

Disrupt Yourself Podcast with Whitney Johnson

Episode 52: Dave Meltzer

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself Podcast. I'm Whitney Johnson. I think, write, speak, and live all things disruption. Today's guest is Dave Meltzer, CEO and founder of [Sports1Marketing](#) and former CEO of Leigh Steinberg Sports and Entertainment, made famous by the film Jerry McGuire.

Dave: I'm [Dave Meltzer](#) uh, CEO of [Sports 1 Marketing](#). Also, uh, an entrepreneur, speaker, author. I uh, s- started my career in technology, oddly enough, and ended up the CEO of Leigh Steinberg Sports and Entertainment, the most notable sports agency in the world. Uh, not because I'm a great lawyer, but because of uh, my technological background. We had a vision of sports and technology and felt that I was the right person to run his agency.

Uh, about eight years ago though, Warren Moon, the hall of fame quarterback and I spun off a marketing arm specifically to leverage the two billion in management that we have. So, instead of just representing celebrities, athletes and entertainers, we bring all the right people to the biggest projects in the world.

Uh, Like the Super Bowl, Pro Bowl, Masters, Kentucky Derby, Breeders Cup. All the award shows, like the ESPYs, Emmy's, Oscars, Grammy's, film festivals like Cannes, Sundance, Tribeca.

I also work with thousands of charitable galas and golf tournaments. Our main objective and my personal objective in life is to make a lot of money, help a lot of people, and have a lot of fun. So everything I do has a charitable component, whether it's my TV show, which is now fortunately the number one digital business show called "The Elevator Pitch," or even my podcast - all have a charitable component to it where we want to empower others to empower others.

Whitney: You said that you're the founder of Sports 1 Marketing, and then talked briefly about what you do there. But could you give us an example of, um, a real live client? What you do for them, what it looks like, then how you make a lot of money, do a lot of good and have a lot of fun.

Dave: One of my biggest clients is L'Oreal and we have really three different components of how we work with L'Oreal. Number one is we have an aggregated marketing platform that we developed. It's the digital side of traditional sponsorship activation in advertising.

And what we do with the platform is four different things. We allow digitally, L'Oreal to be a title sponsor of all the different projects that I talked about. From the biggest ones in the world, like the Super Bowl, Pro Bowl, Masters, Kentucky Derby, down to the small charitable galas and golf tournaments.

They also can be a sub sponsor, where they have some sort of offer or advertisement where you could get a free bottle of this, or a discount on that.

Uh, the third way that the digital platform assists them is through activation. So, we can have contests, a variety of different things. Finally the fourth component of the platform is charitable. So it says if you appreciate all the different gifts and, and offers from L'Oreal then simply pay it forward and donate to, for example, they support my Fifty for Fifty campaign for, I've just turned fifty years old, I'm doing fifty birthday parties to raise over a million dollars for a leadership and empowerment center.

And so, working with L'Oreal on that digital side then leads to our media company, where we capture and put into perpetuity all the different content at these events and projects that we do, so we actually create thirty, sixty-second, three minute spots in which we now are taking advantage of the 3.2 billion people on the internet. Posting it on different, you know, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, whatever it is, where it lives in perpetuity and we drive audiences according to their demographics towards that content.

And then furthermore it enhances our personal brand. So both Warren Moon and I, the co-founders of our business, we do various, uh, speaking engagements, appearances, all types of different ... Uh, I do business coaching, uh, for L'Oreal and so that's really how we derive revenue to make a lot of money, so we can help a lot of people. And because we love sports and entertainment and our clients, we have a lot of fun.

Whitney: Where does the sports come in here? 'Cause you just told me about L'Oreal, and they're a client, and what you do for them. Your name of your company is Sports 1 Marketing. So, where does the sports come in to this mix?

Dave: That's a great question. So the sports and entertainment side of what we do is leveraging the relationship capital of those years of working with Leigh Steinberg, and of course, uh, the, uh, company itself, Sports 1 Marketing. We surround ourselves with the biggest sporting or entertainment events. We bring in, not only celebrities, athletes, and entertainers, but media, high net wealth individuals. We really use sports as a bug light to attract real business - a direct path to revenue. And what we found is instead of like I did with Leigh Steinberg representing athletes, if we would utilize them as bug lights, or attraction to business that we could be statistically successful, and efficient and effective in what we do.

Whitney: Who's an athlete that you've brought in to the L'Oreal platform, or engaged with them around L'Oreal?

Dave: Oh we brought, brought in multiple athletes in- at, at different events that- that we've worked with. So, many hall-of-famers like Eric Dickerson, "Too Tall" Jones, uh, basketball players, the list goes on and on. There's probably been ... We've worked with L'Oreal for years so, probably hundreds of different athletes that have been involved as bug lights to help enhance what we do.

Bernard King, Dr. J, we've had almost all of them. Whether they're legacy athletes, hall-of-famers, or current superstars like, Andrew Luck, Cam Newton, um, and the likes of those types of players as well.

Whitney: What do you mean when you say a bug light?

Dave: So, a bug light is something that attracts the business that you want, or the business that we want is large opportunities that make a lot of money and help people. Um, and so, uh, where people fall down in sports is they don't understand that it's better to not represent the athlete, but instead, hire the athlete, bring them in with decision makers. Have them be the attraction of why, you know ... I can bring CEOs of six major corporations to dinner simply by saying, "Hey, let's go to dinner with Cam Newton."

