



**Complete Transcript: HALO Talks with Chris Pronger
Posted May 18, 2021**

Pete Moore:

This is Pete Moore on HALO Talks NYC. I have the pleasure of having ****garbled**** by way of Ontario, Chris Pronger

Chris Pronger:

Thanks Pete. Thanks for having me.

Pete Moore:

I figure we should probably kick off this podcast with, with a little bit of Oh Canada. Cause I miss going to my hockey games and my fiance was shocked when I went to a Kings game pre pandemic and I just stood up and sang the whole low Canada song, you know sang my heart out before the game.

Chris Pronger:

Love it. See passion brings it.

Chris Pronger:

Oh man. [inaudible]

Pete Moore:

All right. That's good. That's good. Let's kick it off. All right. Welcome to the halo sector, my friend. So once you give us a little bit of a background, obviously people know about you from your professional career in one of the top defenseman. So I want to use this time to get to know what you're up to in the, in the business world post-career and also maybe help some of the other athletes and entrepreneurs kind of think through you know, getting to the next level with their own ventures.

Chris Pronger:

Yeah, absolutely. So when I I was injured in, in Philly in 2011, 12 spent a couple of years really trying to get myself healthy you know, bad eye injury, bad concussion. And you know, did a lot of therapy used use travel as a method of healing and, and really kind of just really looked inward to try to refocus my energy and my ability to get healthy and use all means necessary to do so. And then once, once I felt comfortable kind of get back out into the world and getting amongst the real people in the world. I I

started working with the NHL in the department of player safety did that for three years. And then most recently was a senior advisor to the GM and president of hockey operations with the Florida Panthers they'll town.

Chris Pronger:

And, and all the while while I was in Florida, my wife had started a travel business while inspired travels, which has been a passion project from her on her end for really, since she was six years old. And so as you know, the Genesis of that was she she was six years old and her dad was diagnosed with stage four. Colon cancer was given a 10% chance to live. And with that, he looked at his wife and the kids and said, I want to see the world with the family for as long as I'm on earth. And, and that first summer, when they got out of school, they went over to Europe and traveled all around Europe and she got to see him of life and passion and joy and happiness. And, and from a little six years, six year old's eyes really got to see the healing powers of travel and what it could do for you.

Chris Pronger:

And you know, they went back home. He was getting pounded with chemo and radiation and, and, and was a shell of himself really, and all the while planning that next trip over to Asia. And, and she's a firm believer that he chose Asia because he wanted to marry Eastern medicine and Western medicine and, and learn more about holistic healing methods learn more about acupuncture and transcendental meditation and the hallmarks of, of Eastern medicine and kind of marry the two. And he, you know, they went over to Asia, they, the kids and my mother-in-law would go over and, you know, they were doing all the touristy things, checking out the great wall of China and all the different sites. And he was immersing himself with a medicine man off in the jungle for two or three weeks at a time, learning about all this stuff.

Chris Pronger:

And they got home all the while using that as a, as an outlet in a way to really you know, prolong his life. And, and hopefully in, in his eyes wait for Western medicine to catch up and allow an opportunity for, for hopefully a radical surgery, which did come along and, and save this life really two years later was given a clean bill of health cancer-free and never had another issue with cancer again in his life. So from a very young age, he got to see the healing powers of travel and the mind body spirit, and what it can do for you. And that really left an indelible Mark on her. And, and so they continue to travel when we got together, we started to travel and then when I was hurting Philly at the same time really, you know, it was really starting to form on her head and really starting to, to kind of take shape.

Chris Pronger:

Social media had taken off and she had a little private account, and we had a lot of friends teammates, other athletes you know, business owners, wives, girlfriends, et cetera. And, you know, they were following her and she was posting her trout, our travels on, on the account. And she was getting hit up 20, 30 times, like, Hey, you know, there's that trust factor? There's that understanding that we know what they're going through. We know what they're dealing with. And, you know, she started setting them up, helping them out, doing all this stuff. And, you know, the light bulb moment of, Hey, there's something to this. But at the same time, we had three young kids at home. I got hurt. Her mother had breast cancer. Dad had a debilitating stroke. So from a timing perspective, it just wasn't right. And then you know, a little over three years ago, our oldest got his license started driving.

