



**Complete Transcript: HALO Talks with Matthew Januszek  
Posted February 11, 2022.**

Pete Moore:

This is Pete Moore wanted to officially announce the release of time to win again. 52 takeaways from team sports to ensure your business success. I wrote this book over the last year. I think you're going to love it. Good to great meets wears Waldo pick 'em up for your team. Time to win in 2022. Happy to come to your club, your studio, your company, and talk about ways we can optimize business and win going forward. Go halo. This is Pete Moore on halo talks NY on location with my new good friend, Matt escape fitness via Santa Barbara together. And now we are, co-hosting a halo talks through a hostile takeover by escapes podcast, Matthew, welcome to co-host by she.

Matthew Januszek:

Hey, thank you very much for inviting me in this kind of beautiful entry wear. It's not quite as beautiful as the place in Santa Barbara that we do. Is it, would you agree? Yeah,

Pete Moore:

I mean, a lot of people asked me if that was like a backdrop and I said, no, man, that was real. And we had cushions over the speaker Topeka system. So you guys were you guys were very crafty. Yeah, maybe we could put some like some the butterflies in the background or something. Yeah, I think we

Matthew Januszek:

Need some Palm trees or something. Yeah,

Pete Moore:

I didn't think about the background, cause we're just a on audio, you know, they said you know, radio killed the, the, but it video killed the radio store. Thank you. Thank you. Thanks for joining in the podcast without asking. So Matt, you and I had a really good conversation. I really appreciate you guys bringing us on. And I think we gave people a pretty good crash course and you know, what was what was happening and what's going on the financial side and how people look at it. You know, you spend a lot of your time talking to hundreds of health club operators and entrepreneurs, you know, so maybe just start for the five people that don't know who you are, you know, give your background and let's talk about some of the things you've seen that are being successful and that obviously makes you successful because you're partnered up with those relationships,

Matthew Januszek:

Right? So yeah, I'm a co-founder of escape fitness or of functional training equipment company. So essentially design some of the most beautiful gyms around the world. We provide them with support on, on actual design itself, equipment, education, and also a lot of advice and helping people to understand, I guess, you know, navigate the business side of, of things already because you know, you can stick a bunch of equipment in a room how do you make money from that? How do you get results? And that's really what we we'd like to do as a, as an organization.

Pete Moore:

So when you started in the industry, you know, the original way to sell equipment was to come to a trade show, selling a piece of hardware, drop, ship it to a location when it opened and now, you know, being a value added supplier and actually giving someone advice is kind of like the new normal, you know, so how you're kind of like on the, on the front end of that, did you, did that happen deliberately or is it like people started to rely on you and you need to come up with like, Hey, I'm actually going to tell you I'm going to solve some business problems for you at the same time.

Matthew Januszek:

I think as a, as an organization, I, we, to answer that question, no, we we've, we didn't do it from a reactive perspective. I, I was always an, an avid learner all the way through in the company. I was, I was terrible at school. Didn't really like school and, and learn a lot. But when I left, I realized I do actually enjoy learning. So I I'd done a lot of conferences and coaching and, and, and that kind of thing. And so as a business, I always felt like, you know, how can we continue to move forward and move our company forward, innovate and, and help the people that we are working with. So, yeah, we started out at, at trade shows. And to give you an example, when we did our first trade show, I didn't have any money as such. I think we had a couple,

Pete Moore:

So join the trade show club. Yeah. Inaugural trade show. I did

Matthew Januszek:

Too. So, so we had a, a kind of booth and I think it was probably like six feet by two feet. It was very small and, and there was all these big, it was one of those kind like shell schemes. And I thought, I, okay, I need to stand out. So I had a friend of mine who used to do the, the, the clothes for a group called the prodigy. She was there in a place called Essex in England and she made these wacky costumes. And I said, why don't you make me one of those funky costumes and then make me like a, kind of a, a really cool sign to go on the back of it. So I had I, so I had this freaky outfit and this weird sign and, and people just came by because it was really weird. And, and then it became a little bit of a habit where at the trade shows, I, I, we, all of our team wore seventies costumes one year and we, we, we run seventies prior and all that sort of stuff.

