

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 107: TY SHAY

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself Podcast. I'm Whitney Johnson. I think, write, speak and live all things disruption.

Our guest today is Ty Shay, Global CMO of Norton/LifeLock, marketing expert, and performance storyteller.

WHITNEY Ty Shay, welcome to the podcast. It is a delight to have you here.

TY Thank you for having me on, Whitney, I appreciate it.

WHITNEY First question for you - where you grew up and what did you think you wanted to be when you grow up?

TY All right. It's a good question. I grew up in Peoria, Illinois. I don't know if I knew, had a aspiration when I was younger, but I, I, when I was in college, I saw this movie *Wall Street* and actually thought I wanted to be an investment banker, which I actually did, and I hated it.

WHITNEY You hated it?

TY Yes.

WHITNEY Okay. (Laughing). So, all right. So tell us what you did to get to be an investment banker? I'm a former investment banker as well, I saw that you were at Dean Witter Morgan Stanley. It's tough to get to that place. So, what did you study in college that got you to the point where you were able to get one of those coveted financial analyst slots?

TY Yes, so I, uh, majored in accounting in college, passed the CPA exam and, and to your point, um, I went to University of Illinois, which is a, a, a great school, but it's definitely not a place where investment banks uh, recruit. So I did my own job search, reached out to a lot of the different investment banks and, you know, took initiative, and eventually, was able to land interviews with a few.

I think it was Merrill Lynch, Solomon Brothers, uh, Morgan Stanley, um, and, uh, you know, I eventually got an offer. And so, um, it was the result of my own job search.

WHITNEY All right, Ty, we have to, we have to drill down on, on that just a bit, because a lot of people are in the market looking for jobs, current and recent college graduates. And think "I can't find a job." And here you are, you went to University of Illinois, investment banks don't recruit there. What are some things that you did to get people to actually pay attention to you?

TY I was a, a good student. I had, uh, good grades. I had a lot of extracurricular activities. So, for me, it was mostly just getting my foot in the door, and being able to, to get the attention of the recruiting departments.

Once you get the doors opened, then, uh, in the interview, it was, um, I remember the interviews being very tough. (Laughs). I think some of the investment banks were asking me what's Libor? Uh, what does the prime rate mean? So, uh, my, my experience from as investment banking and I was just kind of, uh, remembering them was it really wasn't about your answer, it was about whether you could stay poised and, and confident, and, and not get flustered.

So, um, you know, there's probably a little luck too, and, uh, I was lucky enough to, uh, to get a couple of offers.

WHITNEY We had Alison Levine on here, who's, um done, climbed a lot of different mountains. Um, Kilimanjaro, etc, etc, and so she had unusual credentials as well, was trying to get a job at an investment bank. And so one of the things she did is she, when she was about to summit a mountain, she would send a postcard, have someone who was going down the mountain. Send a postcard, and say to them, "Hey, here I am, I'm about to summit now, you know, Aconcagua in Argentina. Um, sorry, I can't be there for the recruiting, but, you know, love to talk to you when I'm back," kind of thing.

TY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

WHITNEY So was there one specific thing that you did? Was there, you know, a phone call that you made, a letter that you wrote to get people to, you know, that first thing to get them to say, "Okay, we want to interview this guy."

TY I haven't thought about it for a while, but I think what happened was one of the investment banks, I believe it was Merrill Lynch had an alum from the University of Illinois. And so, I think I reached out to him, um, personally. I mean, um, and I think I was able to land an interview with him.

And I think at that point then, I was able to write to the other investment banks and say, "Hey, I'm interviewing with Merrill Lynch. Um, but I'd be also interested in working with you. Can I, um, come talk to you?" So I, I think it was leveraging the alumni network.

WHITNEY Love it, mm-hmm (affirmative).

TY And then getting one interview, and then I, I think maybe there was some credibility in having one interview, or being interviewing with one, um, investment bank that, um, allowed me to get interviews with the other investment banks. So I think it was, yeah, it was probably, um, the alum was, uh, his name was Eric Carlborg, who I'm actually still in touch with today.

WHITNEY Oh, oh, that's fantastic. Well, thank you for, um, letting me go, go back to your history, and, because I, I do think that that's very helpful, is you started with what you had. You have

the alumni network. You reached out, you leveraged on your good grades and your good extracurricular activities. And then once you had that one interview, then you moved from there. So thank you. I think that's very helpful ...

TY Yes.

WHITNEY ... for people who are listening. All right, so you go, you become, um, an investment bank analyst. Realize you hate it, you go back to business school.

TY Yeah.

WHITNEY When did you discover that you loved marketing? Was it in business school? What, when, when did this light bulb go on for you?

