeah, which is the story of basically everything that I've started up until now.

Ryan [00:12:10]:



Got it.

Mark [00:12:10]:

It's like, okay, this has to work or I'm screwed and then it doesn't work because I screwed myself because I'm thinking about that too much.

Ryan [00:12:17]:

I understand, I understand. So the last time I talked to you about the brand you were getting samples and I wasn't sure based on the pictures that you sent me if they were samples that you had kind of concocted yourself, or if they were samples that a manufacturer sent you.

Mark [00:12:35]:

Yeah, so what I sent you was me doing flavor testing at home. So basically taking an unflavored beef based protein that I got my hands on and then buying raw flavoring ingredients like vanilla powder, cocoa powder, monk fruit extract, sea salt, things like that, chicory root, to experiment with different flavor profiles and try to dial in the 2 flavors that I would like to launch with for the protein.

Mark [00:13:00]:

In terms of samples from manufacturers, maybe we can get into that a little bit later, but the whole process of getting manufacturers to do what I want them to and to be helpful has definitely been a learning process for me.

Ryan [00:13:13]:

What's been the struggle?

Mark [00:13:14]:

Well, I think that I went in with this expectation that because I was an inbound lead ... So I have the sales background right, so I think I assumed that because I was an inbound lead and very serious and send people, "Hey, send me an NDA, I want to get on the phone right away. I want to send you my formula. Get me a pricing ... a price quote on your minimum order quantity," and all that I sort of assumed that they would be more on top of it in terms of getting back to me quicker.

Mark [00:13:42]:

And so I didn't for the first probably 2 weeks that I was reaching out to and having, opening conversations with manufacturers, probably 3 weeks, honestly, I wasn't being aggressive



enough in terms of following up with them and saying like, hey, I really, really need you guys to work with me on this.

Mark [00:14:00]:

And I think that because my order is so small that I probably wasn't attracting that much attention internally because almost ... actually all of the manufacturers that I've been talking with have, I won't say been dragging their feet, but have definitely not been calling me 3 times a week to update me on how things are going.

Mark [00:14:21]:

And so, and I kind of had this expectation that I thought that as salespeople they would be a little bit more aggressive with me and that I wouldn't have to chase them so much, which probably isn't the best thing for them, but certainly hasn't been the best thing for me.

Mark [00:14:34]:

And so that kind of slowed me down not being as aggressive as I needed to be and then, like 2 weeks after I hadn't heard back from any of the manufacturers, I started emailing them again. Hey, like, I really would like this price quote. Do you have an update for me? And of course within 24 hours I had information back from every single manufacturer. So it was like, it was almost like they didn't really focus on this project or on this contract until I was showing some kind of initiative and I didn't expect that.

Ryan [00:14:59]:

This is super common. Well, here's what you will learn to understand about manufacturers. It is very, very slim margins as a manufacturer and all of their money is made in very large orders and so it is like ... it's 80/20 to the extreme. They have a handful of clients who do tens of thousands of units and they get priority over everything and sometimes they run into trouble where it's like, hey, we have a deadline we need to hit because sales are up and all focus goes to the existing clients because that's where all the money is.

Mark [00:15:38]:

That makes sense.

Ryan [00:15:38]:

It's like you've got all your money in 5 stocks and you have no free cash to be able to invest in that penny stock that you think is going to go up. Like there's a chance it could go up, but you're riding Tesla, right? That is manufacturing to the T. So if you come in and you are talking like a startup, you get treated like a startup.



Ryan [00:16:06]:

And so there is ... there's certain ways that you can get their attention by saying things like, "I'm considering moving my business from other manufacturers over to you," or "I'm considering concentrating my supply chain with one vendor who I know can handle the volume as I scale." You are not lying.

Mark [00:16:27]:

Right, yeah.

Ryan [00:16:27]:

But you're saying, I've been talking with other manufacturers. I'm looking to consolidate around one that I know can handle the scale. Can you tell me what type of capacity your facilities have because we're in the middle of a raise in order to launch a new product line, and we're looking for somebody who can handle us and treat us like a priority. Like that type of language ...

Mark [00:16:48]:

Yeah, I thought that just telling people that I was raising capital would be enough for them to be like, oh we like this guy. No. What you said is much better than what I had been saying and I think that I would have gotten ... it's a little frustrating because I feel like I would have samples in hand already and instead I'm still waiting on ... I have only pricing from one manufacturer and the only way for ... It's actually a few dollars less per bottle than you had originally estimated, like \$3 less per bottle, so that's probably a good thing. Definitely not a bad thing, right? And with them to start the sampling process, it requires a 50% down payment on the minimum order.

Ryan [00:17:28]:

Wow.

Mark [00:17:29]:

This is for the only one that's given me solid pricing. The other 3 that I'm waiting for they have either free or affordable sampling options, but I'm still waiting for them to get back to me on pricing. There was one manufacturer that I really liked and they had good communication until they kind of ghosted me for a few weeks. And when I followed up with them, I had said to them on the phone that if possible, I would prefer to not source ingredients from China just to not get into any geopolitical issues of supply chains or something if anything were to happen.

