



**Complete Transcript: HALO Talks with Ntiedo Etuk  
Posted February 25, 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, halo talks NYC on location, face to face with a B2 B2C community engagement leader, and visionary known him for several years. Made great progress. NT. Welcome finally to the show.

Ntiedo Etuk:

Thank you brother. Appreciate it. Appreciate it. How you been?

Pete Moore:

I've been doing all right, man. I feel like we're on the, the, the road to recovery, but got a little bit of a handing great where you got to kind of pick your paths and it's going to be a slow role, but that's right. We we'll get back. So you've been doing some great things for a lot of studios getting them online. Yeah. You know, making them sophisticated. So they're not doing, you know, Facebook live and Instagram live and zooming and freezing. So give us your personal background, why you, you know, your position to do what you did and yeah. Yeah. You know, take advantage of the opportunity.

Ntiedo Etuk:

Sure. So originally from Nigeria and The Bahamas grew up in Nigeria apparently didn't have any friends cuz I was coding six new six programming languages at the age of 11. Wow. Yeah. Yeah. And was building really rooted men, video games. They were terrible, but I still call 'em video games. I say credit, I came to things

Pete Moore:

We're moving on the screen.

Ntiedo Etuk:

Yeah. That something was,

Pete Moore:

Something

Ntiedo Etuk:

Was happen. That's right. Then I came to the states did a little bit of that boarding school thing and then studied engineering, electrical engineering Cornell. Wow. Worked a couple of years and then went back to business school of Columbia. Did a, a stint with a management consulting firm called McKinzie. Heard of them, heard of them. Yeah. And then then I was pulled into what I call city groups, DARPA program. It's like their, their R and D group to come up with billion dollar ideas. So did that for a bit. And then I was pulled out to work with the president to city groups the chief of stats, city groups, president, and I was supposed to, I think go on into a glorious future and finance, but really I was like, you know, I started my first company already and that company does educational video games. So imagine games that allowed kids in LA to play kids in New York while they were learning math and literacy multiple people. And at the same time it was that sort of thing. What was that called dimension? You still call dimension you. I like to, yeah. So

Pete Moore:

Given how much time I see my nephew Fortnite and his to focus only on that going towards math, I think it'd be a lot

Ntiedo Etuk:

Sharper, you know, I'm and I'm determined to bring that kind of, you know, chocolate with the broccoli to fitness as well like that. Yeah. So anyway, I, I ran that for a number of years, raised a fair amount of money for it. And then came into the fitness space and I came into the fitness space because I was injured. I had plantar fasciitis which is that pain between the front and back of the feet, you know from running too much, et cetera. And went into the, went into the pee and they were like, you have CIAR faciitis and I was like, what's that

Pete Moore:

Sounds worse than

Ntiedo Etuk:

Sounds terrible. You know? And I was like, okay, I

Pete Moore:

Do comes up with all these like illnesses

Ntiedo Etuk:

Have no idea, you know, I'm like, all right. So I, so I, they said do yoga, do Pilates. I was like, great. Went and did some Pilates cleaned it up and, and was able to stand more than 15 minutes. I was like, this is amazing. This is what my next, this is going to be, let me help the world do this. And the experience was really, when I walked into the group fitness studio, my instructor private instructor told me, come to my group fitness class. There were these three women in the class and they said, they're talking to each other, put my mat down. They were talking to each other and they're like, Hey, are we going to brunch after Pilates? And I was like, I like brunch. So I was like, Hey ladies, you know where we

Pete Moore:

Brunch? It was, it was great.

Ntiedo Etuk:

You know, I was like, are, are we going to do this? And I was not invited to brunch. But, but you know, so I say, Zuck,

Pete Moore:

Dave, get this guy in omelet.