Matthew Januszek:

And the reason I'm telling you that is as I suppose, you know, I think you always have to try and do things differently, not just for the, the sake of it, but to kind of stand out. And sure. The easy thing for companies to do is just blow loads of money. And, and think that's a way to solve problems and chatting to a, a guy in there. Who's a, who's an investor. I think if you start your business doing it organically with your own money, you have to learn how to manage. Not a lot. You have to be creative and innovative. Whereas I suppose if you can, although I think I'd like a chunk of money to be able to take your business

to another level. If you had that too soon, sometimes you don't really know what to do with it. And I, I, I think it's a, you know, it's probably not necessarily as helpful as what it could be.

Pete Moore:

Yeah. I mean, I used to start out in investment banking and they give you an Excel spreadsheet, you know, to work on it. And there's a person that's, you know, 10 years older than you that's over the shoulder and says, okay grow revenue by 30%. So you plug it in, you know, cut costs by 10% you plug it in. And then I actually started running a company. I'm like, man, that is, this is a lot harder than actually doing it in Excel, you know, like, so growing a business and actually under appreciating like how to actually build the business. And then it goes the model instead of saying, oh, I got this model. Right. And some private equity, firm's going to look at it and throw money at it. There's starting to be said about building a business and, you know, from the ground up. Yeah. So, you know, from your standpoint, did you, did you try to reach all different geographies? Did you say, Hey, I'm committing to this area, I'm going to go get some quick wins or, or relationships that kind of build on other relationships.

Matthew Januszek:

Yeah. We started, we started in, in the UK and we, we were fortunate to work with a few large companies, quite a early on, and that, that kind of helped sort of grow our company relatively quickly. And then we also, then the whole business crashed when we, so we, we did very well off the expansion of the big, big boxes and they were opening like fitness. First was one of the big brands we started to work with. I think they did. They used to do like one month, 10 or 12 clubs in a month. So our, our problem 'em at the time was just getting the equipment in to supply them. Sure. Then suddenly their business changed. They were no longer expanding. They, they had all these clubs and they probably, some of them were doing well, some of them weren't and we just, I just thought this was going to go on forever.

Matthew Januszek:

Sure. And then the tap turned off and suddenly it was like, you know, what are we going to do here? So that was a great lesson. We, you know, you from going bankrupt, I guess the fir yeah. First time. And we had to sort of think, okay, let's diversify the business a little bit more. And so we found different types of customers. We eventually moved into Poland because we're a manufacturing there and we thought, okay, that's a great idea. Let's try. And an international company to expand into an international country to expand into, which is probably the worst country. You can go into Poland from a British company because just the legal system and the language and everything, it's not built for entrepreneurial businesses, you know, it was an ex-communist country. So everything is meant to be very difficult and, and not, not the opposite of America.

Pete Moore:

It for granted here, how easy it is to like, go on legal zoom, get an LLC, go get a copyright. And like you're off to the races and no one gives you any problems.

Matthew Januszek:

No. Yeah. So we went there and that was a great lesson. Then we went to, to Germany, which, which also was a, was an interesting market to go into and, and expand. And, and then I think 10 years ago, we, we came to America, which if I'd have done it again, like English speaking, marketing promotion, like everything is so much easier when you're doing it in the same language you're in. Whereas when we

went to Poland and Germany, you know, just through inexperience really, but you've got to translate it differently. You've, it's just so many complications. So you, you take

Pete Moore:

When, when you did that and, and you and I have gotten to know each other in a very short period of time, but I feel like I know how you, how you work and how you operate. I feel like every piece of equipment goes out the door kind of has your name on it like that. You kind of weigh your reputation on a piece of equipment. So, you know, going in and kind of stretching yourself into other markets, you know, looking back, obviously you say, now I'd rather go to English speaking countries and, and do that. When you think about right now, where your business is today and, and the size of it, you know, how much do you still have like that personal signature on it? And how much can you let that? How, what, at what point do you say, Hey, look, I got a business now and it's not just me.