Mark [00:18:01]:



And there was a bit of a miscommunication and the guy thought that I wanted to source everything, all the ingredients in the United States, like even vanilla bean powder, which I don't even think is possible, and so because of this miscommunication ... because I said, yeah, I would like to source as much as possible in the US and I don't want to source from China. Somehow that that got, I guess, understood as I want everything US sourced. And so when I got back to him and he was like, oh, I don't think we're actually going to be able to do this for you because of ... we can't find monk fruit in the United States because it's only in China and Thailand.

Mark [00:18:37]:

And I was like, yeah, I know that and so once I kind of reiterated and made things clear with him, now I'm waiting on an actual price quote from them and they have a very affordable sampling process as well. So, it's been a learning process that's taken like twice as long as I would have liked it to, and I think a lot of it, if not all of it has just been my fault of not knowing how to properly communicate with manufacturers. If there's one thing that I could tell anybody listening to that's trying to do this is like, I wish I would have had my formula more accurately put together instead of saying, "Yeah, I want this ingredient, this ingredient, this ingredient. I'm open to your ideas on how much to blend of each."

Mark [00:19:14]:

Which is fine if you have a really long time line and you really want a manufacturer's help, but for me it slowed me down because then as I got more clear on my formula and was like hey, I actually want to use this specific ingredient. I want to use this beef protein from Prinova, and here's their price sheet that I got from them directly, etc. That is delaying me further too because I'm now revising what I want them to quote me on. So it's been ...

Ryan [00:19:42]:

And to be to be fair, to be fair, most people wouldn't care as much as you about the type of beef protein, for example, right?

Mark [00:19:52]:

Yeah, probably not.

Ryan [00:19:52]:

So like, you are very specific about what you're going for with this company, and so it's a different approach than what most people do when they're just doing ... I have this little project right now that I've invested in that is about ... it's protein, but it's all awesome flavors.



Don't really care as much about the combination of casein versus whey. Okay, don't care that much. It's a taste play.

Mark [00:20:27]:

Does it taste like cake or not?

Ryan [00:20:31]:

Does it taste like banana bread or does it not taste like banana bread? Because Quest discontinued their banana bread protein and that bothers me.

Mark [00:20:37]:

And that's the whole reason for this brand.

Ryan [00:20:39]:

That's basically it, right? It's like, I want it. It needs to taste like banana bread, and Quest doesn't have it anymore. Alright, so where are you in like the timeline process of actually seeing what these suppliers can do? Because being in this holding period sucks and we want to get through this as much as possible. And you are ... Your blessing and your curse is your research brain so you could continue going down research and we've got to combine that with a little bit of making mistakes, being willing to make mistakes. So, where are you in this process, and then let's make some mistakes.

Mark [00:21:15]:

Well, I'm definitely making those.

Ryan [00:21:16]:

OK, good.

Mark [00:21:18]:

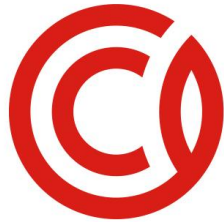
Don't worry about that Ryan. I'm making mistakes.

Ryan [00:21:20]:

Alright.

Mark [00:21:21]:

Yeah, so, I would say within the next week, week and a half I should have final price quotes from 2 to 3 more manufacturers and be in a position where I can actually order samples from them.



Ryan [00:21:35]:

Why can't you do that before you have pricing?

Mark [00:21:41]:

That's a good question. That's what they told me. But I guess that I could tell them, just make me samples of this.

Ryan [00:21:51]:

Yeah, I mean, you could say, well to be honest with you, I'm going on communication and I'm going on taste. I'm willing to pay a premium if the supplier that I want to work with has the best product and the best communication. So can you send me what you have right now while we figure out pricing because there's no reason for us to talk about pricing if we can't nail product.

Mark [00:22:13]:

Yeah, that's a really good point. I need to do that today.

Ryan [00:22:21]:

It's like, because waiting on quotes and then getting samples is like ... It feels like it adds another 3 weeks to the process.

Mark [00:22:28]:

Probably more like another 3 months is at least what it feels like.

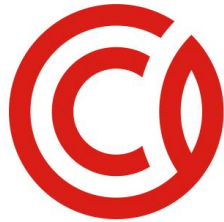
Ryan [00:22:33]:

And to be fair, like if one sample is significantly better than the other, are you willing to pay \$4 extra per unit and figure out how to make that work?

Mark [00:22:47]:

Yeah, even it means that the brand makes less money. Ultimately I want people to use our products and get incredible results and feel really good about the products that they're putting in their body and really enjoy when they put them in their body too. Like, that to me ... the quality of the experience is the most important thing. I'll stay working out of a closet for 5 years if I have to.

Mark [00:23:11]:



If that's what it takes for customers to enjoy my products, then I'm trying to play the 20 year game. As much as I want to do a \$1 million dollars in 12 months, I'm trying to play the 20 year game, not the 1 year game.

Ryan [00:23:22]:

Good, so I mean, we don't need to worry about quotes as much as we need to worry about quality. So let's figure out who has quality and let's figure that out as fast as possible.