Chris Pronger:

And, and, you know, when that happens, as you know, a lot of the pressure, as far as carpooling and things like that are relieved. And then you started looking bigger picture and seeing what's coming down the road, going off to school, and obviously kids leaving the nest and whatnot, you know, and she's been, you know, really kind of thinking deeper about this business you know, obviously much longer and came to me and said, I want to start this and, and, and really want to help people understand what travel can do for them understand the, the healing powers and how it really can kind of take your personal life and professional life to that next level. And start helping her with the business side while I was working with the Panthers and started helping her, you know, network and connect with people a little bit more.

Chris Pronger:

And you know, I've always had a passion for travel as well and, and like event planning and like seeing the happiness and joys that a great trip, a great golf trip, fishing trip you know, what have you can do for people. And you know, join joined forces with her two, two and a half years ago. And we kind of rejiggered the business plan and, and kind of who we were targeting which are athletes, entertainers, C-level executives, business owners, sign net worth family offices. And, and as I just mentioned, the reason for that is that's who we know, that's what we know from the demands on their time, the pressures of the job, the fame, the fortune stress on home life, pressure on kids. We have a unique ability to understand what they're going through, what they're dealing with.

Chris Pronger:

You know, our business is really predicated on relationships and understanding who they are. No two people are alike. You know, we, we certainly understand that from, from our family and our dynamic and, you know, we're real people. We, we want to get to know our clients and, and really kind of dig into what's going on in their lives so that we can help curate and, and steer them towards the right experiences for their, for their, for themselves, for their families for their businesses and, and make sure that they're getting full value for for what they're trying to do and what experiences they're trying to get out of life. So,

Pete Moore:

So when you when someone comes to you and let's say I'm a, I'm a professional player are you trying to diagnose kind of what I need, like, you know, I, I basically am telling you here, here's kind of where I'm at either mentally, psychologically and you're kind of prescribing what I think this city and this spot is gonna, you know, help you towards your objectives, or do, do you have, you know, 30 or 40 places that you and your wife have been to say, look, that we've actually been to these locations. I could actually tell you kind of what the DNA of it is and, and, and, and match those up, or is it like highly curated? How do you guys think about the map?

Chris Pronger:

Yeah, it's, it's highly curated. It's, it's, you know, I think initially it's not diagnosing initially it's listening and, and really kind of building a profile and, and building out some information so that we understand what you're dealing with, what you're going through where you are in your career life cycle, where you are and your family cycle, where you are, and, you know, all the different metrics that we track. And we really want to kind of get to know where you're at, so that we can then understand the landmines and pitfalls and forks in the road that you're gonna encounter. You know, I think we've, we've lived a very

storied life thus far, and, you know, we're very open about our journey and our path and our struggles, our successes that we've had over over the course of our marriage, our lives. And, and certainly, I think people appreciate that and understand we don't have the Instagram filter on where our life is perfect and, you know, there's no issues. And you know, all of a sudden something happens. You're like, Oh my God, I didn't know that they didn't ever post any bad stuff on there. So

Pete Moore:

Yeah,

Chris Pronger:

Yeah, exactly. You know, we're very real about who we are. And, and I think knowing what we know about what people are dealing with you know, maybe 46, but I feel like I'm 80 at times with everything I've been through in my life and career and, and everything outside of it. So you know, I think we have a unique ability to understand where people are at what they need and then it's through conversation and, and, and really kind of peeling back the onion layer, you know, and that takes time to form that trust. We're, we're, you know, I think the hallmark of our business and, and core value, number one for us is privacy and discretion. We don't name drop. We don't talk about clients. We don't promote who our clients are. You know, we're very understated in that regard. We like to keep you know, as I would, when I was playing, I was very private, very discreet, very kind of under the radar.

Chris Pronger:

I didn't like people knowing where I was going, what I was doing you know, that's your private time, your family time, you know, you want to kind of be able to get out of the limelight, get out of the, out of the picture, so to speak. So you can relax and decompress and, and kind of re re-energize yourself and refocus yourself for whether it's a new fiscal year or a new calendar year, a new season, whatever the case may be. You want to be able to, you know, recharge the batteries and, and be able to come out to a hundred, a hundred percent each and every time you're out.