Ntiedo Etuk:

Seriously, man, come on. Small violin. Right. So I so I was like, wow it's a community. People know each other. They like each other. They, they create friends. I like to say Zucks started Facebook cuz he didn't have any friends. I started this cause I wasn't invited to brunch three months later, still didn't know, 50, 60% of the people in the community. Right. And I was like, this is weird. We have common interests. We're in the same sort of closed room. Why are people not connecting this? You,

Pete Moore:

You don't think had anything to do with the foot injury that people talked about and was tweeting about, Hey, stay away from this guy. You're going to get this plant of fish. Exactly. Right. Like what that Steve to be saying, staying on his own Pate's machine. That's right. That's right. He's got socks on. So something fight this kid. A brunch. Yeah.

Ntiedo Etuk:

Yeah. So I was so I was just like, this is amazing from a retention perspective, we believe that if you come to class, you're more likely to keep coming back. If you're more connected to other people, more connected to the clients, the instructor that's motivating you, the front desk person. It's like good to see you again.

Pete Moore:

I, I would go a soul cycle like four or five days a week and yeah. Yeah. It felt like a third place at home. That's

Ntiedo Etuk:

Right. Like cheers a place where everyone knows your name. Totally. So retention, play acquisition, play, bring it all together. Community engagement and use your, leverage, your people to help you do the business. So that, that's what we did. We pushed that out to a bunch of studios. We had 18 at the beginning of 2018. We're now in over a thousand in 18 countries, we grew five

Pete Moore:

Times. You always running it under fit grid or was there any other names associated

Ntiedo Etuk:

With it started as your

Pete Moore:

Guru? That's what I,

Ntiedo Etuk:

Okay. Yeah. And initially it started as a marketplace where instructors and trainers could find, you know, clients

Pete Moore:

When you and I last

Ntiedo Etuk:

Connected that's when we last connected. That's right. That's right. And at that point, you know, one of the things that I wanted to do was I wanted to be, it was ahead of its time. Like it would've been perfect for COVID. Right. Sure, sure. I wanted it to be a place where if you walked into New York, you could find a yoga instructor for you, regardless, whether in a gym, a studio or on their own. And the gyms in the studios at the time were like, well, that looks kind of competitive with us. So I turned it around and said, let me go to the studios first and actually bring the instructors in that way. And so that was what we started to do. So with the community engagement system, we have three pieces of software, one that's for the instructors that allows the instructors to understand who's coming into class and send follow up messages.

Ntiedo Etuk:

And that increases retention over 15% and increases the amount of revenue that comes in. Then there's another piece for the for the staff person. And there's another piece for the clients. So those three components make up the community engagement software and you can do it Alec carte, but it's really increased increases the ability for people to come back and think about it like an automatic community builder in the background. If someone could just turn on and have your community automatically connected, establish a picture based community, get your people automatically bringing new people in automatically coming back and spending more money. And then it tells you personally, this is when you want to send a personal message because this person you're about to lose them or it's time to upgrade. So that's what fit grid does. It's been really successful.

Pete Moore:

So talk about, obviously, you know, since the age of 11 doing video games and now doing community engagement software, how do, how does somebody get onboarded? How does that interface with some of the other software systems or mind body, or, you know, how do the pictures come in? And

Ntiedo Etuk:

Yeah, so we so we attach the booking billing systems. So mind body is our big, I guess, partner. Okay. in that sense, and then we have a sales force that we actually go out and we call the different studios and say, Hey, here's what we have. Are you interested? To the extent that they're interested, then we latch in, we go through the mind, body API. And that's when we start seeing the information about which classes people are signed up for which instructors they have, et cetera, etc. Gotcha. Yeah.

Pete Moore:

Good stuff. So, so how did you build a team since, you know, you're an entrepreneur and you probably have ideas of here's my strengths, which there are many, I got a couple of blind spots or things that, you know, I need other people to do. Yeah. So how did you think about, cause I think a lot of, in one of the chapters in the book, it's like, okay, how you going to build your squat? So did you think about that giving you had a couple businesses before war, the first couple hires?