Mark [00:23:32]:

Yeah, I've got 3 or 4 phone calls I have to make today then and I'm going to do exactly that, what you said. Just I want to order samples. Keep working on this other stuff, but I want samples and I want them now.

Ryan [00:23:44]:

Awesome. Good. I think that's exactly what you should do.

Mark [00:23:45]:

Yeah, thanks for that. I think I definitely needed to hear that because I ... again I haven't really ... I haven't had any experience working with manufacturers of physical products before. This is my first physical products brand. My whole career has been in the tech space. It's all been intangible products or services.

Mark [00:23:58]:

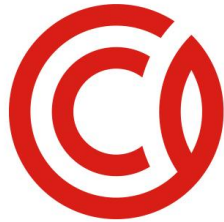
So for me this is totally new and I don't know the name of the game, right? I don't know how to play the game. But I think that I do know how to play outside the box and I've been playing inside of their box because I haven't felt comfortable playing outside because I'm not familiar with the space and ...

Ryan [00:24:15]:

Yeah, I mean in the tech world you've got to wait 3 weeks to see like a spec and a design. This is like they literally have it on a shelf. It's like, send me that thing.

Mark [00:24:30]:

Yeah, just send it to me please. Yeah, you're totally right about that. I have one more question about the ... kind of the manufacturing thing. So there's ... one of the brands I had reached out to, and I didn't realize that they were actually an ingredient supplier and not a contract manufacturer, although they do have like a sister company that's a contract manufacturer. It's a company called Prinova. I don't know if you've heard of them before.



Ryan [00:24:50]:

No. You mentioned it earlier, but I didn't know what it was.

Mark [00:24:53]:

Yeah, they have some of, I guess, the higher quality ingredients that are out there. And I've been talking to a guy at Prinova about our blend because I want to use their beef protein and their beef bone broth protein as 2 of our 3 proteins in the blend. They have a product called HydroBeef and another product called NutraBroth and they're both grass fed protein products made from beef and they're really high quality and they're like ... they're traceable.

Mark [00:25:23]:

So like, for the story that I can tell my customers, I can trace exactly where the product is coming from and it's really high quality and also they're patented, so on our bottle I feel like it'd be cool to say like HydroBeef, protein isolate, NutraBroth, beef bone broth concentrate, to further show our customers the quality that we're after.

Mark [00:25:47]:

So I've been talking with them and they can work with manufacturers and send the product directly to them. They've worked with all the manufacturers that I've talked to before, so they have working relationships, but they also kind of have this ability to basically pre-mix the protein and then send it to the manufacturer for I guess the final stages of just packaging and labeling and all of that stuff so they can make the powder and then send the powder to the manufacturer for bottling and such.

Mark [00:26:14]:

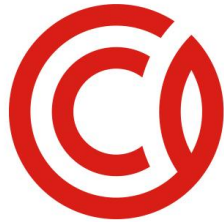
Or they can send the raw materials like their beef, like their proteins to the manufacturer, and the manufacturer can use their own flavoring, ingredients or whatever and do the mix themselves.

Ryan [00:26:25]:

Okay, so, what's your question?

Mark [00:26:26]:

My question is, which do you think is more advantageous in terms of speed, quality control, pricing? Would it be to have them do the mix in-house, send it to the manufacturer or for them to just send the 2 proteins that we want to use, and then the manufacturer do the rest? What do you think is the better option?



Ryan [00:26:44]:

I have no idea. That is a question for your manufacturer. That's a question for whoever your rep is, and they've probably done that 1000 times and have worked with your ingredient supplier 1000 times.

Mark [00:26:57]:

Got it. Okay. Cool. Yeah, I think that's all the questions I have on ...

Ryan [00:27:05]:

So, here's where I want to go next then. So, you know your first product is going to be a beef protein. What does that open up for you in terms of products 2, 3 and 4?

Mark [00:27:20]:

Yeah, so, there's one wrinkle in this and it's probably the number one question that I have next to targeting. I've thought a lot about the journey that I want to take the customer on, the journey that I have been on, like my health journey, which I'm sure we'll ... I mean, you know already and we'll get into, I'm sure, in later episodes or something, but my journey started with healing my gut.

Mark [00:27:48]:

It was arduous. I had multiple different types of bacterial infections, ulcers and chronic inflammation, and leaky gut all at the same time, it was like I would drink water and it would hurt my stomach. It was the worst time of my life and that was already multiple years into this journey of trying to optimize myself.

Mark [00:28:06]:

And when I finally figured out how to heal myself, it was through ancestral nutrition. It was through learning from people like the Weston A. Price Foundation, Traditional Nutrition, the GAPS Diet, all these different things helped me heal my gut.

Mark [00:28:21]:

And I had to take lots of different types of supplements and I also had to make certain foods like certain bone broths and things like that to get the nutrients that I needed to heal my gut. So a supplement that ... This is probably the supplement I'm most excited about is like an all-in-one gut supplement that is a symbiotic so, combining a prebiotic and probiotic, some really cool potential post biotic products like Core Biome, which is like a really interesting



patented ingredient that makes it to your colon as well as like anti inflammatory compounds like curcumin or turmeric and gut building compounds like L glutamine, BPC-157 ...