Well, you know, people spend millions of dollars on sales forces and sales cycles, and you know, the cost of a sale just to get in one of those CEOs offices for fifteen to twenty minutes, where I can get all six CEOs for four hours because they dream, right ... The irrationality of middle aged men and women ... They dream of just meeting Cam Newton. Let alone sitting at dinner for four hours with him.

And it's much more organic and authentic to create a decision-making process via some organic dinner utilizing an athlete or a celebrity as a bug light, than it would be to set up a meeting through a large sales force and try to work through the bureaucracy of a Fortune 500 company.

Whitney: So in this particular instance then, your, your client, to stay on this example of L'Oreal. Your client is the CEO of L'Oreal. You put them in a room with a Cam Newton and you're putting them into that room and ... To get what done? Who's buying in that particular instance? L'Oreal ... And, I guess, I guess, actually more to the question, what is L'Oreal buying? Or what are you trying to get them to buy?

Dave: Alright, so L'Oreal is hi-hiring us to market their brand. So, I'll give you an example. They're launching a male product called "Brew" it's a shampoo in a beer bottle for men.

And so we're giving them access uh, to a much less expensive way, uh, to attract people to their brand. So, uh, we'll take them to the Super Bowl we're doing, [Vaynersports](#) and entrepreneurs, giving away the entrepreneur spor-sports, uh, Entrepreneur Athlete of the Year award.

Uh, Lebron James, Steph Curry, football, baseball, basketball stars all have been nominated, and they're going to give away the Entrepreneur Athlete of the Year, the Social Impact Award. And so we bring L'Oreal into that situation and create content via our aggregated marketing platform as well as our media company, uh, which they hire. And we give them a platform that's organic, organic and authentic at the Super Bowl.

So, instead of ... Like in previous years. L'Oreal had paid for a Super Bowl commercial and didn't get the results years ago that they wanted. We now have a much more efficient, effective and statistically successful way to create content, and utilize, and access the 3.2 billion people on the internet with very fun, energetic and superstars that we have what I call soft branding and endorsement.

So, you know utilizing and understanding licenses and brands. Being able to, uh, give access to certain people related to those brands instead of having to spend five million dollars on a thirty second commercial, hire athletes and celebrities to be in those commercials, produce those commercials. We now can take a Super Bowl awards show and create content and utilize that as the stage, and then execute and distribute it on the internet with 3.2 billion people that are possible to watch it, and have a much more effective marketing campaign. And because the aggregated marketing platform not only drives traffic to L'Oreal, it tracks the traffic and aggregates data as well as actually creates sales.

Whitney: Okay, so I think I got it. And you know what was throwing me off, Dave? Is that you were using L'Oreal and I didn't know L'Oreal sold any products to men. So I was like, "What? I don't get this at all."

Dave: Well let me touch on that too because-We deal with women's products because remember we're not, we're not dealing with the Super Bowl itself we're dealing with the awards shows and the events, the parties, the Maxim party, or the Wheels Up party. Where 50% of the people, you know football for example is the number one most popular sport for women two to one. Uh, I don't know if you know this -

Whitney: No.

Dave: For years in marketing brands-The biggest consumer of buying beer is women. Women actually buy more beer than anyone else. Not necessarily at a bar, but because they are the ones who shop at the grocery stores and go out to BevMo and these other places.

So, there's a huge market for women's products utilizing our platform and our strategy, which is this, you know, aggregated marketing platform. Plus women are so charitable, they also are attracted to that platform, and then as far as the media goes, that we can create thirty, sixty-second, three minute videos by repurposing an event that is more targeted and directed towards women than men. More attractive to women than men.

So, I know it throws people off, but half of the companies we deal with are companies that are trying to attract women, and they're women based products, everything from health and beauty to fitness. All directed towards women even though people have a perception that the Super Bowl is a male dominated event.

Whitney: That's fascinating. I had no idea and what was interesting in what you said about the beer is that they show commercials with men buying beer and so it's interesting that you're saying that the women are the biggest buyers of that particular product. What do you like most about your work?

Dave: (laughs) What I love about my work is I'm one of the few people on earth ... Number one it's a platform business so I can do whatever I want. But it really is directed to, uh, you know I-I-I am surrounding myself with what I love. You know, I love sports, I love entertainment, but most of all I can create tremendous impact. And because I know how to leverage all of the relationship capital that I've built over, I-I call it the one

degree of separation. The inner, inner circle of sports and entertainment. Allows me to have access to politics, business, entertainment, sports and-and it's really fun. I'm a fan myself and it's a dream job. But what I really love the most is that it allows me to leverage all that I love to help other people.

Years ago um, you know I was extremely wealthy in my thirties, and a little bit lost, and I learned a valuable lesson to be of service. And I lost everything, and by shifting the paradigm of value I've learned to give back and trust the universe. And what inspires me, and really I think has propelled my career, my personal brand, and our business is that we are of service. And we put others first, and we trust the universe that it'll comeback ten fold to us. And that's truly what I love about what I do, is that I'm having incredible impact.

We, you know my [Fifty for Fifty campaign](#) we-we built a village for the Unstoppable Foundation and we've impacted 75,000 people. Young women that would never be educated before now are in high school, and instead of being, you know married at, in the ninth grade and no education, and no hope we now have created, and really changed the way things are doing ... We have the [Crescent Moon Foundation](#) and we have given thousands of scholarships to, uh, kids to go to college and technical schools in other places. Secondary school after high school. Because they give back. That's the only criteria we have. You have to be a challenge or at risk student. Regardless of your grades if you're enlightened enough to give back to your community we're going to invest in you, and those are some significant things.