Matthew Januszek:

Yeah. I think it's difficult. Because you're right. It is my name on it. I, I, maybe if I sold the whole thing to someone else, I could, I could sort of not worry about it. But the, the thing is that, like today, I, I came to the trade show. I, I have a podcast and a business. So people kind of know who I am. They and I'm not saying that because that's a great thing. No,

Pete Moore:

They do. I'll validate it for you. People know who you are.

Matthew Januszek:

You, if, if you're, if you're an idiot, people know who you are. If you do stupid things, it's, you know, you, you kind of building a rod for your own back. So, so for me, like whether and stuff goes wrong, as you know, in business, you know, you make mistakes, you have issues with products. That's just life things don't arrive on time. But for me, it's always, okay, so look, if anything goes wrong, what I will do is I'm, I'm going to, I'm going to fix it. I'm going to figure it out. Even if that means that that customer may never buy from me again, I'm going to put you, right. So even if you don't buy, you can't, you can't say anything bad. It's like, okay, he sorted it out. Sure. I don't want to go to them again, but I've, I've fixed it. And I, and I suppose, you know, in some ways in business, if, if you have that attitude, whether it's about your products or your way you run things, then I, I don't think you can go wrong.

Matthew Januszek:

And that's, you know, that's whether you work for a company or whatever you you've got, you've got to develop your personal reputation. Everybody's got a personal brand, whether they're an employee or not. And I think you, you, you know, that's probably the most valuable thing that you can invest in is, is your per what, what, what you say and what you stand for. And, and that goes, if even if I make a dumbbell, you know, I it's, if someone else makes it for me, I make it myself. I'm for that. And I, and I don't want to bump into someone and say, oh yeah, I brought your stuff. And, and it's a bunch of junk.

Pete Moore:

There's some businesses now where regardless of size, like you'll go on their website and they have like a contact us. And it has like a, you know, a survey capture tool with no phone number I'm like had, I'm like, I don't, I don't get that. I don't, I, I don't think I, I could ever operate under that way. Like, I want to be reachable. I want to be accessible. And I feel like you kind of operate the same way is I want to help.

The first thing I want to do is I want to help you. And if I help you something good will happen in return. So how do you kind of think about now operating in the us and, and some of these other markets, are you kind of hanging with a lot of the multi-unit operators that are building out? Are you looking at new locations that have a lot of design elements that you can kind of be the value add, you know, from, from the inception to, to, to the equipment side?

Matthew Januszek:

Yeah. I, I think different, the different market we operate in are slightly different. I think the America's market America market, it's quite sophisticated where there's clearly defined channels and needs to those channels. When, when we are in the UK, it was predominantly the, the fitness clubs, the fitness chains, that's what we did. And that's what the solutions that we developed our product were surrounds. Now we've come here. I think it's a bit different post COVID. I think, you know, in terms of some of the challenges that are, that are booming and some of the ones that are not you know, we are doing very well in a lot of the apartment complexes. That's a, a very interesting market. People are building houses and, and apartment buildings. And they all have gyms in, was in New York last week. And some of the gyms in these apartments are better than you know, some of the big box clubs, right?

Matthew Januszek:

So our ideal customer is someone that wants the help on separating themselves from everyone else want, wants to create an experience. So for us, that experience comes down to the design and, and, and the, the flow and the energy and the lighting and the, and the equipment and the programming within those areas. So, so that's really where we come into our own. And as opposed to just supplying, you know, some dumbbells, I think, I think anyone can do that. And there's nothing wrong with doing that. I, I, I think in, in that type of business in industry, you just become a commodity. And, and so the more value you can provide, the more you're likely to be the obvious choice, which is why, like you, you know, what do we do a podcast? It's a, it's a significant investment of time and money. We don't do any advertising on it, but what, what we do is we like to hopefully help people. And it educate people particularly over the last two years with COVID, there was no trade shows and it's like, well, what, what kind of marketing do you do? Do you keep pushing out, come and buy this product? Or do you say, look, let us help you. And then if you ever want something, you know, pick up the phone and gimme a call. Yeah,

Pete Moore:

No, I think, I think your, your podcast is, is the best out the there I love that you guys go straight to videos. I think it's very engaging, obviously do a lot of research up front and everybody knows who you are because of it. So, so I think it's great. You know, when, when you take a look at where we are right now obviously you got a lot of clubs that are, you know, still in recovery mode, they might have some PPP money that's kind of still, you know, settled in, you know, an account that's like, I don't want to touch this. And I just got to get through in some of these blue states, you know, they're still at 65% of revenue or, or members, and it's just not coming back. You know, we thought September was going to be like, okay, here we go on this, like diagonal, you know, straight diagonal line, back to pre-COVID, it's not happening. So what are some of the things that you've been able to come up with to say, Hey, here's like three things that you could do either that we can help you with, or that you should do to get to the other side.