Ryan [00:29:00]:

BPC is the best. Like, BPC is most underground supplement. Did Alex turn you onto that?

Mark [00:29:08]:

Alex turned me on to that, yeah ...

Ryan [00:29:10]:

If you're listening to this podcast, you've got to get it through a doctor or a source. Don't go buy the cheap stuff on Amazon. It's not real. But BPC-157 is like the jam. This should not be taken as health advice or medical advice or investing advice. This is for entertainment purposes only. We have no idea what we're talking about and zero credentials after our names.

Mark [00:29:32]:

Man, I've got to learn that one. That's good. That line's good. I need to use that a lot especially ...

Ryan [00:29:38]:

I'm an idiot on the Internet. Don't listen to anything that I ever have to say.

Mark [00:29:41]:

Do the opposite of what I say.

Ryan [00:29:44]:

Yeah, and that also is not medical advice. So, Mark, so this is interesting. That's a little bit of a spin, because when we last spoke about your vision, it was very much about exercise and fitness and using whole plants and animal products in order to fuel your best health and your workouts in your fitness. This is very gut specific. Now you can do both, but you have to do one before the other. So what are you leaning towards right now?

Mark [00:30:22]:

So that's kind of the dilemma that I've been facing internally that's been keeping me up at night is this idea of ... Ultimately what I really want to build out of Ancient Strength is a group of people, a community, a tribe, a movement that is about stripping away what modern society has programmed into us to reveal what we already were designed to be, which is more beast-like than we think. Stronger, healthier, faster, happier, more productive, right?



Mark [00:30:51]:

All these things that we should be that we're not because of those three pillars: nutrition, fitness, and lifestyle factors, right? Those are the 3 things that I care the most about. And I want to be an animal and I want my followers to be animals too. But I also recognize that I lived a life of sickness, literally an entire lifetime of sickness until I started to figure out how to heal myself.

Mark [00:31:16]:

And it was through the gut that I actually began this journey to build the foundation that I could grow from and actually become something more than I used to be and become stronger than I was. And so, in terms of the consumer's journey, I feel like unless your gut is already in good shape, which what, like 80% of us don't have a good gut, that's where you actually start the journey is, hey, you got to put the house in order before you can start ... you got to build the foundation before you can put up the walls and I feel sometimes like the gut supplement is the foundation and the protein and the pre workouts and the nootropics, those are the walls, the roofs, the doors, the windows, the plumbing, the AC, all those things.

Mark [00:31:58]:

So while I kind of came into the idea at first with this animal based protein because nobody is doing this and I can do it way better and at higher quality, I also recognize that there's this foundational element that comes before the protein, and so I'm sort of concerned like if I launch with the protein and it's like, oh yeah, this is like a performance supplements company and then do a gut supplement, will the protein people be like, "What do I need this for? I'm just trying to get jacked. I don't care about my gut." Will I alienate people by going in that direction versus the other way around where it's like people who come into ...

Ryan [00:32:28]:

Remember this. You will alienate people no matter what direction you go.

Mark [00:32:34]:

Yeah, that's for sure.

Ryan [00:32:34]:

All directions alienate someone. When you get married you alienate 7 billion people. You're always alienating someone, so it's important to not think about who are you alienating. You think about who you're choosing.

Mark [00:32:50]:



Yeah.

Ryan [00:32:52]:

You think about who you are serving. And so, what you are really facing the dilemma of is, is Mark serving younger Mark? Or is Mark serving a certain population that's slightly different than Mark, and either one is totally fine. I can tell you that doing a gut supplement and a really good probiotic make total sense to me as products 3 and 4. BPC-157 and glutamine, not as much. That could fit as like a product 8 or 9.

Mark [00:33:27]:

Okay. I was thinking as part of a blend that was like an all-in-one gut supplement.

Ryan [00:33:33]:

Okay, got it. So I think an all-in-one gut supplement fits in this brand, as does a probiotic. I think this fits just fine. The other product that I wrote down that you mentioned before was kind of a whole foods pre-workout, which I love. I wanted to do it at Sheer Strength, but we sold the company and they went into a different direction. I've been hot on that idea for years and think somebody should do it with like beetroot and sweet potato powder. I think it would crush.

Ryan [00:34:07]:

My opinion, and this is just one man's opinion is that something like a whole food pre-workout is a really good follow up to a whole food protein and after we have 2 winners we can widen the net a little bit, and widen the net can be a probiotic and an all-in-one gut supplement. Now we have a very complete story about this being a whole food ancestral living brand and we cover a variety of different things on that path. I think if you go protein then gut, now there's a little bit of confusion of what the direction ...

Mark [00:34:56]:

There's a lot of like disparity there.

Ryan [00:34:56]:

Yeah, those are very ... Those contrasts each other strongly. So I would be more inclined to do the core product that you want to do, that gateway product which you've decided is going to be a whole food protein. Do a follow up whole foods something else. And then I would round out the rest of the line with other things you're excited about.

Mark [00:35:13]:



And I do think that the pre workout is the way to go. That's kind of always been ... the thought is after the protein to do a pre-workout. It just seems like they marry together really well.