Whitney: Yeah, so Dave what happened that caused you to ... You alluded to this a moment ago. What happened in your thirties that caused you just to rethink your paradigm and how you were, how you were navigating your way through the world?

Dave: You know, I-I grew up with six kids and a single mom. I-I just wanted to be rich. Uh, an-an-and it really wasn't for a selfish reason. The only reason I wanted to be rich was uh, the only time I wasn't happy was when I'd catch my mom crying because our car broke down and she couldn't afford it, or she couldn't afford to send us to summer camp.

All my siblings went to the Ivy Leagues on full scholarships and had been blessed with just an empowered woman that I wanted to give back to. Well what happened was I not only was able to give back to my mother an-and what I thought would make me happy to provide her a house and a car, but it didn't.

In fact I made so much money that I had everything that I wanted and I woke up empty one day and I started surrounding myself with the wrong people, the wrong ideas and um, I ended up putting myself first and I lost everything. And uh, financially. I have the best wife in the world and she saved my life because she confronted me and told me to go back, and to take real, real structure in what I was and what I wanted to become and, and take stock in that. And I ended up writing my book, "[Connected to Goodness](#)" based on an outline that I was living by.

And it was this paradigm shift of - I wake up every morning to be of service. The first prayer that I, that I have in my meditation is, "May God put ten people in front of me that I can help." And things just changed.

Uh, the ability to manifest, to use my power of intention, combined with uh, what I call the enjoyment, the consistent, persistent enjoyment of the pursuit of my potential. That's the definition of happiness for me and when I started living my life consistently with the same persistence, but to enjoy the pursuit of my potential by being of service, everything I wanted came back to me rapidly and accurately.

Whitney: How did you, so how did your ... So, you said that you, you were married, you made all this money-You had this moment where you said, "Life is meaningless." How did you know you were having that moment and what did your wife do specifically?

Dave: So, it was interesting I, I built a huge home in Rancho Santa Fe in San Diego, and it was my wife's dream house, and the first day we moved into it, uh, was the first day I didn't feel happy. I- I felt empty ... Uh, years later after doing all types of things - I would buy things to make me happy, I'd buy different things to make me happy, and as I surrounded myself with the wrong people and the wrong ideas my wife, uh, I ... Confronted me and she said ... You know, I thought ... We had three beautiful daughters, we're still married and now I have four children. But at that time I had three beautiful young daughters and this beautiful wife who's, you know, spiritual, and supportive, and for the first time I walked in and she said, "I'm not happy. And I'm really scared for you."

And it hit me like a ton of bricks because at that time my arrogance and my ego, uh, was so out of control that I kind of looked around, and in my head I'm like, "Are you kidding me? You're not happy? We have a Porsche, a Ferrari, a huge home, beautiful kids. How could you not be happy?"

And she told me to take stock in who I was. And that if I didn't change that she was going to leave. And, you know, it's uh, I-I've known my wife since I was in the fourth grade, since I was nine years old. She hated me when I was little, I was the first boy to ask her to go steady and she said no because my friend asked for me. And I took me until I was 26 to bump into her again and to, to convince her to marry me by the time I was thirty. I wasn't about to let this all fall apart.

Uh, and so I, I took her seriously, and I trusted her, and I didn't want her to leave me, and I am so glad, and I give her credit, uh, you know for being number one, forgiving for what a jerk I was, uh, but two, to help, to help me.

And that now she laughs because I'm so much more spiritual, that I drive her crazy because I talk about gratitude, forgiveness, accountability, effective communication, and she's like, "Don't teach me." You know? "I'm the reason you are who you are." (laughs) But we, we, it really she, she saved my life.

Whitney: As I listen to you I have to believe you've read, uh, "[Think and Grow Rich](#)?" Is that correct?

Dave: It's my favorite book. I'm actually in the movie.

Whitney: You're in the movie?

Dave: Yes, I'm in the [movie "Think and Grow Rich,"](#) and uh, I live by it, [Bob Proctor](#) is one of my mentors and uh, have ... I-I-I used to say, even when I was young, that uh, when, every time I read the book "Think and Grow Rich," I'd make another million dollars. And I love "Think and Grow Rich," I love the power of intention.

In fact when I went to write my book, "Connected to Goodness," I went to the Napoleon Hill Foundation and said, "Can you please help me? I want to write a book like 'Think and Grow Rich' that's evergreen, that combines spirituality with action." And they assisted me in, you know, really getting a bestseller out there, uh, that's like "Think and Grow Rich."

Whitney: Two things. First of all, I met you when I, at the same time I met Bob Proctor because Asheesh Advani had asked us to be on a panel for [Junior Achievement Worldwide](#). So thank you Ashish for introducing me to both you and Bob. And his ideas, he suggested I read "Think and Grow Rich," has been really powerful.

And what I, when you were talking, and you were telling the story about your wife it made me think of one of the stories that they had said, um, Napoleon Hill said that, every single person, every single person that had been able to achieve their goals had, had a powerful element in their life. Someone who loved them very deeply.

And um, I thought it was interesting when you were telling the story about your wife. How she ... It sounds like first your mother was that for you, and then later your wife has been that for you.