Matthew Januszek:

Good question. I, I, a lot of that I've been sort of figuring out as we are here, you know, I, I suppose it's our business a lot of, or in our industry, everyone said, oh, you guys must be doing really, really well because you know, everyone's buying fitness equipment for the home and, and we did pretty well with that, but we're, we're a commercial fitness equipment provider. So a lot of what we do is for big gyms, it's not for home garages. Sure. So we, we kind of thought, well, do we, do we go into that market or not? And I, I think, you know, we're still staying core to what, what our business is about. We we'll probably evolve that slightly, but we'll stay true to, to what our, you know, what our core business is. And I think that's part of the challenge that a lot of companies have been through is, is you can be too quick to react and you can suddenly, you know, every, the first thing that everybody said is, oh, you know, we got to get into digital, we got to develop an app, we got to do that.

Matthew Januszek:

And, and, and that's a whole different skillset, you know, just, just as you, we talked about podcast and video, just doing a video podcast is, is very different than just doing an audio one in terms of the skill, was it the people and how you put it together and that sort of stuff. So, and

Pete Moore:

You have a better backdrop than I do right now.

Matthew Januszek:

So the, the, the point I was trying to make is I, I think when to, to your question is like, when, what, what do you advise people to do? It's like, well, look, you know, what is that core? And how can you sort of focus that and, and, and, and, and expand it yet. Definitely look at digital, but don't lose sight of, of your core business. And, and, and can you do it better? Can you do it more efficiently, more effectively? Can you save more costs, just simple business practices. Now with some of the stuff that we do, it's compared to other solutions it's relatively expensive, so you can make you can make quite a, a big impact using creativity and some great programming and some great equipment where the, the people who are coming into the facility think that you've spent a lot of money and you've done a lot.

Matthew Januszek:

When in, in most cases you probably haven't done. So it's, so it's trying to say, you know, what can you do without spending too much money, maybe talking to people like us, where we can sort of help you think a little bit outside the box. Maybe, maybe there's some areas that we've seen in other parts of the world that people have done that maybe you've not thought of, not because you can't think of it, but because you just stuck in, in the woods, you know, can't see the woods for the trees. So, so yeah, that, that's the other thing I think I think the final thing is and this is probably the most important thing that I can say is you know, we're, we're all individuals on our own through this journey in a lot of cases. So, you know, whether you're a business owner or running a company, like we are dealing with this pandemic and our own heads as well.

Matthew Januszek:

Yep. And so it's it's a very tough time. Your people's families are, are having issues. Employees are having issues. You've got financial problems, there's a lot going on. And I, and I think one of the most important things that you can do to be useful for the people that you're around is to be quite mentally strong. Because if, if you're not mentally and physically strong, then what of the challenges in front of you is going to seem a lot worse if you're tired and broken down and, and, and not Optim, you know, not in

optimal health. So one of the, what we try, what I try and do in, in things like the podcast, and, you know, even people in our business, you say, look, you know, what, what, what's the most important thing you can be doing at the moment? Most important thing is looking after yourself, mental health, you know, focus on that, your physical health, your sleep, rest, and recovery, and then everything else is you're going to figure it out. You you're, you're in the best place to deal with your people when they come in and suddenly your top training team have left for a competitor, or suddenly you realize, you thought you had some money to pay for your bills, and you've not got to do it. And all that that comes up,

Pete Moore:

Right. You could at least look in the mirror and say like, Hey, I'm healthy. I feel good. I look good. And I, and I'm, I'm ready for whatever,

Matthew Januszek:

But you got to put that first, because if you look at my, even in the industry, most people have, have, you know, people have put on weight through COVID, you know, they've probably not looked at themselves. They've probably not had the exercise. They've been sat in front of doing zoom meetings. And, you know, they're not as good as what they were at the beginning. So really it's, you know, and that's the industry we're in, you know, go, go back and try and go to other

Pete Moore:

Industries. It's a lot worse.