TY Okay. So, uh, so investment banking was, was a great like, uh, expense. It's kind of like medicine, it didn't taste good, (laughs) but I learned a lot of skills doing that. (Laughing). And, um, one thing I realized was I didn't want to be in the service industry, I actually wanted to build something and grow something, um, be associated with a company or a product.

I wanted to be an entrepreneur and the, the culture of Stanford is very entrepreneurial. So, I was there, I showed up at business school. I was one of the youngest people in my class. And one thing that, um, I thought would be a good idea would be to develop the craft or a skill, so versus, you know, being a general business person.

I thought it would be good to have a, an area of expertise. And I happened to have a really good professor, uh, marketing professor, uh, James Lattin and, um, I was inspired and interestingly, um, even though I'm very quantitative, you know, having, uh, majored in accounting, worked in investment banking.

What interested me about marketing was ultimately marketing comes down to individual people making decisions.

WHITNEY Were you surprised when you found, oh, this is actually really, really interesting to me?

TY I was very surprised. I never really even considered probably a, a marketing career. Um, so it was surprising to me.

WHITNEY All right, so you get your first job, and, uh, one of the things I want to talk about is you've had some really interesting jobs. Um, you've been in four companies that have had exits when you were the CMO. I think it would be interesting for our listeners to hear, and maybe not all of them, but talk about one or two of the jobs that you've gotten, and how you got those jobs.

Um, what was the, you know, who did you reach out to, who reached out to you, what did that look like? And just talk us through. Pick one or two that you think is especially interesting.

TY I was at Stanford. I, I liked marketing. I had this good class. And I did about the most un-sexy thing you can do if you're at Stanford Business School, I went and worked at Proctor and Gamble back in Cincinnati. And so that was, for my classmates, you know, Stanford being in Silicon Valley, like why would you go work for one, Fortune 100 (laughing), uh, back there.

But, I, I guess, I've always been a bit of contrarian. Um, my, my thinking was that, uh, this is now the late '90s, is Proctor and Gamble pretty much invented consumer marketing. Um, and so I thought I would go learn kind of where marketing was created. And that was, as I said, contrarian, um, at the time, but it ended up being, I think even now the fact that I have that kind of classic, um, CPG background, um, at Proctor and then Clorox has probably played a role in most of the marketing jobs I've gotten. It's given me some level of credibility. So that was where it all started.

And then, you know, just like I think that, um, I'm a big fan of Warren Buffet, and he always talks about, um, you know, compound interest is also not just doesn't affect money, it also, um, happens in your career. I think if you're able to, you know, leverage this experience, and they kind of compound one after another, because, um, when I was at Clorox, um, I was there, I was managing their STP and their Armor All brands, and then somebody from Proctor and Gamble reached out to me, um, through the P&G network. And, um, he was, uh, helping launch a company called Esurance.

So, that's how I made the jump from packaged goods to, um, you know, the Internet, and, uh, direct selling businesses. So it was through that, uh, P&G alumni network.

WHITNEY Interesting, so alumni networks have been very powerful for you in your career, (laughs).

TY Yeah, I guess, you know, a lot of jobs, I don't know what percent come through people you know. But it's definitely been true in my experience. I think there's only, um, one, once, once or twice in my career have I ever actually done a job search. Um, things kind of have tended to, to find me through, through people I know, most of the time.

WHITNEY Let's change directions for just a minute. Um, you love basketball, like *love* basketball. Where did that come from?

TY I don't really know, Whitney. I think somebody was saying you don't find your passions, your passions find you. So I liked playing basketball when I was, uh, a kid. Uh, I always played, um, actually wasn't great, (laughs) at basketball. But, uh, I was kind of bitten by the bug and, um, I remember when I was, uh, in seventh grade, I was playing basketball, and, um, there was a local, um, charity auction, in one of our, growing up in Peoria.

One of the members of our community was in a car accident, and so the community rallied to raise money, um, to pay for medical bills. And a lot of, um, celebrities and sports teams donated items. And, um, I think, um, my mom encouraged me to, to pick out a couple of things because, uh, it was for a good cause. So I ended up getting some autographs from NBA players, uh, Michael Jordan, Dominic Williams, and Hakeem Olajuwon.

And I think, I don't know, it's just as a seventh grader having those autographs, uh, I, I think I felt some kind of connection to those players. And since then, I've been a, a pretty rabid, uh, basketball fan. Uh, I'm still a Houston Rockets fan to this day, because I got Hakeem Olajuwon's autograph when I was seven years old.