Ryan [00:35:23]:

Yeah, they do, they do, and if they if they match the same story of being whole food based, you're home free, man, you are home free.

Mark [00:35:31]:

And I have this sort of this idea and I wonder what you think about this, because my ... obviously like my tagline has been fueled by our past, driven by our future. And I think of the brand as like an intersection of ancestral nutrition and modern nutritional science, right? Like it's not just ancient foods and it's not just oh, these are all the compounds that the clinical studies say work.

Mark [00:36:00]:

It's the marriage of the two. So imagining a pre-workout that has those whole food elements to it but then also has Alpha GPC and some really, really well sourced caffeine and maybe some other compounds, that's kind of the marriage that I'm looking for or the middle place that I want to be in, because for me, that's where I want to be, right?

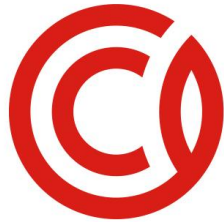
Mark [00:36:23]:

Like, I love nutritional science. I love all this new stuff that they're coming up with. I want to take that stuff, but I also don't want to fill my body with artificial ingredients and sucralose and maltodextrin and neglect to fill my body with the things that I think that I should be, which is the stuff that comes from the Earth without being processed, or heavily processed at least. So that's kind of the idea, and I think the pre-workout would be a good place to kind of introduce that marriage. Does that make sense?

Ryan [00:36:46]:

You're giving them a nice transition because most pre workouts have all those things that you just mentioned and so you're allowing for that transition to take place, which is a really good place for this brand to play. Like, beef protein, it's not quite a whole food. You're giving them a transition to ancestral living. A pre-workout with sweet potato powder and beetroot extract isn't a whole food, but it's a beautiful transitional product that replaces a lot of the things that they're currently putting into their body.

Ryan [00:37:36]:



And so, if you can come up with those kind of transitional ideas, that might lend to having a food bar as one of your products or having a beef jerky as one of your products. We can have these transitional products that are ... What's that?

Mark [00:37:53]:

Organ jerky.

Ryan [00:37:55]:

Absolutely organ jerky. Yeah. So, now we've got this really good transitional line that helps people start to go in that direction. You're making it possible for the masses. I like that direction.

Mark [00:38:06]:

Yeah, that's exactly what my vision is, so I'm glad I'm glad that you think that that makes sense.

Ryan [00:38:13]:

Are you thinking about your launch plan yet?

Mark [00:38:21]:

Yes, in some ways. I've been trying to experiment with what channels I seem to gravitate towards or seem to do well on or that are giving me results just in terms of community building. I would say the number one thing that I'm focused on right now is building a community around this idea. In terms of a more formal launch plan I haven't really gotten there.

Ryan [00:38:48]:

What is building a community mean?

Mark [00:38:53]:

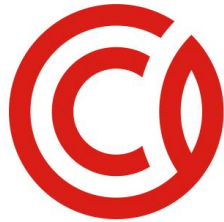
Specifically or like, philosophically?

Ryan [00:38:57]:

Specifically.

Mark [00:38:58]:

OK, in this case, a Facebook group. That's the number one thing that I've been focused on in the last 3 weeks is starting and beginning to grow a Facebook group. We just hit 90 members this morning in 3 weeks, which is pretty cool. Like 80 posts, like 500 or so reactions in total, so we're doing like 5 to 10 posts a day across the members that are in there. And I've dropped a



few videos talking on different subjects and topics and people have been asking questions, been dropping polls. I've been asking for feedback on the products. Hey, do you want this ingredient? That ingredient? Things like that. That's been where I have focused the majority of my efforts so far.

Ryan [00:39:38]:

Okay, are you happy with those results?

Mark [00:39:43]:

No. I mean, I always start more.

Ryan [00:39:46]:

That's what I thought you were feeling. So Mark, you really come alive when you tell your story. You really come alive when you tell that, and it's kind of irresistible in a way and you're building a community that doesn't give you the opportunity to do that in the most ... in the biggest sense.

Ryan [00:40:20]:

So, let me come back to this because the question I was going to ask, and these are going to come together, is what influencers would you love to work with if you had a magic wand? And this could be sponsoring their podcast, it means advertising on their YouTube channel, it means giving them equity, it could be any combination, but who would you love to have talking about your brand?

Mark [00:40:41]:

Yeah, there's a few people that come to mind like Thomas DeLauer on YouTube and Jason Wittrock, who's also on YouTube. I think maybe Mikhaila Peterson's podcasts would be an amazing place to sponsor if that was an option. I'm not sure that she does sponsorships on the podcast though. I don't think I've seen them. That's kind of all that I have right now. I have a list that I had sent you before.

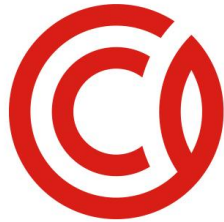
Ryan [00:41:15]:

There's way more, there's way more here.

Mark [00:41:17]:

Yeah, there definitely are.

Ryan [00:41:20]:



Just so you know, I have an in with Mikhaila Peterson, Thomas DeLauer used to work for Sheer Strength, and one of the other companies that I have in the fund is really good with Wittrock. The other names that I wrote down were Dave Asprey, who I know personally and Joe Rogan, who you can sponsor.