Matthew Januszek:

Yeah. Just invest in yourself, get, get, start, start out, workout programs, stop eating that. You know, make sure you're getting some proper rest. And then, you know, that's probably the best advice I can give.

Pete Moore:

So let let's pivot for, you know, we got a couple minutes left here. Let, let's talk about you. As, as a business entrepreneur, most of the groups on here are, you know, independent operators, you know, that they're looking at their own income statements. They're not, you know, reporting to a private equity or venture capital for firm or venture capital firm that says, Hey, you can lose a hundred million dollars this year. And like, don't worry about it type of thing. So, you know, in the, in the real world that you and I live in, you know, you've got a, you've got a strong business, you got a good podcast, you got a lot of friends, you got a family, you know, how do you think about after going through this pandemic? Like, what do, what do I need to do next? So what, what do I want to do? I'm helping a lot of people, I'm educating a lot of people through the podcast, you know, do I need 30% revenue growth? Do I need 50% revenue growth? Do I need to go and find a private equity group? Do like, what do I need to do? Have you kind of recalibrated, cuz I have, you know, like what, what success looks like to me is different now than it was two years ago. Right?

Matthew Januszek:

Yeah. I would agree with that. Well, it's a couple of things. One is as a company we spent probably the last six, six to nine months reorganizing our three year plan. And, and asking those, you know, serious questions is, is a lot, is all of this stuff we doing really necessary. What are the things that are going to

move the needle? Right? Both for the business, cuz we're a family business. So part of it is, has been, it provides a lifestyle for you, but also where's the opportunity in the market. And I think one of the things is really clear that people need what us as an industry are doing more than ever. One of the biggest reasons for people's death during COVID is, is because they're overweight and obese. That that

Pete Moore:

Was the, that's the two things that unbeliev well that people don't talk about it more, they took that part down on the CDC side of like underlying conditions.

Matthew Januszek:

Yeah. I don't know why they don't talk about like

Pete Moore:

They should put it in bold flashing.

Matthew Januszek:

Yeah. It's, it's crazy. So, so, you know, as an industry, we can do so much to help save people's lives. You know, know if you look at the extremes, the government have gone to, to protect us by closing down and destroying people's lives and families, you know, why don't they also say, but, but we are going to help you incentivize you just to go and start walking, go and take some exercise, stop being. So

Pete Moore:

I'll give you thousand dollars. If you take a vaccine, I'll give you a hundred as if you walk back and forth to get it.

Matthew Januszek:

Yes. Things like that. So, so I think there there's a lot of potential in this space, so that's great for anyone that's in it. Like, you know, although it's tough, the good thing is that people need us more never and hopefully more people realize Health's important. So, so that's the first part. The second thing is that I, I believe for people in manufacturers in the industry, at least for the next 12 months and longer is going to be pretty tough that the logistics issues where the supply chain's messed up and that puts a lot of press pressure on businesses like ourselves, from a cashflow perspective, there's, there's a ton of great ideas that we can be investing in, but it's, you got to balance that with maintaining a level of cash to continue sure. To go forward. So we're obviously thinking, well, how can we take advantage of some of these great, exciting opportunities potentially looking for people that are interested in, in investing on some level so that we can, I suppose, be in a much better place when this finishes.

Matthew Januszek:

So that's, that's definitely something we're looking at. Sure. But also like you said I think having, and it sounds really corny like balance, but just realizing that I used to travel to Europe, like every four to six weeks go back, we got a business over there. I spent a lot of time away from my two young children and through the pandemic I've, I've really watched them grow up their nine and 10. I spent more time. My I've realized. I've just like how lucky I am to have someone right there. Sure. And I've, and I've realized that, you know, I've, I've, I've got a great business and, and I think sometimes that, you know, sense

checking, well maybe a lot of that stuff you're doing is not necessary. It's not helping your business. And also it's not supporting what you want out of life.