WHITNEY Who knew, right? What a formative experience, that seven-year old, seven-year old child still loves the Houston Rockets. And, and then you ended up in, in part, uh, you started a business. So you've been a CMO at a number of companies, and I want you to have us, have you walk us through that chronology, um, of what that looked like. And instead of my, me reciting it, I'd love for you to share that. Um, before we do that, let's talk about Fan IQ, the business that you started.

What did you do with that business? Um, and it's funny, because on your Twitter profile, you're like, one failed startup, sports startup.

TY Right.

WHITNEY Um, talk about what that business was, and what was one of the biggest lessons that you learned that you have then been able to take to your subsequent roles?

TY Well, Whitney, this is a little bit like therapy, because a lot of the things I haven't thought about for a while. But, uh, (laughing), so, uh, I'll, I'll start with, uh, when I was in, uh, business school. So I, I wanted to do marketing, and you know, I was working for, I, I did my internship at Proctor and Gamble. And I was obsessed about getting a job in sports.

My second year of business school, I was trying to do the same thing I had done and, and work for the NBA, or work for Nike. I think those were my, then there was a company called Star Wave, which was pre-ESPN was on. So I really had targeted those companies to try, and once again, did my own job search. So that one Whitney, unfortunately failed, (laughing).

After I left Expedia, I thought it was time to be an entrepreneur. And you hear a lot of advice about follow your passions and, and follow your passions.

So, you know, I always joke that I could never get anyone to hire me in sports, so I had to start my own sports company. And I think that's what I did is I said, "You know, I've always wanted to work in sports, so I'll start a sports company." And that was Fan IQ and, uh, this is around 2006, about that same time that Facebook was just getting started.

And I had a, a theory that, um, social networks wouldn't be horizontal. There wouldn't be a, a, a ubiquitous social network. That social networks would instead revolve around interest. There would be huge social networks around, let's say religion or music, and, um, one of the big ones I thought would be sports. And Fan IQ was supposed to be that, that, um, sports social network.

Now, of course, Whitney, as history has unwound, I was completely wrong, (laughs), that Facebook and Twitter ended up being this huge horizontal social networks, where people talk about everything from, you know, politics to sports, to music.

WHITNEY So what was one of the big lessons that you've then been able to carry with you to the work that you're ... Because you've got, you then went on to have two more, (laughs), companies, where you're the CMO.

TY Yeah.

WHITNEY And have, have had exits. So presumably, during that process of trying to get people to hire you, and not in the sports industry, where you didn't get hired. So there were some probably interesting marketing lessons learned there, and then having the startup not quite work. What are some interesting lessons that you've carried with you that you're like, you know, I know to do that now, because I learned it the hard way.

TY Yeah, you know, the big thing I learned was there's this, uh, this principle called the, the Expert Paradox, which is, you know, what you think you know versus what you really know. And so, I was really young. Um, I'd come off of, um, the Esurance experience and the

Hotwire experience, the Hotwire sale. And I, I really did, Whitney, kind of think I knew everything about everything.

And so, it was with a lot of confidence, and maybe a, a little bit of arrogance that, that I founded Fan IQ, you know, with my own money, boot strapped it. And that was a really, uh, sobering experience because, uh, you know, I was a sole founder and had to do everything, and I quickly learned that, you know, a lot of the success I'd had at Esurance or, or Hotwire, you know, really had nothing to do with me, (laughs).

It was, was, uh, (laughing) a lot of luck and working with the right people, and having the right things. And as I was trying to do everything myself, I, I quickly realized, um, that, you know, I had kind of attributed too much of my success to myself, and that was very sobering. And I also realized, uh, as part of, uh, being a startup and, and recruiting a team that, um, you know, at one point at the beginning, I, I thought I could kind of be the brain and, and keep everything straight, and, and kind of be more I would say hierarchal or authoritative in my leadership style.

And I really learned, um, during that startup that it really, um, is all about your people and your team, and it's about hiring people that, uh, are smarter than you and, and really empowering them to, to do their job. So, you know, I look back at that Fan IQ experience. We ended up, we did end up selling it. It was, um, more of an asset sale. Um, so it wasn't great outcome for investors. But it was an outcome.

But my, my greatest lesson in that is the power of people and the power of teams. And, um, you know, going back to the sports analogy, um, I do think that, um, the best team usually wins in business. And so since then, I've been really obsessed with building great teams, and empowering them and, and, and letting them lead instead of me, um, you know, doing everything myself.

WHITNEY What good lessons, and you lived to tell the tale, right?

TY I lived to tell the tale. (Laughing), and, um, with some learnings from that experience definitely. It's definitely put me on a different path, I think.

