



**Complete Transcript: HALO Talks with Vin McCaffrey, Max Wessell & Ryan Drummond
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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

Pete Moore:

Is Pete on HALO Talks, NYC. I have the pleasure of announcing the merger of the athlete book into game plan. We are bringing athletes into the halo sector and that starts now. So I have the pleasure of having max van and Ryan game plan, top executives to share with us the vision here and how this all transpired. So Ben, let me turn it over to you.

Vin McCaffrey:

Yeah. Thanks Pete. So game plan founded 14 years ago, with the idea of helping an athlete get a job. What we realized though, is it's, it becomes this chicken, right dilemma. You have to have the athletes to get the jobs. You have to have the jobs to get the athletes. What we quickly realized was that if we solve to help the athlete go through their journey, there's a real value. So now game plan across the country is in over 300 athletic departments scaling really rapidly, over a hundred thousand athletes averaging 14, 1500 e-learning courses a day, and our platform and the engagement model is shifted from as opposed to just solving for this trans action challenge of let's help an athlete, get a job, let's help an athlete move through their entire journey on experiencing campus. So 300 athletic departments, the NBA, the NFL major league baseball, the NHL, you name it from a competitive standpoint game plan is working with that athlete where we think this thing is just a wonderful marriage, is we're. We've never lost focus of the idea of helping an athlete get a job, but we realized we needed to work with them through the journey. 14 years later, we finally had a place where we can do that. And so now when the athlete book comes together, it now it takes us to the next step of all these athletes preparing them through their experiences on campus. Ultimately, we're going to make the transition to the workforce, what better place than the halo sector for an athlete to land.

Pete Moore:

That's great. So, so max, as you were kind of canvassing the landscape of, you know, add on acquisitions and you know, how to kind of get to this last mile, if you will connecting the athletes directly with employers, you know, how did athlete book get on your radar screen and, you know, partnering up with Ryan here and us to make this happen?

Max Wessell:

Absolutely. Yeah. So, so since game plan and the next athlete came together, which was in February of 2021, we have been pursuing growth aggressively, both in the athletic organization space, but also has been set in this kind of employer slash jobs for student athlete space. We began looking at the competitive market and looking at companies who had a similar offering and being that it's a very niche market, you know, there's, there's not too many, but what really stood out about athlete book was Ryan himself and kind of how Ryan positioned the mission for athlete book and how he spoke about helping student athletes get job. You know, we saw Ryan speak on TEDx. There was a lot of things that really stood out about the athlete book, but also Ryan as an visual, which led us to reach out to Ryan about a potential merger slash acquisition.

Max Wessell:

I would say if I, if I had to break it down to, to one key point though, it was that we are mission aligned in that we are trying to improve the student athlete experience. And part of that means helping a student athlete have better outcome after college and getting a job where they are valued for being a student athlete, cuz being a student athlete at spin, Ryan and I know is not easy. It takes a lot of work and dedication and to have an employer who understands how, how hard that is and values you for the skills attributes you, you acquired being a student athlete was probably most important thing. Now we also were really trying to figure out a way and, and Ryan will touch on this more, but to, to expand our presence in the virtual career event space for student athletes, the athlete book was kind of the market leader in that area. So that's kind of what led us to first reaching out to Ryan about a potential acquisition and the rest is history.

Pete Moore:

Yeah, so we got involved and met Ryan, I think the same week I was on a jet blue flight and they had the college athlete documentary available that LeBron and his agent had put together. And it, it chronicled several awesome college athlete leads that, you know, were living in their car, opening up a Dick's morning goods in the morning being an assistant, you know, a substitute teacher, an assistant football coach. And we're also trying to prepare themselves to get back into one of the big leagues. And I just thought that that was completely unacceptable, that that, you know, could have been working at a Jersey strong. He went to Rutgers, he was an all American less graves. And or he could have been working at a, you know, orange theory as an instructor making, you know, three to five grand a month not having to live in his car.

Pete Moore:

And I'm assuming he just didn't know that those, those options were available. And when we met Ryan, you know, the, the know bringing athletes into the halo sector also kind of struck a chord for us because several of our clients were putting ads up on LinkedIn or indeed, and having to shuffle through resumes to get employees, you know, not knowing what those people actually, you know, look like. And do they look the part of a, you know, of what they should be because obviously walking into an orange theory

you know, I want to see someone who is an athlete because, you know, I want to be an athlete again. You, so there's something aspirational or inspirational about having, you know, team concepts and, and, and actual people that played division 1, 2, 3 sports, you know, as a natural progression for them to get into the health and fitness and, and halo sector.

Pete Moore:

So, you know, Ryan, you, you convinced us, you know, back in the day where this was going and you know, why athletes, and I think it's really kind of come together where everyone understands now the benefit. But why don't you kind of recap that for the listeners here on why they should be thinking about athletes, you know, as their entry level or, you know, even professional athletes that, you know, maybe have retired, you know, focusing on what VI said about all the leads, you know, what do you do after you play in the NHL or major league baseball, like what's your next step? And hopefully it's, you know, it's the ALO sector,

Ryan Drummond:

Right? No, you know, I still get so excited when somebody asks, well, why are athletes better than any other candidate? Why is that a subgroup that we should be looking at? And, you know, for any college athlete that's gone through, it's like, oh, it's a no brainer. Like I had to get up every morning early and for four years and pushing through these barriers. But you know, when employers are being surveyed through the national association of college of employers, over 80% of them are saying the number one trait they want is a for the ability to work in a team. Okay. And so that just defines what, what the athlete is and what that candidate subgroup is. The challenge though has always been, is here, you've got this price candidate pool that is so hard to get in front of. And that was always the problem that we were trying to solve.