Dave: You nailed it. (laughs) Without a doubt. They still, they still both are, and uh, and now, you know, I've, you know I was blessed with three daughters. Uh, that are powerful influences and, you know, inspire me, and my youngest is a son. My seven year old.

But it's amazing the lessons that you learn in who can be a catalyst and, and how they affect you, uh, and drive, you know, what you want to do. And I'm just so grateful . uh, and blessed, I don't know why or how it happened. But I was born into an extremely empowering mom, and then was blessed to attract uh, just this unbelievable spouse and partner in life that has not only changed my life but allowed me to impact so many other people.

Whitney: You just mentioned your mom. Could you share something or one thing that you remember that she did that has been so influential for you?

Dave: Oh, gosh. Uh, I joke around that my mom is your typical Jewish mom. (Laughs) And uh, so I always joke around that if you looked at her, you-you wouldn't realize it but she is an expert in the martial arts. In fact, I always tell people that she is a third degree black belt in the martial art of Jewish guilt.

Whitney: (laughs)

Dave: (laughs) And that has motivated me through the years but, um, you know, I, it's hard to pick one moment out. I think for, for my mom she has taught me so many lessons. Like, I think one of the critical moments in my life was I came home from, from law school, we had six kids. My older brother was a doctor and he passed away.

I was in my second year of law school and uh, we, we, we really were having trouble. I'd, somehow, um, uh, I had got- gotten a job, well, it was a recession in law school, I was borrowing money to go to law school, I had gotten a scholarship to college and I got offered a job for sixty thousand dollars salary plus commission to sell golf clubs in Japan.

Uh and I was really looking ... My real father who I wasn't so close to, he had left when I was so young - was really against me being in law school and borrowing money, and you know, pushing me that I could make so much money with my sales skills.

So I flew home for the funeral and I told my mom I was going to quit law school (laughs). And uh, I got, I get choked up because she said to me. She goes, "Uh, you know, if you're not going to invest in yourself, what are you ever going to invest in?"

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dave: With one phrase she changed my entire perspective as Wayne Dyer says, "Change the way you look at things and the things you look at change." Uh, "They'll change" And by telling me instead of being in shortage void and obstacles in my life because of these loans and losing my brother and, you know, looking at the short term, and at this goal of making money, she shifted my perspective, investing in myself.

And then my wife, her catalyst was, she shifted my perspective investing in others. And so instead of just investing in myself I shifted my paradigm and started being of service. And that even had a greater exponential effect on my life.

Whitney: Wow. I need to ask you one quick question before we move forward, and that is the Leigh Steinberg agency. Am I pronouncing that correctly?

Dave: You are. Spelling it's more difficult, but you pronounced it perfectly. (laughs)

Whitney: What did you do that has allowed you to be one degree of separation away from so many athletes?

Dave: Leigh Steinberg himself is truly Jerry Maguire right? He co-produced that movie. He was, uh, in the movie. Um, you know he started sports agency. But Leigh hired me within 48

hours of meeting me. I wasn't looking for a job, uh, but we connected at a different level. I think mostly because my brother that's fourteen months younger than I, who went to Harvard and graduated summa cum laude is so much like Leigh. And, and Leigh and I connected because I had lived and shared a room for eighteen years pretty much with my younger brother.

So, I knew how to deal with this genius, you know, this guy that's on the spectrum. He can memorize a book and tell you what page a quote is after he does it. Uh, that's the way my younger brother is and, so we had this ability to, number one, connect.

And then two, because of my technology experience, which so many people want to work in sports. And they think sports is a profession. No, sports is, it's like saying, "I want to work in medicine." There's like a million different ways to work in medicine.

There's a million different ways to work in sports, but the way that I got into sports was, I had a law degree, got into technology, the combination of those two skills and the knowledge that I had acquired, and of course my passion convinced Leigh that I should be his Chief Operating Officer within 48 hours, and then within 6 months I was running, as CEO, the most notable sports agency in the world where we had over two billion in management.

And uh, it gave me access to the inner, inner circles of sports and entertainment because Leigh had represented everyone. He had eight first picks in the NFL draft, he sold his baseball practice for a hundred million dollars. So I had one phone call away from talking to the President of the United States. The owners of all the baseball, football, basketball, and hockey teams, all the media. And it was extraordinary, and I took advantage of that opportunity uh, while I ran that and uh, Leigh, unfortunately, was an alcoholic, and Warren and I, Warren Moon the hall of fame quarterback we spun off our marketing company eight years ago when Leigh hit rock bottom.

And uh, I think that, to us, we got to save Leigh's life because he's now reinvented himself and is sober and uh, you know, and it was one of the more difficult things in my life, to allow Leigh to bottom out. But uh, you know, an extraordinary man, one of my great mentors. He's up there with Bob Proctor. And I ... Whatever blessing I have, I have been able to attract these unbelievable mentors that have accelerated my career and I tell people all the time, "If you want to be successful always have three mentors. And pick the people that are in the situation that you want to be in and ask them for help."

Whitney: So who are your three mentors? Bob Proctor?

Dave: Yeah, so Bo-

Whitney: Leigh Steinberg, and?

Dave: Leigh-Leigh Steinberg and now currently my, uh Jonathan Bogner who is the producer of Undercover Boss. I uh, you know, started, I'm [executive producer of a TV show](#) that's

doing extremely well. Um, my podcast "[The Playbook](#)" just got moved up into FOX Sports and NBC Sports.