WHITNEY Yeah, yeah, it sounds like it was really transformational for you in, in terms of your leadership style. So let's now talk about you, you've mentioned Esurance, you've mentioned, um, Hotwire. Let's talk about your last two roles and, um, what you're doing currently.

TY Yeah. So, I, uh, joined LifeLock about four years ago. LifeLock does identity theft protection. So, I got a call once again through my network, uh, about that LifeLock was looking for a CMO. What was really interesting about that call was I was a member of LifeLock because my brother had had his identity stolen, and if you've ever known anyone who's had their identity stolen, it's a terrible experience. You're basically guilty until proven innocent.

So, about six year ago, he had had his identity stolen, and literally LifeLock, um, you know, saved his life. Um, he joined LifeLock and they took care of, of all the, the hassle of, of having to prove your innocence. So, he called me and said, "Hey, look, you got to sign up for LifeLock." So, you know when you're brother tells you to do that, you do.

So, you know, I got a call from LifeLock. They were looking for a CMO, and I felt like it was a, um, a noble cause to help protect people from this, um, terrible identity theft.

While I was at LifeLock, um, we were a public company. We had an activist investor, and, um, they made an offer to buy the company. So, being a public company, the board of directors really had a responsibility to make sure we were getting the best offer, and so we hired Goldman Sachs to run a, uh, a sale process.

So that was, uh, um, a really, um, I learned a lot through that experience, in putting together a, a management presentation, and, you know, pitching to about 12 or 13 companies, were interested in, in buying, um, LifeLock.

WHITNEY Wow.

TY Ultimately, um, yeah. So it ended up that there were several PE firms, um, that were interested in buying LifeLock, but then ...

WHITNEY That just for everybody who's listening, that's private equity firms. Okay, keep going, (laughs).

TY Yes, private equity firms, sorry about that.

WHITNEY Yeah, yeah, keep going.

TY Um, thank you. And then, uh, but ultimately, what, what I've learned is, um, when there is a sale process that, um, strategic buyers, um, can always pay more than, um, than, uh, financial buyers like private equity firms. So, Symantec, um, who, uh, you probably, most people probably haven't heard of Symantec, it's a, a cyber security company.

But they actually own the Norton brand, which 99% of people I've heard of. Um, Norton that, that was very, is very famous for protecting against viruses on your PC. Um, so ...

WHITNEY The antivirus, right?

TY Yes, the number one antivirus brand. So Symantec was very interested in buying LifeLock because Norton and the PC antivirus, um, category had been kind of stalled out, and actually declining a bit, because of, um, the, the shift to mobile, and people using their mobile devices instead of PCs. So Symantec viewed it as very strategic to get LifeLock, which was identity theft is a, is a rapidly growing, um, category, and, and LifeLock was growing, uh, uh, pretty rapidly as well.

And so, they thought it was strategic to buy LifeLock, ultimately with the goal of combining the LifeLock and Norton brands, um, into one, um, all in one protection against cybercrime.

WHITNEY I have to say, as I'm listening to you, I'm like I need to buy this LifeLock, I don't have it. So you're selling me, that's for sure. And it's interesting because I, I'm wondering as I'm listening to you, um, so Symantec bought it, and, um ...

TY Yes.

WHITNEY ... combined, are combining these two brands and, um, and you stayed, you didn't leave?

TY Yeah, I, uh, I stayed because, you know, I joined LifeLock to, uh, protect, um, people against cybercrime. And, you know, for me, the acquisition, um, that combination with Norton was a bigger platform.

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

TY So Norton is a global business. Um, we operate in 38 countries. Um, LifeLock was, was domestic only, U.S. only. And so, I saw the power in combining, um, the Norton platform that is really, like I said, if you're, now that, you know, I'm, I'm part of Symantec, I go to Italy, I see Norton. I go to Japan, I see Norton.

So, uh, Norton is truly a global iconic brand. So I saw the, the power of that combination. And, um, I was lucky enough that through the due diligence process, I think Symantec was very impressed, um, with the, the LifeLock, uh, marketing team, and a lot of the capabilities that we've built. Uh, LifeLock is a pretty marketing driven company. We spent over 200 million dollars a year on marketing, uh, to acquire customers. So I think, um, Symantec thought it was, um, a good strategic capability to, um, use that marketing, um, machine that we had created for LifeLock and apply that to also the Norton business. So they, they asked me to stay and, um, it's been an exciting journey for me.

WHITNEY It sounds exciting. So, um, when you get an offer to go somewhere new, you've gotten offers to be CMOs, four times now that you've taken. Probably actually five, 'cause you stayed with Symantec, but it's probably been more than that. But what, are there one or two or three things that you look for that you say, "Okay, these three things need to be in place in order for me to consider taking on this job?"

