



**Complete Transcript: HALO Talks with Wes Chow & Paul Park
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Pete Moore:

This is your host, Pete Moore. And I am pleased and humbled to announce the launch of my one and only book titled time to win again, 50 takeaways from playing and watching team sports to guarantee your business success. Those of you who know me personally, and then when I was listening to halo talks or any length of time, know that I am an avid sports fan and a big believer in the value of team sports. What I've seen over the past 25 years, helping businesses grow raising capital, being an entrepreneur myself in coaching and mentoring executives in the sector. It's the lessons learned on the field perfectly apply to business entrepreneurs, executives, managers, you name it. Every company that's a strong company has got a good team. So quick read. There's also illustrations in there from our good friend market cruelty free cartoons. You go to integrity, sq.com. Enter your email address, and we will send you information on the book and the entrepreneur wars survival kit as well. Be great. Take names, go halo.

Pete Moore:

This is people are on halo talks NYC. I had the pleasure of going straight from 30th and sixth and seventh. We are live back in the gym, upfit, Wes and Paul. Good to see you guys active making change, bringing fitness back to society. Welcome to the show.

Wes Chow:

Thanks, Pete. Really excited to be on.

Pete Moore:

Awesome. So it's been a, it's been a long hiatus, but you know, why don't you give us your guys' background on how you started taking us through the pandemic and coming out stronger on the other side?

Wes Chow:

Yeah, you know, it was an interesting time for us because one, we're a bit of a new concept. We run small group training where every lift buddies on an individualized training program, but it's in a small group. So you get that energy and dynamic different from a lot of people in New York were doing. And then when the pandemic really hit us pretty hard, we kind of basically dropped down to 50% of our member base. The funny thing was, as we were slowly ramping back up, we gained an insane amount of traction just because of the big, like, I would say that the biggest thing that we do differently is just it's

so community focused and everything from like hosting, like zoom happy hours to actually in-person events at Madison square park. And we're, you know, in the midst of setting up like an outfit like bowling night. So yeah, it's, it's not just training nutrition results and all that, but it's really community focused too. Awesome.

Pete Moore:

And Paul, how did you guys connect originally? So middle

Paul Park:

West going each other from way back, we went to a junior high school together. You know, a funny story. First time I met Wes or I kind of noticed Wes was a kid was like 12 years old, outside, out of school. We just got out of school and this kid had his shirt off to water bottles. WWE was big back in the day. So he was like, yeah, of course, man, triple H impression, all original shredded. I going to meet this kid shredded at 12

Pete Moore:

One of my kids. Well, one of my buddies, Jason Alger, and a figure four leg lock in front of his house. One day back when I was back in long island, he went like crying back to his mother.

Wes Chow:

Oh, I got it. Yeah, exactly

Paul Park:

How I want to meet him.

Pete Moore:

Lifting back in junior high school or what? Yeah.

Wes Chow:

Like, you know, like the basic, like 10 by 10 bench press, only bicep curls to Pete, no back all bench, press all,

Pete Moore:

All bench. No, all, all chest, no back we stayed college. We used to have this big mirror that we used to stand in front of me and my buddy from Roslyn. And we used to do posing in front of there. And I'm like, I don't think that really played very well except for the two of us back in the day. So when did you reconnect after a while? If you've been kind of like working together [inaudible] ever since. So

Paul Park:

We kind of went our separate ways after high school college went pretty deep into a more corporate fitness structure. Worked at a bunch of big box gyms, working, you know, management and sales, and I'm headed more into the public sector, working with collegiate athletes, you know, division three to division one schools went toward getting my masters in strength and conditioning and spent some time also at Equinox. So we connected right around the time I finished up grad school. And we just started talking about, you know, what each other's experiences were and what we see the fitness industry as it

is now. And I realized we can do this way better than 85% of the people in the industry now do our experiences. And we decided to just come up with a concept together and then four years later offer this here. And you know, a lot of it is the combination of what our conversations have been since we reconnected.