Mark [00:41:45]:

Yeah, he's definitely a dream influencer, for sure.

Ryan [00:41:49]:

Okay, so, look, all that requires is money. It's not like you've got to know a magic system to sponsor Joe Rogan. You just pay him.

Mark [00:42:03]:

You're talking to the bootstrap guy. I neglect to think about the power of capital sometimes. That's probably one of my fatal flaws. But it's a feature and a flaw.

Ryan [00:42:14]:

It's not a fatal flaw. It makes you very common among entrepreneurs who are who are experiencing their first taste of success because when you get that, when that clicks, all that requires is money, well, now your gloves can come off because money is easy. Money is everywhere.

Ryan [00:42:38]:

So you have a great vision, a good product line, and so part of your launch plan is we're going to sponsor ... and I'm making this up. We're going to partner with Mikhaila Peterson, sponsor Wittrock, and advertise on Dave Asprey and Joe Rogan. If you put that in front of an investor, they're like, this is a plan that will work. I now see how my capital helps this company be successful ...

Mark [00:43:03]:

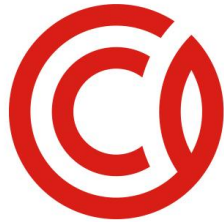
It will be leveraged properly, yeah.

Ryan [00:43:05]:

Right.

Mark [00:43:06]:

There's other people, too that I have like Justin Howells, Elliott Hulse, Conor McGregor which is kind of I guess, a dream one.



Ryan [00:43:14]:
I like that.

Mark [00:43:16]:
Gina Carano. Gina Carano.

Ryan [00:43:19]:
I don't know that person.

Mark [00:43:20]:
Formerly of the Mandalorian. She was a star on the Mandalorian, but she's not coming back.

Ryan [00:43:28]:
You know who would really good for this is Lauren Fisher. Lauren Fisher would be a great partner on a company like this. She would be a great partner. Now she has her own line so I don't know if she would be interested, but it's a different direction but that would be a really good conversation. Someone that I know. So this is great. Like, between the 2, like your dream list, I know you know 6 out of the 8 people that you just riffed off, awesome. It only takes 2 of them to do some damage.

Mark [00:44:03]:
Yeah. Yeah. And then, if you take good care of those customers, you're building the engine.

Ryan [00:44:17]:
Yeah, so this is the story that I like to tell on this one. So I want you to imagine for a second that you raised \$100,000 and that \$100,000 was there specifically for customer acquisition. So that \$100,000 was just for customer acquisition and all the other funding went to inventory or you bought that, you had enough capital leftover. Just, you have \$100,000 for customer acquisition and I want you to pretend that it wasn't optimized and so you lost \$10 a sale. After every customer you acquired, you lost \$10, Mark. Now in the traditional marketing world, is that a good result or a bad result?

Mark [00:44:57]:
Bad.

Ryan [00:44:59]:



Okay, so you lost your whole \$100,000, Mark. You lost all of it. You have spent someone else's \$100,000 and now you have zero. Was that a success or a failure?

Mark [00:45:10]:

I would say it's a success because we have customers.

Ryan [00:45:13]:

You have 10,000 customers. 10,000 customers, and is there a decent chance that 3% to 5% of them left reviews on Amazon or on your Shopify store?

Mark [00:45:25]:

Yeah, for sure.

Ryan [00:45:26]:

So now you've got ...

Mark [00:45:27]:

Especially if you put the tools in place to garner more of those reviews.

Ryan [00:45:31]:

Exactly. So now you've got 10,000 customers and 400-ish reviews. So is there a decent chance that a product with 10,000 previous buyers is also having some repeat buyers? Some word of mouth, some organic, some shares on Facebook? Some reviews that you're posting on your Instagram stories, some people telling other people about them? They're now following your podcast or whatever content you're putting out there, and so they're probably doing like 50 organic sales a day, and then you come out with product number 2 and you have 10,000 people that you can promote it to. That's going to get to 50 sales a day pretty quickly. So some people would say I lost \$100,000. No, that's 100 sales a day.

Mark [00:46:15]:

You got 10,000 customers, yeah?

Ryan [00:46:17]:

Yeah. You just built a million dollar business for \$100,000 that's going to continue to grow. Then you might take it to another extreme and say, well, I'm out of money and I still want to go aggressive. So I'm going to sell another 10% of my company. Well, now you're not a startup, you're a \$1 million dollar business, so you raise it at a \$2 million dollar valuation. So 10%, you



get \$200,000, you still own 80%. You own 80%, you've sold 20%. You've got now \$200,000 additional dollars, which you lose again at \$10 a person. And so now ...

Mark [00:46:55]:

And now you've got 30,000 customers.

Ryan [00:46:57]:

Now you've got 30,000 customers. You now have like a \$3 to \$5 million business. You did great.

Mark [00:47:03]:

And then you launch products 4 and 5 and before you know it ...

Ryan [00:47:06]:

You did great. Like that's the leverage that having some capital gives you.

Mark [00:47:12]:

Yeah, I really need to better adapt to that mindset.