TY Yeah, I think Whitney, it's, it's changed as I've, um, gotten older. So, a lot of, some of those roles like the, the Hotwire, you know, I started as a, as the director and, and was promoted to VP after a year. And then eventually got promoted after another year to CMO. So, so, you know, there's a lot of luck within any career, and I think I always acknowledge that.

Um, I think earlier in my career it was really about where could I learn the most, did I believe in the business model, etc. For the first half of my career I put a premium on learning, and feeling like is the company relevant, will they be in a relevant category and a relevant space. You know, now, when I look at a business, um, at this point in my career, I, I think more than half of it is, is the people that I'm working with.

So, I think, you know, you spend more time with at work than you do with your family, most times. So, I think over about half of my decision is usually around people. Uh, about 25% of my decision is around impact, you know, and I, am I going to be, be in a, in a role where I can be impactful to the company's success? Um, help the company be successful.

Um, and then about 25% is, is still like, is the, a, is there an opportunity for, um, I would say wealth creation, so like compensation. Is it, you know, something that's interesting from a compensation perspective. So that's kind of now the, the latest I'd say algorithm about how I, how I judge opportunities.

WHITNEY So the mix has shifted over time, which would make sense?

TY Definitely shifted, yes.

WHITNEY Yeah. All right, so, you've talked a lot about this idea of teams and, um, and you're doing some doing, have done some great marketing work. Um, can you talk about, are there any ... If you look at composing a team, or the composition of a team in terms of the people who are closest to you.

Are you, do you find that there are certain types of people that you work best with, that you're, you're, you know, so for example, like you're really good on the analytics side, and you're also good on the storytelling side. Do you find that every time there's been this commonality, or there's another person on your team, kind of a, a trusty sidekick that's really good at X. Do you find that there's any sort of commonality there?

TY Yeah, I, I think like, uh, um, I've always thought about this idea. One thing I do like about marketing is the skills. I think it's something that, um, it's like the 10,000 hours. As you, as you put more time into it, I do, do think you get better and better. So, um, you know, I keep evolving and keep learning about what, what the, the ideal team is, and what the ideal, how things should be structured. And of course, a lot of it depends on the business situation.

But in general, you hit on a couple of things is you do need, to be a good marketer, I think you need a combination of being a great storyteller, and being able to tell stories and tell stories in a disruptive interesting way. And you also need, um, to be able to, um, understand and, and figure out what's working and what's moving the business, and what's not.

And you refer to that as the analytic side. So I definitely think a, a good marketing team is composed of analysts and storytellers, and, and a good balance of those. Um, I do think the, uh, when I look to hire people, one of the other things I look at is, um, is, is what's, what's their motivation, and I, I do think that, uh, I tend to work best with people who are very self-motivated.

Um, you know, as a manager, I think it's really, you've got a lot to do. So one thing I've learned about my, I don't think I'm a good enough leader to, or manager to motivate somebody who's not self-motivated. So I'm looking for people who are, who are very self-motivated.

And also, um, there's this book by Carol Dweck called *Mindset* about having a growth mindset, um, which is all about, are you a lifelong learner? Um, do you feel like there's always more to learn. So, I also always, um, screen for, is this somebody who's open-minded and always wanting to learn. So those are some other things. (Laughs).

WHITNEY How do you screen for that? I, I love that book. Is there a, a specific question that you ask, um, that helps you determine or gauge if they have a growth mindset versus fixed?

TY Yeah, I mean, there's a lot of behavioral interviews, um, around, um, asking people to describe their experiences, asking them to describe their future. Um, I think that, um, one thing you learn is, uh, have a lot of questions about trying to get through the, the why people do what they, what they do. Um, you know, why, you know, you've asked me about my career path. I think as you learn about my job search and college, or, you know, my path. I think you probably learned a lot about, I'm guessing about what makes me tick through, some of the questions you've asked me, Whitney.

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

TY Both some of the same questions I would ask people. Walk me through your transitions in your career. Why did you make that choice? What was important to you? Why did you decide that? And what I like are people who are, um, you know, s- self-aware. They, they actually know what, they have a framework for how they're making decisions, and the ones that kind of lean into learning, challenge, um, not being comfortable. So, um, I think you learn a lot through understanding people's journey in life.

WHITNEY Yeah. Is there a single person that's been a really strong anchor for you as you've gone throughout your career, that's made it possible for you take a lot of different kinds of risks, to, to, um, take on these interesting jobs, to be a true contrarian, in the late '90s to take a job at P&G, when this was the heyday of the Internet bubble.