Uh, so I wanted to gain the situational knowledge of the entertainment business, uh, as a producer, also as a talent. And so I picked that mentor, Jonathan Bogner. I really like Undercover Boss, I had a personal relationship with him where I felt comfortable asking him for help and once again, you know, whether it was, you know Napoleon ... Gregg Reid did Napoleon Hill Foundation when I wrote my book. Uh, Steve Wynn, when I was going through and understanding, uh, relationships with money, and to build that side. Whether it was Leigh, or Warren, I've always been able to simply ask for that help.

And I'll tell you, when I asked, uh, Steve Wynn to mentor me, I didn't know him. I got to have dinner with him, and almost the first question I asked him was, "Do you mind mentoring me?" And he said, "What does that mean?"

I'm like, "Look, I'll be really concise, but if you make yourself available by text, phone or email, every once in a while, I'd like to learn about your relationship to money, and if you could mentor me on that, it would be invaluable." And I was just blown away, he just said, "Sure, here's my cell phone."

Whitney: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Okay, come on, Dave. Like, this does not happen. So, what's the secret sauce here, because there's got to be something.

Dave: Why doesn't it happen? I, I'm curious because I get that on the internet, right? I have a bankruptcy video, people are like, "Oh, that's because you knew all these people." No, I, I didn't. I actually utilized "[The Power of Intention](#)," "[Think and Grow Rich](#)," and put myself into the situation ... Let me give you an example.

People like, "Well, how'd you meet Leigh Steinberg?" I, I had no idea. I had met Leigh Steinberg, I went to a Super Bowl party seven years earlier, met Warren Moon and Leigh Steinberg, and I was aggressive enough just to say hello, get his phone number and email address. Now-

Whitney: But how did you get into this Super Bowl party in the first place? Because that, that's important.

Dave: Oh, because I was volun- I was volunteering, uh, volunteering for, uh, helping a woman in San Diego that had a company called, uh "Cover Your Ad." And her marketing guy wanted to go to the Super Bowl, and my father had (laughs), my father lived, my real father lived in Houston. And they didn't have very much bud- budget, so I said, "Look, we can go there and, uh-" he had been invited, the marketing guy, to Leigh's party.

And I said, "You, we can go there and stay at my dad's house. And you can save all that money." And so he said, "Oh, yeah, can you go ... You'll come with me?" So, I trick- I was helping him, right? And so, you know, knowing no one, I went to the party. Though, when I got to the party, though, unlike most people I was more aggressive, and excited, and I met these guys. But ironically I never contacted Leigh after the party.

The way that I met Leigh seven years later was that my friend, uh, who I went to high school with, called me and said, "Can you help me? Uh, I have a TV show called 'Showtime with Magic Johnson.'" Uh, this reality show. And, you're one of the best negotiators that I know, Dave. Will you represent me, uh, for the show?"

And I said, "Sure." And he said, "Okay, good. We have a meeting with Leigh Steinberg, you know, in three days up in Newport Beach." I was living in San Diego. As a friend, I was just helping. I'm not a great lawyer either, I am a good negotiator. So, I went up, not looking for a job, to negotiate on this TV show, met Leigh Steinberg, he loved my personality.

The next day he invited me back up to the office at 7 a.m. because had lost his Chief Operating Officer, a guy named Jeff Morad, who ended up owning the Padres.

But Jeff had left. And he kept telling me, "You know, you remind me of Jeff Morad. You know, I've been looking-" And literally offered me a job in 48 hours, and that's how that happened.

But I will tell you that when I went to Napoleon Hill Foundation that is not a sports, uh, oriented agency, that, you know, I met Greg Reed and no clue nor did he give any hoots about who I was. But I simply asked that I wanted to write a book like, "Think and Grow Rich" and they were happy to help me. And within two weeks time I knew exactly how to write my book, how to distribute it, and I give them all the credit for the success of that book.

Whitney: When did you realize that you were, you could sell? Because getting people to say, "Yes, I, yes, I'm happy to give you my, my, my phone number. And text me any time you want." When did you realize you were good at that?

Dave: That's awesome. So that is a born gift. Right? I'm just, I was one of those kids-

Whitney: That's a born gift.

Dave: Yeah, I was, I was, I could sell ice to eskim- I was a kid who grew up Jewish, and I went Christmas caroling, and I figured out people would donate money to have me stop singing, because I have such a bad voice. I turned it into a sales opportunity. I outsold everybody on the magazine drives, and the candy bar raises. And, uh, you know, my parents would joke around, uh, that, you know, I was, I could sell anything to anyone.

And in fact, the reason I didn't become a real lawyer, I was a litigator, uh, maritime law litigator. I was gonna work for an oil and gas company. Uh, and make a lot of money that way. But my professor, my maritime law professor, uh, was a big publisher for West Publishing. And they were putting everything on the internet, and he's the one who convinced me. He goes, "Dave, you're a born salesman. This internet thing is gonna be huge. They're hiring four young guys for six figures to sell legal research online. I can't think of anybody better than you."

And I went through the whole, they were only looking for people with four years of litigation experience. I was still in law school. The reason I got the job, the vice president of West Publishing, when I was in my final interview, he, I told him, "Look, if I'm not in the top half of this sales force, you can keep all my commissions. Just hold them for a year."

You know, because I, I was so poor, the salary was gonna be enough, and the expense account was extraordinary. I didn't care. But anyway, I said, "If I'm not in the top half-" he says to me, "Can I see a picture of your girlfriend?" And at the time, (laughs), we didn't have cell phones. I pulled out, remember those little pictures that you used to carry around in your wallet, the wallet pocket-sized photos?