Ntiedo Etuk:

Yeah. You know the first time my first business I built from the top down. Right. You know, and that tends to be pretty heavy. You end up with executives with a lot of experience. You need a lot of people, you know, under them in order to get things done because they're not going back to the days when they were doing the work. In this case, we actually started from the ground up. So started with actually who's now our CTO and our now our head of product and we're just the three of us in an office building the stuff out. And then we went to sales and then marketing client services. Right. but what we're really focused on, who are the people who can do the work and I can handle the strategy. Gotcha. You know, in the short term and the medium term. And now we're at the place where we're really making that transition and say, okay, we're looking for the folks who have done this like two, three times, you know, before in order to be some of the executives that we bring into the company.

Pete Moore:

And did any of those people have any prior fitness experience or you kind of build it as a fitness company and a technology company kind of hybrid.

Ntiedo Etuk:

Yeah. Yeah. So the engineers definitely, they had a lot of fitness experience. They'd heard about it. They knew they, they knew what fitness was. Yeah. Okay. No that's were, were not, they were not really into,

Pete Moore:

Into fitness. So really on the technology side. Cause I feel like sometimes people come into this industry and they've got a preconceived notion of how the industry works and then want to stay within the framework of it versus coming in saying like, this is kind of how it should work, which seems like what you've done. That's right. On a community engagement side.

Ntiedo Etuk:

Yeah. We sort of came in and we looked at it and it was just like, you know, one of the things that we did was that I said, in order to understand this space, let me run a popup studio for a bit. So that was something called YG studios. And we had clients going through,

Pete Moore:

We, we met, talked about that too. Yeah, that's

Ntiedo Etuk:

Right. Sure. Right. And so I, I looked at that, but in the background, you know, folks asked, well, why don't you spend more on the buildout? Why don't you do? And not the reason was because there was a big talk center in the engineers that we had just watching what was happening. And so in the biggest challenges that I saw was like, I have this entire database worth of information, which is not surfacing

what I need to know on a daily basis. And I was like, I know that there are people who are about to leave because the experience I, they haven't, I haven't talked to them. Who are those people? How do I find them? I know there are people who I should be shaking hands with or giving fist bumps to it, but it wasn't being surfaced in any way. And I knew that, you know what, because it was a popup studio, we had very limited staff. Right. And so as a result of that, I was like, how do I leverage all of these other people who are actually passionate, you know, about this to bring in more people for me and to keep the other people there, nobody had created software that allowed you to leverage your entire community to do that. Right. And I was like, if we could do that, then we basically multiply the efficiency of any, any studio.

Pete Moore:

Let me ask you I don't know what the right term for this is, but maybe a philosophical question. Yeah. I feel like a number of studios and businesses that have an embrace technology feel like the technology now yeah. Should be doing the work and they kind of stop doing the in person and kind of like, say like, Hey, well I already communicate with my members. Well, you should really be doing both,

Ntiedo Etuk:

Both. That's exactly right. That's exactly right there. There's nothing that you know, what I, what I like to say is that the software should surface what you need to do in person. If there's stuff that it can take care of. That's great. But if there's stuff that you really need to do in person, no client creates a relationship with an automated email or an automated text. Exactly. They create a relationship with a person. Right. And so the challenge that we have is we have so much information and so much go going on. Like the world has become so much more complex. The real question is how does the studio owner or manager or front desk person, how do they know who they should talk to, what they should say and what the issue or the opportunity is. So being able to surface that right on time, that's what great software should do.

Pete Moore:

So I just to kind of close the loop on that, the software's going to tell me certain things to do. Yeah. It's going to do some of it on its own. Correct. And it's also going to alert me to actually do things in real life that's. Right. And understand, cause some, some of these dudes have like 300 members and they say, oh, did this survey. And it's like, well you have 300 people. Like you could physically talk to them as well. Well,

Ntiedo Etuk:

That's right. And, and it's not just and it's not just, it's not just you, like when we say you, we think about the like what you would do. We think about the owner of the manager, what we're doing is actually different. We, we consider ourselves to have sensors in the hands of each member of the community. So you have your staff member, you have your in instruct and you have your client. So when you think about an experience, when a client let's say, first comes into a studio, they actually have three experiences. The first, the first experience is the front desk person. Right. The second experience is the instructor. And the third experience are the other clients in class. What if you could trigger an interaction with each one of them, the right. And interaction. Right, right. So that someone walks away with like, oh, this feels like my spot. That's what we have the ability to do. Yeah.