I mean, that really did take a lot of courage for you to do that, I think in retrospect. Um, are there, have there been one or two people around you that have really served as your, um, sort of your anchoring influence, as you've taken all these interesting, um, challenges on?

TY Yeah, I, I think Whitney, there's I think for me, I've been lucky enough, uh, family. So, my mom is, (laughs), you know, mom was a nurse. So she's been just an unconditional source of love. So I would just say I know that no matter what I do, whether I succeed or fail, you know, my mom's always going to be my biggest fan, which is, um, super helpful, um.

WHITNEY Shout out to your mom. (Laughs).

TY Yes, I ...

WHITNEY Shout out to Ty's mom.

TY And then, uh, you know, now, uh, so I have been married. Just I had my 16th wedding anniversary. Now my wife is taking on the role of, of really the supporter, contrarian. I think that's what's great about the relationship with my wife is she is when I need encouraging, you know, she'll encourage me and encourage me. But also, she really does make sure that, um, um, I keep my, my feet on the ground. So, you know, I, I always say that my wife and I have a daughter who is also 13, they're my toughest critics, (laughs).

So, I'll give you a, a crazy example. On, uh, you know, on Fridays, I like to just to, 'cause it's Friday, sometimes I wear, uh, fun shoes or sneakers or whatever to the office, and sometimes they're crazy colors. So, my wife and daughter really don't like this, uh, that I wear these, uh, like red shoes on Fridays.

So, I'll go home and I'll say, "Well, look, you guys don't like it, but, uh, I just got multiple compliments at work." And wife will be, "Are these people who work for you?" And I'll say, "Yes." And then she's like, "Well, what do you expect them to say to you? (Laughing). So, always, I think it's good. I'm, I'm lucky enough that my wife (laughs), like I said, she somehow senses when I need to be brought to earth. And also, you know, I've had a tough day or a tough week. She also, uh, um, helps me with that.

WHITNEY Yeah, good, good. And, and the thing that I, I think is so wonderful about, um, you know, a family in particular and, and children especially, is that, you know, they see our underbelly. Um, they see us at our worst, and yet they don't, there's no one that they love more than their parents. And so, when they give you feedback, it comes from a complete place of, I want you to be successful and I love you, um, etc.... So I think that, those, that kind of true telling is especially valuable.

Okay, so, how do you know, um, how do you know when it's time to go? You, you talked a little bit about, um, when you were at SquareTrade. So, this was the company before LifeLock. So your third successful company. You were there. You said it was time for you to go. How did you know?

TY Yeah.

WHITNEY How do you know?

TY (Laughs). Well, we, we did skip over that. That was an interesting one because after we sold, um, my startup Fan IQ, there was a time of reflection for me because I'd ultimately done the entrepreneur thing that had, had brought me out to Stanford. So, it was kind of like okay, I did the entrepreneur thing. I think it was a, definitely a mixed bag as far as success. Uh, what do I do next?

So, I had a theory that, uh, what I really do like to do is help companies grow, and help companies grow efficiently. So, when I actually took the SquareTrade job, um, I had talked to the two founders, um, and I had said, "You know what, um, I will come and I will help you. I'll, I'll hire a team, I'll figure out the brand. I'll figure out the analytics.

Um, and I'll basically make myself replaceable in two years. And, then, you know, I'll, I won't leave you high and dry, but I'll, I think, you know, I'll set you up for success, and then I'll go, go do something else." And so, um, it was interesting. So I entered that, um, job at SquareTrade with kind of that, um, kind of expectation that it would be a, a two year job.

Now, it ended up that, uh, at the end of my two years, I, I had breakfast with, uh, Ahmed, the CEO, and he, he asked me stay on another year. Uh, we had grown a lot in scale then to, um, um, take over some of the customer service and the operations. And so, um, so I did stay on that third year.

But I'd kind of said, was very explicit with, um, the founders about what, what success would look like, and I, I felt like that when, by the time LifeLock had called, I, I had done a lot of what, um, I had set out to do, um, explicitly with the founders.

WHITNEY Interesting. So in, in my parlance, so we talk about the S curve of learning and so my parlance, you set out at the very beginning, here's what it's going to look like when we get to the top of that learning curve. Now, once we get there, it's time for me to go.

TY Yeah.

WHITNEY Um, and one of the things that I read about, and I, you're going to be too modest to say, but you've had two or three people who were waiting on a slightly lower part of the curve to when you left, they could easily, um, move into that role, because part of your job had been to train your replacement.

TY I, I think the greatest leaders, what, whatever function you're in, your job is to try to make yourself, um, obsolete. I, I really think that's one of the qualities that determines great leaders from really bad leaders, (laughs). Bad leaders try to make themselves invaluable, and you can think about the behaviors, etc, that you would do if you were trying to make yourself invaluable.