Pete Moore:

So, so there's definitely an analogy of what's going on in the health and fitness industry right now, where there's this push towards digital, and everything's going to be curated for you through an algorithm. And at the end of the day, we believe that the personal trainer, the group exercise instructor, that, that health club, that localization and that personal relationship is not going away. Even though people writing articles saying, Oh, the health club industry is going to be like the arcade industry. And when you take a look at what you and your wife are doing, you know, you're basically saying, Hey, look, you could go on TripAdvisor and you could like drag and drop your, your itinerary, but you kinda gonna get what, you know, it's like, you know, if you want to, self-serve something that you don't know what you're serving yourself. You might actually want some personalization in a relationship. So do you see, like you had a level of technology is kind of like, yeah, it's a nice to have, but it's actually like, there's reasons humans exist. And like, we should leverage our skill sets, you know, and not just push it up. Right. So what, what's your thoughts on that? A little counter-intuitive like, Hey, what kind of business you're building?

Chris Pronger:

Yeah, no, there's, there's a lot, you know, from an analytical standpoint, there certainly are all kinds of different companies and ways to do it. And some people want to do things on their own. And, and

they're, you know, they're, they're interested in curating their own travel and, and, you know, we're, we're a resource, we're a service that a, you know, a higher end service, a luxury service that allows us to kind of, really, as I mentioned earlier, peel back the onion layer gets in, get to know you on a more personal level, understand what you're doing, what, what your expectations are what you want to get out of your family life, your person, you know, your private life, your professional life and really kind of curate and manage that so that as you learn about a new culture, and you're looking at the drag and drop scheme screen, as you say on TripAdvisor there's 50 different properties that you can choose from, how are you going to know which one's going to be the right fit? And do you really want to spend two hours or four hours scrolling through all that information and scrolling through all those sites and trying to figure out, and then ultimately waste all that time and choose around property.

Pete Moore:

Yeah. And also, I also think like the anxiety of like, when you get on the plane until you actually get to the location to find out if it looks like it actually looks like in the picture, like, that's, that's gotta be worth like at least a couple of hundred bucks an hour of anxiety. Yeah.

Pete Moore:

So would you think about the business that you're, that you're running now w with your wife and you think about back to your career and everything was about, you know, what are we doing this season? And Dave and I are finished up a book now where we're trying to do analogies between like the sports world and the business world. So D w when you approach, like, you know, 20, 21, obviously we've got a big hiccup here with, with COVID and I think in a year we'll, you know, we'll say, okay, we've been there, done that, you know, w we made it through what do you take away from some of your, you know, core elements of who you are as, as an athlete and turn that into what you're doing as a, as an executive of a, of a business.

Chris Pronger:

Yeah. I think, you know, being in the pandemic and being in high stress situations, I think it, it really, I wasn't stressed out. I wasn't worried about it. You know, I think you know, being able to withstand this the current times, if you will allowed us the ability to actually invest more in our company, invest in our, in our staff, invest in making sure we were training properly and, and of, you know, really kind of digging into what, how we can best serve our clients. And it really gave us an opportunity to hire some, some fantastic people who who are going to help make our company great. And, you know, I think we're all invested in, in helping those clients that have given us the ability to, to kind of steer them in the right direction and, and curate and create amazing experiences for them and their families, their businesses.

Chris Pronger:

And I think really when you, when you, when I look at 20, 20, 20, 21, I really just looked at this, the performance sheets and, and kind of moved it over and then actually added a little more based on the feedback that we're getting from, from clients and prospective clients and where their heads are at vis-a-vis travel and, and what they're looking to do as one client said, and every time I say it, everybody goes, Ooh, that makes sense. There's going to be a lot of revenge travel, a lot of off people that have been stuck at home,

Pete Moore:

Not able to travel. And

Chris Pronger:

There's a lot of dry powder at home waiting to head off into their next experience, their next travels. And, and we're here waiting for them.

Pete Moore:

That's great. You know, when you look at the hotel properties and the resort properties around the world, or kind of in your, in your direct purview, there's definitely a push towards providing more health and fitness recovery. How important is that on the list of your athletes when they want to, you know, potentially train and how discerning is it for you and your wife to say this property, you know, might be equivalent to like this hide in this Hilton is an example, just to throw two brands out, but this one's got a 10,000 square foot health club in an exhale spa. And this one has, you know, like a Hampton Inn type of, you know, workout. And how does that rank, because I want people to understand how you think about it from the, the requirement for travel, especially to cater to this type of clientele. Yeah,

Chris Pronger:

No, it, it's, it's very important, you know, and that's another reason how we got started and why we got started. You know, I was in the middle of my career when, when my wife and I met and I was very maniacal about my training. I was very you know, involved and focused on my career and on you know, making sure that I was as fit as I possibly could be and not leaving anything to chance in that regard as, as my, as it relates to my career. So we, she, when we first got together would always say, well, why, why aren't we traveling more? Why aren't we doing this more? I'm like, well, you know, 20, this is 20 plus years ago, really the, the beginning of the health and wellness craze and, and in the hospitality industry, there, wasn't a lot of properties that had the right gyms and the right spa amenities that, that I wanted.