Pete Moore:

I feel like a lot of locations you know, hire the front desk people and they kind of view it as like a, you know, somewhat of a revolving door that's right. And you know, they probably get maybe a couple hours of training maybe a day. Yep. And then don't fully appreciate that. That what you just said is like, my brand promise is like now in the hands of a person making 16 an hour, that's

Ntiedo Etuk:

Right.

Pete Moore:

That's right. Who might not even have taken a class before. That's

Ntiedo Etuk:

Right.

Pete Moore:

That's right. And when I ask a waiter or a waitress and I'm like, Hey, what do you recommend on menu? Like, I haven't eaten any of that. I'm like, well, you shouldn't have a serving of each that's. Right. So you can recommend it. Like, you're, you're a taste maker and you're also representing this organization. I, you not know what the product

Ntiedo Etuk:

Is. That's exactly right. That's exactly right. And, and I think that most studios the owner, the reason why these owners are so exhausted is because they take so much on themselves. Right. Right. You can actually distribute that out if you think about it with the right type of training, as you've said, and if you leverage all the other people, the other staff, the instructors and the clients, they just need to know what to say and when to say it. Right.

Pete Moore:

Right. So given that you, you know, you ran the YG studios. Yeah. Done things at city group and, and large organizations have, you know, millions of dollars of technology budget. How did you think about building a technology? So do user interface is, is, is seamless and also not intimidating.

Ntiedo Etuk:

Yeah. So, you know, my, my perspective on this, so we, we looked a lot at popular software, you know, that was out there and sort of said, who has done this well, who has done this in a really simple, easy use way. We believe the interface is everything. And actually one of the challenges,

Pete Moore:

Can you tell us which, which types of companies, like, what, what do you like the best when you say I go on the site? Like, man, they just thought of everything. Like everything's positioned exactly where I think it should be. What, what do you,

Ntiedo Etuk:

Yeah. So actually, interestingly enough, what I thought was the most intriguing were actually the dating apps. Yeah. Because dating apps are actually really good at, at sort of grabbing your attention

immediately. So whether it is on the client side, whether it is on the instructor side, how do you present something that someone gets yeah. Just graphically, you know, and knows what to do. So that was really great on the on the studio side, you know, it was really on the studio or the desktop interface there. We just looked a lot of the software that was out there. And we were like, I don't even know what this is saying. Like, I need to study, I need to study a manual to, to figure the us out. So just starting with the idea of what would a community site look like? Well, they have a lot of people, right. You know, and a lot of imagery around people and all that, all the rest of that. And it would be more graphical. How do we surface what we call actionable information? Not numbers, not data. People are drowning in numbers of data, but how do you surface something? That's like, this is what I need to know and what I can actually do with it. Yeah.

Pete Moore:

You, you touched upon some that I think is really important. Somebody said yesterday, you know, I, I look outside the industry. Yeah. For ideas, not just inside the

Ntiedo Etuk:

Industry.

Pete Moore:

So the, the, the, one of the takeaways from this should be, you know, if you're building something, figure out where else in your life, you, you have this type of SIM more relationship or this experience, like I used to go into like restoration hardware.

Ntiedo Etuk:

Yeah, absolutely. You

Pete Moore:

A great shop. Yeah. And RHH like, they purposely, there's no price tags on any of the furniture. Right. Cause they want you to go into a room and they want you to feel like you live in it. That's right. Sit down and that's right. Experience. And that you're not in a store you're basically in like a show room. Yep. That I can transport in. Yep. What are so not on the technology side, but what are things in your life since you're kind of like, you, you've seen a lot of things and you know, a lot and what are some of the, the companies or

Ntiedo Etuk:

Absolutely

Pete Moore:

Shirts you like, you know, these guys have nailed it and I, I, I want to emulate them it some or, or it's already in your brain to emulate something. They do.