Pete Moore:

I mean, I I've been seeing the size of your community and you know, how, how people gravitate towards you. You know, we spend a lot of time talking about this HVLP concept, which is, you know, cost less than a Turkey wrap in, in New York city. Some of these groups are not, don't really talk about the results that they're getting for people, because that's not really their focus. It's really, you know, giving people like a self-serve to a laundromat. So, you know, how do you kind of cut through the noise and say, Hey, look, there's all these great different options that you have, but if you want to get results, like the we're serious about it. And we got, you know, data and we got people that you could see a before and after, and this is real and you got paid for it.

Wes Chow:

Yeah, absolutely. You know, those sorts of ideas, I'm accepting them into people's heads, right? From the phone conversation when they're still a prospect and I'm telling them, Hey, this is a different sort of training methodology. We're very, or then you're going to track your sets, your reps or weights. It's going to be progressively overloaded over time. But the end destination is we have crazy before and afters people losing 75, 85 pounds of body fat putting on 20, 30 pounds of muscle. We're known for body transformations and one of the top rated place in New York city for small group training that does that. So, you know, that's just the evidence right there. But you know, even past that too is it's like, we're here for your best interests. You know? So everything that we do, I I've heard you talk about like sleeper members from before. And like those, we don't like that we're members here, you know, like I treat members as if they're like my extended family, you know, paying for something that you're not getting a tremendous value out of.

Wes Chow:

And I say that right off the bat. And I think when people hear that they get you know, one, it puts them at ease and they understand, Hey, if I'm coming here, I'm going to get taken care of it. I'm going to get results in a great training experience. And just as if you were to go to like a Ritz Carlton or four seasons, you know, we have those, you know, big corporate, big box gym, like backgrounds where it's very service oriented. And then you felt like, you know, that paired with just good evidence-based training, periodization, individualization, and then top-notch coaches, you stack the community on top of that. And that's really what we've built over here. Yeah.

Pete Moore:

So how do you guys divide and conquer or, you know, does it kind of, you know, since you've known each other since 12, does it kind of happen, you know, organically?

Paul Park:

Yeah. So I think going into it, we were caught, you know, what are our roles going to be the weren't as excited. But I think as we started working more and more, they've become way more clear. Plus just had a conversation the other day about north different ways of thinking or ways of training people and just our kind of biases of running a business. And, you know, Wes, his background is more in sales and

marketing. He does have a training background, but he loves that part of the business likes generating leads. He likes to work in again. That's what he enjoys doing and, you know, that's what he looks first. Once the, once the business starts kind of throwing off his house to get more leads for me, it's more, you know, while I do have experience with those things, I enjoy finding out how I can get the most results in the hard times, talk to people better. So I guess in a nutshell, Hey, what's, this is to get more under my key people there forever. Once they're here. Gotcha. Combination is, is a big reason of why we've been successful. No well, not the primary, but I think it has something to definitely do it.

Pete Moore:

So you guys obviously have a lot of history together, you know, so it's probably easier to go through tough times cause there's, there's you know, a foundation of trust. That's not, you know, easily replicated. So, you know, during the pandemic, when you had to shut down maybe you were doing some workouts kind of quietly, you know, like some of our other groups were doing and I was doing, you know, what, when you, when you hit the tough times, you know, you know, you shed a little light on, on how strong the partnership is and how it's like a rubber band and, you know, adversity is kind of part of business. Yeah. That's the

Wes Chow:

Same way that you face adversity every single day when you're training and that's really helped to develop character. We face the same thing during the pandemic, right? I mean, you know, I'm not going to lie to you. I'm going to say that you're not certain times, you know, you, you do feel like, oh, it would be easier to just exit out of this and liquidate, like whatever we've got, but then, you know, then you realize like, Hey, that's just, you got to put that behind you. And now we're moving forward. There's nowhere to go, but straight forward from here. And so, you know, we adapted very quickly. We rolled out with a bunch of virtual options, you know, kept our current community engaged in anybody that was willing to come in, kind of held on to that. And we kind of waited out the storm.