Ryan [00:47:16]:

Well, that's my job, Mark. I mean, my job is to know that and to guide you there, while you stay lean and hungry and aggressive. Like that's my job, and I have capital and we'll work through this together. And we can grow together and so you don't have to get better, you don't have to try to get better at this. You are getting better at this and the first time we sponsor Dave Asprey And we lose \$25,000, we're like, oh, we're still alive. It wasn't that big of a deal. It didn't make or break us. Let's keep going and you get a healthy relationship with that type of risk.

Ryan [00:48:07]:

So I think Mikhaila Peterson is perfect for you. If we can get her dad, that's a really cool sign as well, and I think he is really perfect for this. I think considering sponsoring Joe Rogan would be a really good fit. You know who also started taking sponsorships is Aubrey Marcus because he is now no longer CEO of Onnit. He is running his personal brand and now he's taking sponsorships. I don't know if that's a conflict of interest because of his relationship with Onnit, but that that's a really good ... That's a good name right there. Be a good name to consider there too. So you have a really good ...

Mark [00:48:47]:

[INAUDIBLE 00:48:47]: the Rock.



Ryan [00:48:49]:
OK, great.

Mark [00:48:51]:
We're talking to influencers here. I think that would be pretty ...

Ryan [00:48:54]:
Don't hedge it man. You don't have to hedge it. If you want the Rock, we can get the Rock.

Mark [00:48:59]:
Yeah. Yeah, I need to remind myself that over and over.

Ryan [00:49:04]:
Yeah like, you could have, do, or be anything you want. I would write this list down if you don't have it already. And here's an assignment for you. To give you some momentum while you're waiting for samples, because your job right now is to come up with a plan that's going to allow you to stick the launch as fast as possible, so all you need to do is look up who of these influencers accepts advertising and where. I would give priority to podcasts and YouTube channels.

Mark [00:49:43]:
Oh yeah, that's one thing that I have also been doing. I found a podcast directory and I have a list of like 15 or so podcasts that are sort of in this I guess ancestral or primal space that they're all a bit smaller. I wasn't sure if more smaller podcasts is better than a few larger ...

Ryan [00:50:01]:
Well, well, there's a second part of this strategy, and that for me is ... Part of this strategy of looking at sponsoring these podcasts is not just to get the podcast ad. It's to begin the relationship with these people. So when Dave Asprey does a reading on his show, he's the one reading it. He is the one giving his endorsement to Ancient Strength. He has now a relationship with your brand.

Mark [00:50:32]:
Yeah. Yeah, So what do you want that relationship to look like?

Ryan [00:50:36]:



Well, sponsoring the podcast is that first easy yes to building a relationship with somebody that you want to do business with. We both have flown to see Gary Vaynerchuk, right? I've met with him I think 4 times.

Mark [00:50:53]:

Yeah, I think I've met with him one time.

Ryan [00:50:57]:

So all of my relationships with Gary I paid for. I don't consider that like a bad thing. I paid him to speak at my event. A friend of mine sponsored a charity event. I got that one for free. That was nice. I bought a lot of wine, and I made a donation to a charity that he likes. This isn't like ... I don't feel bad that Gary only talks to me when I pay him. He endorsed my freaking book. You know what that means to me? Like I have a picture of him right here.

Mark [00:51:38]:

Yeah, and ultimately over time that relationship is going to deepen, and deepen and deepen.

Ryan [00:51:43]:

Yeah. Right. I've been trying to build that relationship for like 5 or 6 years and I'm not worried ... like I'm not ... I'm thrilled with our relationship, like we're on a Zoom call, he recognizes me. So this is my long way of saying it's a good thing. It's a positive thing for you to open up relationships with the people you want to work with by doing business. In some way you and I know each other because of business. We want to make money together. That's great.

Mark [00:52:22]:

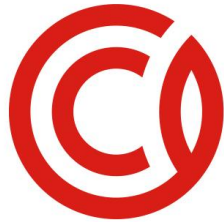
And if it wasn't for my working relationship having gone to work for Mark Jenny like I never would have met you.

Ryan [00:52:29]:

Business is a great way to build relationships. So, find out, inquire about Mikhaila's podcast and Jason's podcast and Aubrey and all these people and just inquire for rate sheets and tell them a little bit about what you're doing. Tell them who you are, what you're doing, you think they'd be a great fit and ask for the rate sheet. And that just starts the conversation with their team and now you've got an in, if you will.

Mark [00:52:58]:

Got it and we probably can talk more about launch plan on another day, I imagine.



Ryan [00:53:04]:

Yeah, let's save that for round 2, but I think your work is cut out for you right now. Go follow up with those suppliers and start making inroads with some of these influencers and I can tell you, again, I know I know half of these influencers so when you've got samples and our first run of inventory happens, these conversations happen a lot faster. So go get those samples. That's like our bottleneck and then we can start moving into this direction.

Mark [00:53:34]:

Got it.

Ryan [00:53:36]:

Good work man. This is fun.

Mark [00:53:38]:

Yeah, I'm having a lot of fun. This has been super helpful. There was one thing that you said you wanted to circle back to about community building or platform building. Do you want to just [INAUDIBLE 00:53:49]: that real quick?