They end up not being great for the company, I think, most of them. Um, and so, uh, I think that, um, you know, what I've always tried to do in my career, post the startup, right. I mean, the startup was where I learned how important people are, was really try to recruit great people, help them with their career, and ultimately, make myself replaceable.

And so, you know, I would say, even at Symantec, um, we've had a lot of consistency with my team. I joined four years ago, hired a lot other people, um, that, um, you know, um, a lot of my team came from the LifeLock acquisition. We've had amazing retention since the purchase. So, I feel like I'm, I'm on that journey here at Symantec. That I have a, an amazing

team. That, uh, every day I get a little less important here. Um, 'cause my teams, uh, continue to step up and grow.

WHITNEY Yeah. So, I guess this leads me to one of, sort of one of the final questions is you, obviously, you're an expert in marketing analytics. You think about those. So, I love this left brain, right brain piece, right. Because you got the storytelling perspective of who you are, you've got this deeply analytical place. So what analytics are you using, do you use to measure whether you have been successful as a developer of talent, and a developer of people? Are there one or two things that you look at?

TY You know, um, I'd say that that development, there's, uh, because we're, we, we talked about the role of mindset and growth. Um, if you come work for me, it's a very feedback rich environment, where you're getting a lot of feedback, not like once a year. But probably (laughing), uh, weekly or daily about what you're doing well.

And I, I think that's one thing that I've also gotten a little bit better at over time, is you know, I, I think you try to think the balance of say six positive things for every one constructive thing. So you're giving out, you got ...

WHITNEY Right, [crosstalk 00:38:57].

TY Yes, hopefully positive and hopefully constructive, but I really do take seriously that the job of, um, you know, for, for my, my team knows that my personal goal is, um, I used to take great pride in being the same person I've always been. And, and, as I've got older, that shifted to the fact that every year, I look back and say, "I want to be a different, I want to be evolved from where I was, and continue to evolve as a person."

So, each of my directs has personal goals and goals, leadership goals to help them be a lead-, another leader. And what I'm really proud of is I see with all of my direct reports. I see an evolution, um, as far as who they were when maybe when we started working together three years ago. Or like I said, even in the last year. And I think they've all evolved. So, I feel very good about that, um, you know, on the daily basis. And then a lot of my success then I, I view as, um, through the backdoor of my career of where have people that have worked with me, or worked for me, what have they gone on to do. And I think the, uh, the alumni of, uh, Hotwire or Esurance or, um, SquareTrade and LifeLock, like have gone on to do some really amazing things.

And so, I, I really do think it's one where have you been able to impact people's lives and career for the positive. And I think that's my ultimate barometer, are they, um, you know, have they gone, what have they gone to do after they, uh, work for you?

WHITNEY I was going to ask you to name someone, but, I, I would, (laughing) it would be like, then they would be like, well, I thought, Ty, I thought what I was your favorite child. And then you're going to have a favorite child problem, so I'm not going to ask you to name anybody. But, um, but you really look at where the, where have those alumni landed, and what are they doing today, which is a, is a ...

TY I do, and, and you know, we had just talked about this, because we're going through focals, and, you know, the feedback that I've gotten consistently, and this, um, you know, pre- my startup at Hotwire and, and, you know, now, for my directs is that I have a very high bar. And, and, you know, that I have really, really high standards. And sometimes the feedback is, you know, is it really fair that you have such high standards for the marketing department, um, because it, it may be higher standards than maybe other groups have.

But, you know, I, I think that where that always ends up is, um, as I said after kind of they, they leave working for me, a lot of people, you know, go and they, they're like, "Wow, you know, compared to, you know, being in your marketing department, this is really easy. And I'm a, I'm a superstar." (Laughing).

So, I think in that respect, literally, I mean, it happens all the time is, you know, so like my investment banking, so it's like medicine where you're going through it. But then afterwards, they're very appreciative of, of the skills they developed during the time we've worked together, which is, like I said, I think when I, when I think of defining my, my personal mission is like to help people, and I think I have an opportunity every day to help my team, or help people within Symantec be more successful. So those are, um, Whitney, the, one of the ways that I, I measure am I being successful in my career, how much am I helping other people succeed.

WHITNEY Love it. Okay, two final questions. Um, what is the hardest thing about being a marketer that people completely under-appreciate?

TY I think that, uh, I've really embraced the role of, of accountability in marketing. So my goal, um, when I take marketing jobs is to be a revenue driver, not a cost center. So what happens is I, let's say I'll sign up for a certain marketing budget. And then, I usually have a commitment of, of some kind of new customers, or some kind of revenue, um, commitment associated with that marketing budget.