Ntiedo Etuk:

Yeah. So I'll give you, I'll give you a great a great example. The hotel industry. Yep. Right. So there are times when I've been fortunate enough to actually stay in some of the best hotels in the world. And I'm like, there's no reason like when, when a four seasons knows that you like a certain type of chocolate

and they leave that chocolate on your pillow. Yeah. There is no reason that we can't replicate that here in, you know, in the fitness space. Right. And so I talk a lot about, and think a lot about how can we deliver software that will allow a studio to, to replicate a four star experience? Or I'm sorry, not a four star five star experience. Sure, sure. Five star hotel experience. And you know, it really doesn't take that much. They just need to know when to do it and, and how they should

Pete Moore:

Do it. It's funny you say that because I was staying, I was staying at a Fairmont. Yeah. And I was staying here for three days and, and by the second day I feel like everybody knew my name, but I had no idea how, cause I didn't have all this interaction, these people talking about it, like what's going on behind my back. Exactly. Then I realized like they just got a really good internal system. That's, everyone's getting cued and it's seamless.

Ntiedo Etuk:

It, it actually inspired one of the, of the features inside of our instructor app where the instructors can actually write a note. You know, there are two types of notes that they, you can write. One is a personal note like, Hey you know, your birthday's on Friday. Right, right. So that's just for them to know. But if they put something like, Hey, empty, sprained his ankle. And they put that as a shared note, everyone in the studio knows. Right. So now the next instructor comes, Hey, I heard your sprained, your ankle. All of a sudden, it's like, wow, how'd, you know, it's magic. Yeah. So you try to, to create as many magic moments as you can from as many different places as possible.

Pete Moore:

That's awesome. So, you know, given you know, this, this tidal wave of COVID and, and we're on the road to recovery here, how much easier has it been to tell people like, look, I've been, I've been preaching here for years on what the future looks like and that's

Ntiedo Etuk:

Right.

Pete Moore:

That's

Ntiedo Etuk:

Success, right.

Pete Moore:

It's today. Right. So, you know, how do you, you know, is it come down to price? Does it come down to referrals? Does it come down to people, you know, looking at other data or, you know, having a conversation like we're having now and say like, yeah, of course I want be like the four season, like gimme a software. I, I want everyone to embrace this at, at

Ntiedo Etuk:

The beginning. At the beginning it's, well, we know the technology curve, right? So the innovators and the early adopters, we, we look for those folks and we get them on. Obviously when you get to the mass

audience, they want something different. So that's when we start to talk about data. But the good thing is that after the data, after the initial people get on board with the data, it's all social proof. Right. So if we go for example, to a franchise group or something like that, then every new, every new studio that we go to, we talk about the studios that we're already in. Right. And so it's about landing, you know, sticking and making sure they have a great experience. And then you expand, expand, expand, expand, and go to the next person, say, this is who we have. So that's been the, the best way that we found to do it. Great.

Pete Moore:

Yeah. So in closing here, and we'll meet up in New York, if you're on over the next couple days, so I'm going back there tomorrow. Give us a couple business quotes or some life quotes. You've kind of been a global citizens. What do you

Ntiedo Etuk:

Got? Yeah. So, you know, best business advice I ever received was actually for my mom, who's a doctor she's not retired. And I was like, this is wow, you're a business person. It's amazing. But she, she once said to me, listen, there are three things you can do in life. The things that everybody can do, the things that only some people can do and the things that only you can do, focus on the things that only you can do and outsource all the rest I've been living that mind entire life. It's amazing. Produces stress for

Pete Moore:

Shout out to auntie's mom, little words of

Ntiedo Etuk:

Wisdom. There you go. Moms.

Pete Moore:

Awesome. Happy mother's day. That's right, right. But great to see you. I'm, I'm psyched to see your success. I'm glad that the industry's finally caught up with, with your Dropbox in your brain.

Speaker 3:

There you go. I appreciate you look forward to seeing the city. Thank right buddy.