Whitney: Yes.

Dave: I pulled out a picture of my girlfriend-

Whitney: Yes.

Dave: And he said to me, "You're hired." And I was like, "What?" Like, this was my dream job. He goes, "You're hired."

Whitney: (laughs)

Dave: I go, "What do you mean, I'm hired?" He goes, "'Cause if an ugly guy like you can get a girl like this, I know you can sell." That's what he said (laughs).

Whitney: (laughs)

Dave: And, so yes, I was born with this gift. But I took advantage of it. And I constantly ... Where the real shift was though, at West Publishing, they taught me how to be a professional. I became a student of sales. Mike Bosworth was one of my mentors. He came in to coach, uh, at the company, and he really changed me. He scolded me and said, "Look, you're a cocky young man. You can sell anything. But unless you are a student of sales, you're never gonna be great."

Whitney: So what's one tip you would give people that want to be better at selling?

Dave: The biggest tip I give people is don't forget to look somebody in the eye, smile, and have one question. It's five steps to a sale. You stimulate interest, you transition interest, you share a vision. Most people think you're 80% done when you share a vision. The true art of a sale is that it's only 20% of sharing a vision.

It's 80% is managing and developing a vision so things thrive. But you can't do that if you're not someone who can stimulate interest or provide energy. So for me, I always have one question. I look people in the eye and smile. And say, "Where are you from? What do you do?" It, it's amazing when you're more interested than interesting, how you can now stimulate interest for whatever you want, whether it's that person or

someone they know, uh, and then there's a great old football player named Vencie Glenn who has a great line which I think you're learning about my personality, "You don't get unless you ask."

Whitney: So what's the best deal you've ever negotiated?

Dave: It was when I was bankrupt. And I kind of shifted this paradigm, and understood, and I have a video on this, but I understood that, why don't I start asking people, you know, what they need?

Whitney: Wait, before, sorry, Dave?

Dave: Yeah.

Whitney: Before you go there I just want to just get the quick chronology for people. So, you became really, really rich. And your wife said, "Ugh." Were you bankrupt after that or before-

Dave: Two years later I was bankrupt. She was foreshadowing my, my, uh, ignorance and arrogance.

Whitney: Your demise.

Dave: Yeah, and it was 2008. Uh, I over leveraged myself. I owned a golf course, a ski mountain, 33 properties. Uh, but I'm accountable. I didn't pay attention, and, uh, surrounded myself with the wrong people. So she foreshadowed me losing everything. There was nothing we could do. You know, I, I blew it, and I blew it before she warned me. Um, and I didn't have a time to recoup- in fact I always say the hardest time in my life was - I was living a principled life, I was being of service, but the effects of what I did years earlier, um ... And that's where my wife, two years in when we were going bankrupt, and they took our homes and everything, she was nervous. And I was full of confidence.

So, I was living the right life, and, and I kept telling her, "Don't worry." You know, I felt like, Disney, right? Don't worry, I've got a kingdom about a mouse, everyone's gonna love it ... I'm gonna make millions again. (laughs) You know? And she's rolling her eyes at me. But she stuck with me and trusted the fact that being of service was gonna work. And things turned around, uh, very quickly, uh, in 2008.

Um, because I figured out this idea that, what if I was of service, and part of being of service isn't just, you know, walking the streets of Calcutta giving away everything I had, but asking people what they needed. Not telling them what you had.

Whitney: Right.

Dave: And so, I started surrounding myself with the right people and the right ideas, intentionally going to charitable events, uh, where there was extremely wealthy people,

and networking, and asking, you know, what do you need? In fact, you know, my friend from high school, there in 2008 when I started with Leigh, was because I asked him, "What do you need?" And he said, "I need someone to negotiate this deal."

Well, uh, the best deal that I had was, uh, a gentleman needed about 10 million dollars worth of a product, and asked me, you know, if I could get that. And I just somehow knew the CEO of the company and said, "Hey, look, you know, my friend, an international guy, he's looking to purchase this. What price can I get this 10 million dollars worth of stuff for?"

And he goes, "Oh, you know, probably 8 million." And then I worked my way down to 6 million, and you know, ended up making a huge margin and started realizing wow, I get so busy working I forget to make money. I have all these relationships, people I've done nice things for. Why not ask them what I need, and see if I can't create a margin out of that?

And really our business, you can kind of say, because it's hard to explain, was built, Warren and I, off of this idea of helping people and making money. And it was really, "Hey, we've got all these great relationships, let's start asking people what they need. Who they need to meet, what they need to know." And that's how we started our business.

Whitney: You mentioned that, um, Jonathon Bogner is your, one of your mentors right now as you've been trying to figure out the, um, the media space of being both a producer and on-air talent. Um, I'd love to hear a little bit about the television show, or the digital show that you're doing right now.

Dave: I co created with Bill Shaw, the president of Entrepreneur Magazine, and Jonathon Bogner, uh, a TV show called "Elevator Pitch." It's a digital show. Uh, we have over 21 million viewers. Uh, in our first season. And the idea behind the show was to be "Shark Tank" with soul.

And so we would give, uh, entrepreneurs 60 seconds, in an elevator, by themselves with just cameras, 60 seconds to pitch four seasoned judges and they'd come up 60 floors in an elevator.