So, as an accountable marketer, what you realize is if you're at a company, like most of the companies I've been at, every day there's usually some kind of daily flash report or traf-uh, uh, or transaction report that's sent around usually to, to all of senior leadership, maybe the whole company. So I think what people under-appreciate with, uh, the, the role of, um, accountable marketers is you're really, every day, you're getting graded on how you're doing your job.

And it's very transparent to the rest of the company, by how many people, um, became customers, or how much revenue you drove yesterday. So, I think that daily, um, treadmill of you have a great quarter, but then, you know, at day one, it starts from zero is I think the, uh, the real challenge of being an accountable marketer.

WHITNEY So, you're looking for ROI. You expect to see ROI on your work?

TY Oh, I expect to see it, and it's very transparent to the rest of the company (laughs), whether I am doing, you know, whether my team and I are doing our jobs or not.

WHITNEY Love it. All right, so, final question for you Ty, if you could be the CMO of any company, let's say what you came to do at Norton LifeLock, it, you've now become unnecessary, um ...

TY Yes.

WHITNEY ... and you've done what you came to do. It's, it's finished. You, you're, you're ready to close that book, jump to a brand new learning curve. If you could be the CMO of any company, who, what company has a story that is waiting to be told, that you would want to tell?

TY Wow, great question. So, uh, I have two things that come to mind. Um, as far as, uh, one of the companies that I, that I'll probably always love is, is the NBA. I mean, I think the NBA as I said, as you talked about, I'm a fan, (laughs). I couldn't get the NBA to hire me, and, uh, after business school, but, I think they have an amazing story. I think they have great

leadership. I think they've been actually doing a really good job marketing. So, from a personal passion, um, perspective, I, I think it's like the NBA.

You know, with the product that I have, that I, I'm in Silicon Valley is so I, I have a Tesla, which I really love. Um, and I feel like Tesla is a, a product driven company that, that probably, um, doesn't really have a, a ... It hasn't really needed a marketing function.

But I really think of, um, how, how good the product is and I think about if you could actually marry great marketing with a great product, I think the sky is the limit. So, uh, I think Tesla, Tesla and the NBA would be dream companies for me.

WHITNEY Love it. Love it, love it, love it. Well Ty, it has been a pleasure. Thank you for being willing to open up and share so much of your story, to go back into the archives, (laughs), um, around some aspects of your story. It has been fascinating.

TY Thank you Whitney, I really enjoyed it.

Ty is such a great example of someone willing to take on market risk. From leveraging his alumni connections to get that prestigious analyst position, to taking a job at Procter & Gamble after his MBA at Stanford when everyone else was heading for startups. Ty is a good outstanding example of taking on market risk in your career in a measured, thoughtful way.

And as Ty was talking about the importance of building a great team and how happy he is in looking at what people who have worked for him have gone on to do, I was reminded of [my conversation with Rodan + Fields CEO Diane Dietz](#). She has a similar philosophy. Probably not a coincidence that she's also a P&G alum.

Finally, I'm so impressed with Ty's focus on learning throughout his career. This is why he chose marketing as his field of study. It's a discipline rooted in the psychology of why people do what they do, buy what they buy, intersecting with constantly changing technology and strategies of how to help people do what they want to do. A continual puzzle for someone who values learning.

Practical tip:

If, like Ty said, leading a successful team is all about hiring people smarter than you and empowering them to do their job, is there someone on your team that you can empower? Can you adopt that Multiplier mindset that [Liz Wiseman talks about](#), remove roadblocks so they can move up their current S Curve of Learning more quickly, and/or possibly is it time to help them jump to a new one.

In the meantime, if you'd like to learn more about how to build a high growth organization by making sure you have high growth individuals you need, check our book [Build an A-Team](#). It's available on Amazon and wherever your favorite business books are sold. And if you'd like a free sample, you can download the first chapter at whitneyjohnson.com/ateam.

And, now we've got a fun giveaway for you. Ty has generously provide us with gift cards for free one-year subscriptions to LifeLock and a couple other Norton products for a few lucky listeners. To be eligible to win, you'll want to share your favorite episode of the Disrupt Yourself podcast. You can do this by text or e-mail (then sharing the screenshot!), share on Twitter or Instagram and tag me (I'm @Johnsonwhitney on both platforms) or you can share on LinkedIn. Then send us an email at wj@whitneyjohnson.com letting us know that you shared. We'll choose winners at random on Tuesday, April 30, 2019 and notify you via email.

Thank you again to Ty Shay 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.