Chris Pronger:

And, and we really had to dig and source properties that either had a gym nearby that was suitable for my needs. And then the spa and, and, you know, culinary and being able to eat the right foods, you know, I trained two months and then we're going to go on a vacation and I'm not able to eat what I normally eat. I'm not able to train the way I normally train. It doesn't make sense to me that I would be doing that. So we needed to source properties. And, and that also kind of got the wheels in motion and other teammates and friends of ours were calling about, you know, setting them up at these various properties. And now when we, you know, the health and wellness craze and halo craze, if you will you look at where a lot of properties are when they're developing these resorts and building these properties, the fitness center, and the spa are no longer the seventh thing on the list of, well, let's fit it in it's, you know, a lot of them, that's the focal point of what, why they're building it, where they're building it, it's, it's in a location where they can potentially make it bigger if needed you know, over the last four or five years, who've been to a number of properties where the, the gyms have been very impressive and, and very you know, I think they see the, the fitness craze, if you will, and see where people are at with relation to going away on vacation, they work out, you know, they keep, they keep moving, they keep doing what, what they do on their everyday lives.

Chris Pronger:

And that's, we build that into our programming and build that into how we curate our trips based on that aspect of life and, and wanting to stay in their everyday routine, you know? Yeah. They might go lay on the beach and yeah, they might have a few cocktails at dinner, but they're going to the gym in the

morning, making sure they get their workouts in making sure that they get their system cranked back up again, so that you know, they don't skip a beat while on one of these travel experiences that we've curated.

Pete Moore:

Yeah. And are you getting feedback directly from them, you know, down to, I don't know, it's an example, like down to the instructor or down to like, Hey, w you know, was that really a top five store gym? Is the spa really what they say it is? Or you kind of like continuously honing, like these properties are, you know, not just five star people say they're five star, but like, they're, five-story, you know, the way we look at it. Yeah.

Chris Pronger:

You know, from a, you know, from a culinary perspective from a fitness center perspective from the spa yeah. We follow up with each and every client to make sure that they're happy B if everything went according to plan and then, you know, asking questions, detailed questions on, you know, what they liked. Was there anything that was above and beyond what you expected? Was there anything that was below expectations? And, and as we get that feedback, we were taking notes and, and kind of understanding where certain properties or at which, which parts we really like, and you can then kind of continue to steer the right clientele in that direction. And then obviously as you get good feedback on properties, you're really able to kind of figure out the right clientele to fit the right properties. And really, as we get analytics back and data back, we're able to then kind of continue to hone, hone our curated travels and make sure that people are as satisfied and pleased with their experiences as they should be.

Pete Moore:

If I gave you a 300 room hotel, let's say it was shuttered because of COVID and you had a blank check and someone says, Hey, [inaudible] developed this hotel to meet every one of the needs. Like what would be required in the room? Like what, you know, like I got an error filter, I got you know, water, you know, filtration with alkaline. Do I put like an infrared sauna in every room? Like, w what, what, what's some of the things that you like, look, if you want to be the best, and you want me to recommend your hotel, like, here's like some interesting things that you might not know about maybe a salt room you know, w what are some of the things that resonate with you that you would advise, like the CEO of a big hotel chain, like, look, invest here?

Chris Pronger:

Yeah. I think if you're, if you're taking a 300 room hotel, you'd probably make a 250 and make the rooms bigger, because if you're going to incorporate let's say you have rooms and you put 50 infrared saunas in them, and then you have, you know, you, you create certain sectors of a hotel or certain room types to be XYZ. Obviously you're going to, you're going to want to build out a, a state-of-the-art fitness center. You're seeing the equinoxes of the world coming into the hotel industry you know, with, with massive gyms and things of that nature as big spas. You, you want to have, you don't want to lose the boutique-ness of the property. You don't want it to be this gargantuan facility that is catering to the masses. You know, I think, you know, if, if, if the building has 300 rooms total, you know, you're going to want to build out a couple of high-end restaurants you know, a spa, you know, maybe you cut it down to 150 rooms and make it an all suite property. And you're able to then, you know, you're obviously

charging more and you're, but, but you're getting the right clientele and you're getting the right amenities to fit that clientele.