If the judges all agreed and liked the pitch, the doors opened, if not, they'd send them down in the elevator. Uh, after they come out of the elevator, they have five minutes to pitch, uh, their idea. And the judges all have to agree, uh, to fund that idea. And if not, [IndieGogo](#) is one of the major sponsors, uh, the company will feature that business on [IndieGogo for a public campaign](#), and kind of put mud on the faces of the judges.

And the judges, after, if the campaigns are successful, can actually come back and invest again in the company, and, uh, we were very, very fortunate with Sprint, Entrepreneur, IndieGogo as major sponsors of the show. We had great exposure, and, uh, and of course distribution. And so the, the show really has taken off, and, uh, we are launching in Europe as well. Israel, Africa. We have been extended out for three more seasons.

We're filming the second season in March, and the third season in September. Uh, we have thousands of entrepreneurs wanting to be on the show. We have hundreds of people, very significant people who are auditioning to be judges. Uh, and it probably was the most successful thing that I did, have done in my career that I knew nothing about.

And it was very risky. Uh, I actually own part of the show, I'm Executive Producer, I put my money where my mouth was. And it, it's been an extraordinary experience. And I love the show, and love the people we work with.

Whitney: So if people want to see it, where do they go?

Dave: So, there's many places, obviously Amazon, uh, YouTube Red, uh, Roku, [Entrepreneur Network](#). Uh, we are also in negotiations with a network. Uh, but right now just digital. And you can actually just, you know, google Entrepreneur- Elevator, Entrepreneur's Elevator Pitch. And there is plenty of places to watch, um, and, and enjoy it. It's you know, 13 minutes. So it's an easy watch. And we had 12 episodes in the first season.

Whitney: Congratulations. What's the best team you've ever worked on, and why? Or been a part of.

Dave: I, I have to say the best team that I've ever been a part of is the team that I have here now at my company. Um, the combination of the aggregated marketing platform, the media, my personal brand, you know, the Dave Meltzer Enterprise side, Sports 1 Marketing. I, I truly am ... And I wrote a second book with Blaine Bartlett called "[Compassionate Capitalism](#)."

And he asked me to write it with him because of the team I have here. It, it's weird, because everyone wants to come work for me because we're in sports and entertainment.

Whitney: Hmm.

Dave: But I only teach values. So I teach gratitude, (laughs), empathy, which is forgiveness, accountability and effective communication. But this team, we do really cool things in here. We just have this really cool, fun, inspired place to work, where everyone is aligned to make a lot of money, help a lot of people, and have a lot of fun.

We, we're a mission company. Right? Other people have businesses. We're a mission that does business. Other people have a business that they have some sort of mission statement. We truly are on a mission, and, and we're a business that's on a mission.

Whitney: You talked about how your current mentor ... So, you had said, um, Jonathon Bogner. He's taught you what you needed to know about the, um, the media business in terms of being, producing an on-air talent.

Who's your next mentor that you have in sight?

Dave: Uh, just recently asked, at CES, uh, Gary Vaynerchuk, Gary Vee. I actually have been mentoring his sports guys. Uh, they started a sports agency. So, uh, their executive vice president, and president, AJ, his brother's the president. Uh, I've been mentoring them for a year. And uh, just at CES I asked Gary to mentor me on the content side of things.

You know, I don't have kind of the same personality as Gary. I really, uh needed his help in taking my brand to the next level. And already in a very short time, CES was just, you know, I met with him on January 11th. You know, here, just in about ten days we've done extraordinarily well building an audience, and understanding how to tune and clean up the vlogs that I do and the content that I create.

Whitney: So he said yes?

Dave: Yes, he did.

Whitney: We actually had [Claude Silver, his chief heart officer on this podcast](#). So people will be excited, our listeners will be excited to hear that. Because I know there are a lot of people that are big fans of Gary Vee.

[On your website](#) you say that there are two words that can change your life. What are those two words?

Dave: Thank you. It's the easiest way. You know, I've studied physics, quantum physics, metaphysics. I have changed my own life and so many others. But if people really understood the power of gratitude. Gratitude, thank you, gives you perspective. Which means it makes your past unbelievable, your present better, and your future even brighter.

And so, gratitude, those two words, you simply say them before you go to bed and when you wake up, you're programming your conscious, your subconscious, and your unconscious mind.

If you're grateful for everything, you live in the favor of the universe. And I'll give you a real classic example. I'm a time freak, right? OCD, I have a little bit of ADD, uh, but I ... You know, I'm in a hurry, I, I want to ... You know, watch my videos. I've got a five twenty rule, right? Five minute phone calls, twenty minute meetings.

All the things I do are related to time. And you know, I'm rushing home from work to go pick up my son from basketball. And I'm in a hurry. And in the past, I get stuck at a red light when I'm in a hurry, and my immediately perception is not gratitude (laughs).

Right? I'm using Gary Vee's language. I'm now at a disadvantage-

Whitney: Not your language, of course. Just Gary Vee's language.