Matthew Januszek:

Sure. So I think, you know, identifying that stuff that doesn't move a needle doubling down on the things that do and, and also realizing from a personal perspective, what is important, your Health's important, your family's important. Being happy is important. And, and, and I suppose for all of us, really, if we can kind of get our lives in a little bit more balance then that's a good place to be. And even we're at us and I'm not going to dis trade shows, but for years, the whole booth thing are just like, it's, I don't know whether I can say anything, but it's like, who's do whatever you want. Who's got the bigger, he's got the bigger, whatever, you know what I'm saying? Yeah. And, and so, you know, it's, its it's, you know, like it, it becomes who's, where's the value going back into the industry for how having a gazillion foot booth nobody. And I think when you go in there today, okay. It's a lot smaller, but it makes a lot more sense. Look, be there, let's meet people for sure.

Pete Moore:

Sure. There's a lot of, there's a lot of additional square footage on our like padded flooring. That's not a hundred percent necessary.

Matthew Januszek:

Exactly. Exactly. So it's like

Pete Moore:

Also \$4 for a bottle of water is not really fair to me either, but we'll leave that

Matthew Januszek:

At where no, there's a lot of prob there's still a lot of unnecessary costs, but it's like, okay. Some of that's probably better to invest in other things of course, than, than a trade show. Yes. We want to be here. Yes. We want to meet people. And I, I know, I know a trade show is a business for certain people, but you know, let's, let's put it into perspective and let you know, probably invest the right amount of money. And I think at the moment that look, it, it, it seems to be fairly sensible and hopefully money can be re redirecting in the right areas. You know, like Freeman services, the, the unions, like how much HR who's benefiting from that the industry's not benefiting. Right. It'd almost be better to put that money into something that, you know, some sort of educational course to move to the industry

Pete Moore:

Heal academy and, and, and a day with escape and like, you know, that's a good value make you smarter.

Matthew Januszek:

Yeah. It, it, I'm not saying there's anything against supporting these, these unions and this wasn't my point on the, the podcast, but as an industry, it, you know, we it's, it's an industry organization, but a big percentage of, of what we're paying or previously paid goes to unions that are not part of the industry. So why not get somebody to do that where we can, everybody can be better and, and where, cuz we're all in this together at the end of the day. Yeah.

Pete Moore:

I'm with you. So in closing, give me gimme a good business quote or a, a life quote that we can that we can tack on.

Matthew Januszek:

Well, I'd have to say escape your limits because I think mentally we, we do set our own limits and I think as we've gone through this, this pandemic, I think we've probably a lot of us, myself included have probably, you know, that, that circle of what we believe is, has been possible is probably coming a lot smaller. You know, we suddenly see all these difficulties and these challenges and I think sometimes coming out, meeting people, sometimes you kind of need that to say, well actually, yeah, I, I, I can do what I didn't think I could do. Yeah. Yes. It looks bad. But there's hope and, and, and let's not lose that. Let's not lose that hope because so many of my friends unfortunately have thrown and thrown the towel in over the last two years, you know, mentally, physically with their businesses because they just think, why am I doing this?

Matthew Januszek:

And we need these people that have been around for a long time to, you know, it's a lot of young people coming in, which is great. But a lot of the people that are a little bit older have sort of said, I've had enough, I don't need this anymore, but we, we really need that knowledge and experience as well as the young people. And, and I, I think there's, there's so much potential out there, you know, let's not read too much into the news and it's a great time. It's a great time for the world's in a very different place. It's, there's so much opportunity for innovation and, and I, you know, I, I think there needs to be more of that good news, that more, that positivity. Yep. And you know, let's go out there and do

Pete Moore:

Something great. Again. I love it. I love it. I love it. Well, well, the book's called time to win again. This podcast has been brought to you on the audio side by halo to, and on the video side, escape your limits. So good to see you again. Sorry about my decor here. Not as fancy as our Santa Barbara, but we will we'll do another one orange county. We'll make it a go. Excellent. All right. So to us educating the industry together you know, I'm in take part with the good work. You too, brother. Thank you very much. Thanks for coming on.