Pete Moore:

Great. So going up to the, the more broader issue that we're dealing with in this country and, and around the world related to obesity and diabetes and hypertension, and if you have those self, mostly self-inflicted elements you know, or underlying conditions, you're not fighting, COVID the way an athlete could fight COVID. So do you feel, are you optimistic that this, you know, kind of turns into the halo movement or the health and fitness movement is like the, you know, accelerant on that? Or do you say, you know, what people, you know, like to eat their pizza and there's more pizza commercials on than anything else during the last year? You know, how, what, what's your mindset? Are you optimistic?

Chris Pronger:

Yeah, I, I think kind twofold. I think the country has gotten in better physical fitness as you know, created more programming. You know, I think there's a segment of the population that has gotten in much better shape, but I think there's also another segment. It's easier for a lot of people that go spend five bucks at McDonald's and eat a couple of hamburgers and a Coke than it is to spend 10 or 15 bucks on a salad with some chicken on it. And, you know, unfortunately that's you know, a product of resources and, and the ability to, to pay for certain things. And, you know, that's unfortunate, you know, and then obviously, as you said, you know, some people are unwilling to change their habits. You know, it either becomes an addiction or becomes habitual and they're not able to get out of their own way sometimes.

Chris Pronger:

And it just, they're kind of feeding the beast and, you know, on both fronts, you don't fit fitness people and fitness buffs. They got one lifestyle and they're all in on that. And the same thing on the other side and the obesity side. So you know, I think the more you can peel away from the obesity side and they don't have to be totally all in on the fitness side, but changing certain habits, like you don't have to go to seven 11 and drink a massive, big gulp of Coke four times a day, you know, that's, you know, there's certain things that you just don't have to do.

Pete Moore:

Yeah. It should be, there should be restrictions on the number of pumps I was behind this woman that did not need like six pumps of sugar and like four pumps of cream. I was like, what are you? I'm like, why aren't you getting cut caffeine on top of it? I mean, I mean, why don't you go to the gas station and just like, fill it up with like leaded instead of unleaded, you know, it's like, come on. Some machine only works on certain, certain ingredients. So, so in, in closing here, you got any good quotes or lessons you live by, obviously you've had a really interesting path and a lot of success and starting up a company, you know, starting from, from ground zero, like every company you know, so how did, how do you kind of stay?

Chris Pronger:

I think, I think my hockey career and some of the things that I learned in pressure situations, I've kind of carried over now into this business. And, and especially with the pandemic, you know, one thing that we really focus on and live by is never make any rash decisions in a time of crisis. You know, think things through, stick to the plan, be patient a lot of times, you know, it, it's, it's a process, you know, and, and

building a great company takes time. You know, we're, you know, as I said, we're not to, we're not taking the shotgun approach and, and blasts in a way, trying to get 250 300, 400 clients all at once. We want to take one at a time slowly you know, learn more about them slowly provide great service and, and, and curate, amazing travel experiences for them. And, and then use referral and use the time as on our is on our side. And, and as the word gets out about our product and who we are and what we do and how we do it you know, while we're very confident in our abilities and in our company and our ethos, if you will, of what we, who we are and what we do, that that people understand that. And, and we'll we'll come on board.

Pete Moore:

Well, I'm glad we got connected here today. Officially welcome you to the halo sector. Feel free to use that term. If you want to not use the word wellness, say I'm like the halo travel gurus and concierge service and look forward to meeting up with you in person here sometime later, shear when the coast is clear. Yes, sir. Sounds good, Pete. Thanks for having me. All right, man. I'll send you a picture of the guns. Yes. The gun show a buddy. Have a great day, man. Good target. I want to thank my friends. Ed Byrne, B R R R N, to sponsoring this podcast, DRD innovative company behind the world. Renowned burn board. Many of you don't know. I was one of the top roller hockey players in all of Nassau County. Back in 1988 to 1990. If I had a burn board watch out, I would probably be an N H L legend got a seven day free trial on their on demand library of hundreds of workouts, \$30 off the purchase. Check it out@shop.is a burn.com. We'll have it in the show notes, use the checkout code halo and go burn it on the burn board, ice hockey in your living room at home fitness, low cost, low tech, low impact go halo, burn it up.