Wes Chow:

New York was one of the, you know, the center points of the, of this pandemic. And we really got hit pretty bad, but come September things started opening up and, you know, we were just exploding like from there. And so we're doing basically better than pre pandemic revenue. And just to shed a little bit more light on what Paul was talking about before, you know, in terms of our, our management styles and what we focus on, you know, it's, it's I'm very heavily concentrated on yes, it's acquisition, right? It's like lowering the churn. We want to get EBITDA as, as high as possible. Right. And if this ever went a direction where were, you know, it was going to be some sort of growth equity deal. Right. And then you know, I'm trying to Paul with what he's working on, being like the director of training, he's trying to increase that lifetime value and just literally value delivered to members. And so what, you know, with our focuses on these different areas, I think it's, it's a, a match that's really, it's a really strong synergy where you know, a lot of other smaller, I guess you would call them boutiques, you know, don't necessarily have, and you know, we've in our competitive analysis and seeing just how everything has unfolded in the past year, you know, we've seen a lot of places go under, unfortunately. Whereas, you know, we've been doing very well. It's really fortunate and happy about that.

Pete Moore:

Yeah. So, so both of you guys are basically in the, in the studio pretty much all the time, right? Yeah. You know, so one of the things maybe you can help shed light on for some of the people listening here is I'm

going to make an assumption and then you can just nod your head, even though we're not on, on video here for the podcast, you know, you, you can look at the data, but if you guys talk to everybody every day, that is the data and that's actually better than looking at a spreadsheet. So talk about, you know, maybe Paul, like D the interaction and understanding, you know, what people need, they Darvish you're looking for results, but they're also looking for, you know, probably a friend they're looking for a therapist to looking for a mentor. They're looking for someone to, to vent to. And that, that connectivity that you have there, you know, you don't have to go run a report, you know, you have to, I just have to be, be human. So maybe give us a little more commentary on that thread.

Paul Park:

Yeah, exactly. You know, that's a big part of our program, you know, the face-to-face interactions, the coaching, the conversations, it definitely can't be substituted. You know, I think we have that advantage over, you know, a video program where people just come in and follow a video, stuff like that. It's people coming in telling us about what their situation is, us listening to them, acknowledging their situation and listening to what they're going through and come up with a plan together here in the mouth. What are, what are your pain points? You know, what are you concerned about? Just having a conversation that people don't have with other people in regards to fitness and health, and then coming up with a plan together and then laying out a vision for them that it's clear and, and executable. I think that kind of vision, you know, it leaves an impression on people on how I can improve on my pain points and, and that I'll also feel supported while I'm doing it. And I'm going to have guidance along the way. I think that's huge. And, you know, sometimes we have a ton of people in the city, but not always, people are always connected, you know, like, like, you know, a part of a community where people are being acknowledged for stories. So I think that's something we're really trying to do and really make a point of hearing their story and acknowledging it, and, you know, having a collaborative experience with these people. That's great.

Pete Moore:

So, you know, you guys obviously are changing people's lives. You're probably helping more people than, you know, everybody that you train with and you get results for has three or four people or more that depend on that person. So it's, it's a domino effect. I think somebody leaves the, the club and, you know, lost 15, 20 pounds or what have you, you know, they spread the word, they feel better. They probably say hello to their doorman. They probably are nicer to the taxi guy. They say, you know, pleasantries to somebody else. So it's a cascading effect. So how do you guys define what, what success looks like for you? And before you answer that, you know, we have people come in and say, Hey, we want to build 500 studios. What about a thousand studios? I want to do this or that I'm like, look, build one effect, change and, you know, affect like your local market. And then once you nail that, then figure out where you want to take your life, where you want to take your business. So, you know, you guys are obviously very focused. You got a great community, you know, do you feel the need to, to scale that to hundreds of thousands of people, you'd be like, Hey man, look, we're good. We're crushing it. We're helping people. We sleep at night. And as this thing evolves, it evolves.

Wes Chow:

Yeah. And I'll speak from, from at least like the biz dev side. I, you know, I, I think one of the big things we're working on this year's is productizing what we do. And in that sense, you know, making it a little bit more scalable, you know, so that, that way we can replicate the programming and the value that's ultimately delivered and make it, so that, that way, you know, like our responsibilities become less of actually the one-to-one interactions with members becomes more of us disseminating the program to

our coaches and then the coaches are relaying it over to the members. And so that's something that we're working on this year, but you know, that would definitely move us more closer towards what I would define as success. And then eventually, you know, we are growing to a point where reaching capacity, it will have to move into a second location.