Ryan [00:53:50]:

The reason I went on that rant was because the way that you're building a community, you could also just pay someone to do. Like you could sponsor Mikhaila Peterson, who already has a community. The way that I think you'll be happiest doing this is if you are sharing your own story in whatever route you are comfortable doing this. Facebook posts, a podcast, YouTube, Instagram is actually a really good play for you right now, because you can do long text posts on there and you're good at Instagram. So I would ... I just get the sense that you should be more public with the way that you're building a community because you're good at it and because you would like it. So for that reason alone ...

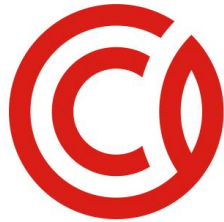
Mark [00:54:37]:

That's like the opposite of what I thought. I kind of didn't think of myself as a natural a natural face to the brand.

Ryan [00:54:48]:

Doesn't matter. It's the story of build ... Like, story of your recovery. It doesn't matter if you match the avatar. You're serving people who match the story. That's all that matters.

Mark [00:55:00]:



Got it. Got it. I definitely am enjoying the Facebook group thing. But I do agree that it feels because it's private and it's just this community, like the people that are in there are definitely starting to really respect me and come to me with questions, their concerns. It certainly has built a small but fervent tribe, but I definitely do wish that there was more scale to it if that makes sense.

Ryan [00:55:26]:

Yeah, it totally does make sense. So, I don't need to add things to your to-do list, but I would consider ...

Mark [00:55:34]:

I don't mind that.

Ryan [00:55:36]:

So then the thing to add to your to-do list is to say what platform would be the most fun and enjoyable for me to share my story and the story of the development of Ancient Strength? And the goal is to not get leads, that will be the byproduct. The goal is to enjoy sharing your story and the story of ancient strength.

Mark [00:56:10]:

That makes sense. Yeah, I'll work on that.

R [00:56:12]:

This is great.

Mark [00:56:13]:

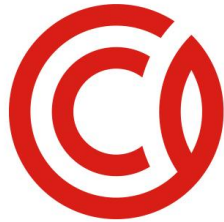
I've been sort of working through that for a few weeks. I was really hot on Instagram for a while and it almost felt like I had to try or something. It didn't feel like it was coming naturally. And that's why ...

Ryan [00:56:26]:

You were probably teaching. That's what people are doing. They're talking rather than documenting or sharing. I call it sharing.

Mark [00:56:36]:

Yeah, I actually think I was definitely, I was consciously not teaching and I was definitely just sharing, but something about it felt like it didn't fire me up to just be talking about myself on Instagram if that made sense. I felt like I was enjoying more interacting with people and



helping them solve their problems on the Facebook group. And that was kind of like why I went in that direction. But I've been thinking a lot about like if I should be doing more on Instagram again. And so, I just have to think through that and work through that and work out the kinks.

Ryan [00:57:08]:

Yeah. And nothing's gone wrong. You haven't done anything wrong. The only question is like, what would be the most fun? And when you know that answer, that's the direction you should go. That's why I do this podcast the way that I do it, like I'm not teaching anything. I'm all in on Mark. And as a result ...

Mark [00:57:25]:

Yeah, I've actually thinking about starting a podcast.

Ryan [00:57:27]:

Okay, good, and if that'd be fun for you, do it.

Mark [00:57:29]:

And bringing in people who make their living or make their ... Their whole life is about solving the kind of problems that I'm trying to solve in my own life and in other people's lives and learning from them, and having those conversations. So I think that that would be like a natural format for me that I would I would enjoy because really I enjoy conversations. I love people. I think that's why I like the Facebook group so much because people reach out to me and I mean I've been getting personal questions from people about struggles that they've been having ...

Ryan [00:57:56]:

Okay, Mark, this is your play. You start a podcast and your call to action on the podcast is to join the Facebook Group. Like that is your play.

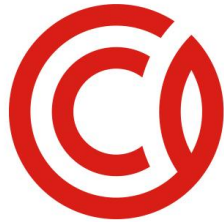
Mark [00:58:05]:

And you could put the podcast on YouTube, you can put it on, you know iTunes and Spotify, put clips on Instagram, put it on Facebook. It creates a lot of valuable stuff.

Ryan [00:58:16]:

I am telling you that will do very well. That is your play.

Mark [00:58:19]:



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Yeah, I think you're right. The Ancient Strength podcast. It makes a lot of sense.

Ryan [00:58:24]:

I love it. I love it. My last ... I've got to run but I believe Sam owes you something about us working together. Is that on our plate? Are we the bottleneck there? Okay, I will make something happen there. Alright my friend. Great to see you. Keep me posted.

Mark [00:58:44]:

Yeah dude, this was this was great. This was really helpful. I've gotten so much value in the last hour just talking through all this stuff with you and I feel like I have a nice little chunk of stuff to work on that is going to move us forward in a big way so I can't say how much I appreciate it bro.

Ryan [00:59:00]:

Alright, you bet. Alright man. Good to see you. Keep me posted.

Mark [00:59:03]:

Alright. Peace, buddy.