Dave: No. Not publicly, right? Uh, and so, um, now I know that I live in favor of the universe. I'm in favor. So everything is done for right purpose, at the per- right reason at the

perfect time. I get stopped at a red light now, I simply say thank you. Knowing that it has stopped me at the right time. Because who knows what I ... The universe is unraveling in front of me. It's protecting me. It's not hindering me. And sure enough, as I lower my, my own, you know, put myself back into center, and I, and I lower the ego out of it, I arrive to the basketball five minutes late, and meanwhile the practice was extended ten minutes, and nobody knows the difference. Where in the past, I may have perpetuated or escalated negative energy, attracted shortages, voids, or obstacles because that's what I was believing. And now an entire shift of my perception through gratitude has happened. And more and more ... Wayne Dyer talks about it all the time, jokingly. I can't control the flow. Gary, Gary and I in our first conversations with the mentoring talk about it. I can't, I can't handle the flow. And it's this flow that comes ... Gary is one of the most grateful people. He is so blessed, and he talks about being, you know, in this flow, of being grateful for everything, and blessed for everything he has. And he has such a unique way to deliver and communicate it. Uh, you know, gratitude is everything to me.

Whitney: So, what does Dave Meltzer need?

Dave: (laughs) Oh my goodness. You know, it's so funny. I, I truly believe I need nothing. What, what I, what I want is to continually pursue my potential. To, to really, you know, expand, um, not only my awareness, but my vibration. Uh, I really ... What, you know, I prioritize three things in my life at all times. And one of those things is my health right now.

Coming to an awareness of turning fifty, that jeez, if I don't take care of myself, my business, my family, my community, and maybe even the world won't be the same. And so I prioritize that, and I'm really trying to enjoy a consistent, persistent pursuit of that potential of, of my health. And then secondly is, is my family. And then third is my business.

Um, and so, I just want to be of service, and really, really strive and enjoy the pursuit of my potential. Because I feel, I don't know if I'm 10% there, 30% or 90%. I feel as if there's unlimited potential, uh, that I have to impact and empower others to empower others and create significant change for the better.

Let me be fair too. If someone asked what I wanted, (laughs)-

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dave: I would love for people to, uh, donate to my [Fifty for Fifty campaign](#), you know, and-

Whitney: Okay.

Dave: Yeah. I would, I would love for people to, to either run a campaign themselves to raise money for it if they don't have money. Or donate money if they do. Uh, you know, we can have a lot of fun with it. Uh, you can text "50," "FOR50" to 555-888 and it has everything on there.

We use our own aggregated marketing platform to perpetuate. I want to raise over a million dollars for my leadership and empowerment center. That's what I really want.

You know, I, I really want to stress, uh, that attitude of gratitude. That, you know, I have studied all of the different ways, uh, to be happy. And it's important that you detach your happiness, uh, as an outcome. You enjoy the pursuit of it. And it's a really difficult thing to understand, that through gratitude, you know, you don't have to wait and say, "Oh, when I graduate I'll be happy. When I get a job in sports I'll be happy. When I do all of these different things I'll be happy."

Detach the happiness and enjoy the pursuit of it. And you can do that by simply living in an attitude of gratitude, by saying thank you and manifesting everything that you desire by being of service and helping others. And that's truly living in gratitude.

Whitney: With that I will say Dave Meltzer, thank you very much for being a part of this podcast.

Dave: Ah, you're awesome. I've been waiting a long time since I met you. You are one of my favorite people. And I just am just ... Almost embarrassed that I haven't been able to hang out you- with you since. But thank you for having me on.

Whitney: It's been awesome.

Dave is such a great example of personal disruption -- I'm not sure where to start.

So, I'll start with God. And the fact that Dave asks him every to put ten people in front of him who he can serve, and that he **pursues** his potential by being of service. I'll confess when I hear the word serve, the picture in my mind is - do something for someone who I perceive to be less than me, and that thing is something that I don't really want to do. Which is wrongheaded because no one is less than me. No one is less than you. Just as no one is more than you and no one is more than me. And does service need to be something we don't like doing? That doesn't make money? Sometimes it does. But lots of times it doesn't. Why can't it be that whenever we create value, whenever we improve someone's life, we are in service?

Second observation. Dave Meltzer is a person who know how to sell. Which in disruption vernacular means he knows how to persuade people to jump to a new learning curve. He's great at packing their parachute so they want to jump. He's great at getting buy-in. Including from would-be mentors. Notice how he said he attracts mentors. Sure, he asks for help. But they say yes, because they want to help. They are sold on the idea of helping him. This hit me because in my 20s and 30s I felt like mentors were rare. Maybe it's because it wasn't much of a thing then, but now I am finding that many people are willing to mentor me. People like Marshall Goldsmith, like Bob Proctor. So were there really not mentors? Or no mentors wanted to jump to the "mentor Whitney Johnson curve." If we want more people to help us, maybe we need to make it more fun, more interesting so that they want to help us?

I was also struck by his comment -- I just find out what people need. It made me think of the Unstuck in 45 Days course that we just launched with Richie Norton. Instead of creating a course based on what we thought people needed. We asked you. What do you want? What do you need? You said you wanted to get unstuck. The good news is that between Richie and me - we know a thing or two about getting unstuck -- so that's the course we created.

If you enjoyed this episode or any prior episodes, please leave a review, even one sentence, and share your twitter handle, so we can thank you.

If you aspire to be a talent magnet, a person who can persuade others to jump to a new learning curve, like Dave Meltzer, check out Build an A Team my book with Harvard Business Press that out on May 1st. You can pre-order it now, and download the first chapter at whitneyjohnson.com/ateam.

Thank you again to Dave Meltzer for being our guest, thank you to sound engineer Whitney Jobe, manager / editor Macy Robison, content contributors Emilie Davis and Libby Newman, and art director Brandon Jameson.

I'm Whitney Johnson

And this is Disrupt Yourself.