Wes Chow:

And then the scaling up of that to being able to execute this just as well, and number two, or number three, it doesn't need to be a hundred, you know, like you always say in the podcast to say, Hey, you know, how about getting the unit economics down of one spot and then slowly taking it out from there. I've definitely like been listening to you more and just like taking that advice and hit it just let's just move along slowly. And let's really nail this formula down. And I think things will continue to happen organically. We're pretty patient, we're not in a rush. I don't need to be the orange theory. But I know that what we've got is really, really valuable. And I know that, you know, as this team grows and bring the right people on, it'll just become, you know, more parents and more people.

Pete Moore:

That's awesome. So, you know, talk about the location there and you know, what, what a typical you know, month looks like, how many days do you, do you want somebody in the studio? How many days do you want them communicating with you? You know, give us a little roadmap of somebody that becomes a new member to community. Yes.

Wes Chow:

I mean, most people come in and they they're starting off depending on their level of experience at a certain frequency, you know, whether that's like two or three times a week, but ultimately they're trying to transcend that and then move into like just the most physically active and healthy lifestyle that they could juggle with everything else that they've got going on. Right. We're in New York, it's a high stress lifestyle. People work a ton, they probably don't sleep enough. They need to bounce off their stress management, their recovery, their sleep, and then get a few workouts in there as well. So we want it to be as productive for people and collaborative as possible. So that answer, isn't like a straightforward, you know, they, everybody starts here answer, but generally it's like a two or three time a week exposure with us. And then and at least right now, you know, the average person is with us just a bit over like 10 and a half months at that sort of frequency.

Wes Chow:

And it gradually ramps up as they're with us. But that also means that our level of engagement continues on a regular basis as well. So like, you know, right now I'll give you an example is like, Paul's, I'm doing like a cutting group. So there's probably about 10 people involved in this kind of group where they're tracking calories, counting macros, he's doing weekly zoom calls and this is available for all members and some like non-members as well. And it's just the one it's more exposure, it's more added value. And so, you know, whatever you want to call them, touch points basically every single day. So we try to, yeah, just make it a point to be as, as big of a part of their lives as, as they're willing to reciprocate with. Cool.

Pete Moore:

Cool. And so you guys got any good quotes that you could share with our community? I'm sure there's a lot of motivational quotes going on there nonstop. What are some of your all-time favorites I gave you a second to figure your best ones? Cause I know Paul's got plenty

Wes Chow:

Pretty deep right now. I guess the one I could say is I got a tattoo of it actually goes off. The obstacle in the path becomes the way

Pete Moore:

Like that. You

Wes Chow:

Know what adversity with a situation that seems like an obstacle. It's just an opportunity to get better. Yeah.

Pete Moore:

Love it. Love what

Wes Chow:

I got a few I'll lay out. Just one because the thing is, you know, we're always trying new things and I think that if you're not trying new things, you're never really going to make true progress. And, and, but the thing is, you know, when you do try new things, sometimes you're going to fail. So I like this one. I like a fail fast fail, small fail forward.

Pete Moore:

Nice. Awesome. All right, man. I'm glad to see you guys live in, in charge. I'll be back in the city in a couple of weeks, we've got a big event. Dave, make sure we invite these guys to the to the FDN Y fitness event that we're doing. We'll tell you about that later, but I will be in mid, mid-July. So I'll come in and get a workout with you guys and keep, keep pushing, use this as a resource as you need it. And Wes, thanks for joining the academy and I'm glad it's you know, helping synthesize what you're doing there and you know, you guys are on a, on a great path and I love what the way you're methodically making it happen. So good to see you guys, nothing but good, good things. And you know, take your shirt off again if you want. And we're coming to Russell you when I see you,

Wes Chow:

Like you're going to ANSYS.

Pete Moore:

Yeah, I know. Right. Right. Exactly. All right guys. Well, I'll see you soon. Be safe. Take care. Awesome. Take care. Bye.