Ryan Drummond:

How do we make it easier? And it does, does it lend itself nicely to, you know, a, a transactional job board approach. It really is building the relationships with the right employers who see the benefit of, of building a long term pipeline strategy to, to bring in athletes into the organization. And so, you know, when I'm look, when I looked at this transaction, or before we did the acquisition, the athlete book was a small team. And now it's like we found our people with game plan, a larger team, more people that are have their own individual roles of making it possible for these employers, these employer brands to say, I'm going to lay down this pipeline. I'm going to access this talent pool of game plans, 300 plus athletic departments, 80,000 athletes that not only are just sitting in some database, no, they actively have to and are required by their athletic department institutions to take the upskill education that's in the platform that they're playing for.

Ryan Drummond:

Well, that presents an incredible opportunity for an employer brand to say, Hey, are you interested in working in health, maybe active lifestyle life, a lifestyle outdoor industry, if yes, Hey, lemme talk to you about this. No, you want to go into equity research. Well, we've got this. So the point is now is like, it's such an exciting time that we have this elevated platform with game plan to really come together and, and work with the corporate partners to say, Hey, here's a, here's an awesome opportunity to really stand out and not be so reactive and transactional in, in what the market's dictating on your hiring needs. We've got something where you could kind of dial it back and forward and, and, and really bring these, these athletes in every year. There's a new group, a new crop coming in.

Pete Moore:

Yeah. I mean, just given the what's going on with, with the budgets for colleges, you know, everybody's got a you know, a career development or, you know, somebody who's in charge of trying to make sure people, you know, get jobs and, you know, it used to be when you know, watching NCAA game, they would say like, you know, this, this team has got a, you know, a three, five GPA always graduate X amount of seniors. I want to know how many of those people get jobs, right? Like how many of these people went to the NBA and how many people got a job out of school and not, you know, scraping away like that, that documentary you know, that I referenced here. So, you know, when you take a look at what game plan, you know, couldn't pro I to a college and say, look, don't bring on two or three people and pay 'em a salary and hope that they get a job.

Pete Moore:

Or at least you can say, Hey, look, we put resources towards this. You know, the game plan basically is your outsourced resource and we'll get these kids jobs. And that's like what our directive is. So how do you think about that from a cost structure, you know, supporting these teams and also how game plan is not, we'll put these job boards up and we'll try and get your guys, you know, jobs and women, but we're actually going to take 'em through the whole journey. So actually know what they might want to do. So talk a little bit about that, Vince,

Vin McCaffrey:

Those aren't mutually exclusive Pete, like in my mind when we acquired athlete viewpoint in September, we loved it because they're the largest survey provider in all of athletics. And we looked at that as almost like what Gallop is to policy makers. We can get real insight direct from an athlete. What, how are they thinking about things? One of the clear pieces of information that we saw was that there is a huge gap, but associated with career development for athletes, there's an enormous amount of focus around things like mental wellness and diversity education, things that we're, we're dually critical on. Like those are areas that we want to see, cuz we're providing a lot of that education. We love that. But when we found that these athletes are coming away saying there's a gap around the career development, it becomes really critical for us to be able to figure out a way to address it this summer.

Vin McCaffrey:

One of the things that Ryan and I have been spending so much time on talking with different halo organizations about is the first ever game plan academy game plans already launching out compliance education. We're, we're doing incredibly well with life skill education. We've never done professional development education game plan academies are our first entree into providing student athletes true professional development. First two they're coming out B2B sales management training. So manage training in particular, let's just talk about halo for a moment. Imagine the ability to not only see student athletes who are going through a management training curriculum, but then talk about the industry focus associated with halo. So if you're an orange theory or LA fitness, think about those brands out there. They're going to see pipeline as a service. They're going to see the candidate going through a curriculum begin and interacting and educating that, that student athlete about the industry and then be able to ultimately recruit 'em, but effectively you're doing pre-employment education. We think it's a no brainer to do good do well. Right? We want to help the athlete. That's always our true north, but beyond that, we're now connecting athletes with the types of brands that you know, that halo represents. We think it's a win, win, win.

Pete Moore:

I mean, it's interesting you say that again and you know, one, one of the, the academy courses, you know, game plan could be, you know, how do you use mind body software? How do you use Domo, which is data analytics, ABC you know, Daxko, and, and basically have these software companies come in and put up, you know, training. So then on the resume, which has never been done before, by the way, you know, on the resume of a, of a graduating senior athlete could say, yeah, I know how to use my body. They'd be like taking a back that you actually can go in and you don't have to get trained on the software. That's huge. And then also, you know, what we intend to do with you guys is have people understand the business, my, and the KPIs associated with these different brands so they can come in.

Pete Moore:

They can say, oh yeah, these are, you know, members per square foot. This is what, you know, the EBITDA margin should be. This is what, you know, lead generation looks like in those types of metrics. So we're excited about, you know there's in, in the financial industry, there's something called train the street, you know, and these kids would go on, it would take these classes before they get into investment banks, you know, to basically master, you know, at least the fundamentals of Excel before you get into a bank. And if you're in a bank and you're starting with no Excel skills, like you got problem. So, so I feel like this upfront education and content and learning is, is going to be huge

Vin McCaffrey:

And think about it. What we saw for is chicken or the egg, we got the audience now. So now we're able to bring out all this educational opportunities and growth. So I I'm with you. Yeah. And that's why Ryan's had said it's, it's just been so enlightening from our standpoint, learning from him. It's been awesome.

Ryan Drummond:

Well, when you think about any company, any business, any industry we're talking about halo right now, but when you hire someone out of school, how long does it take until they're actually comfortable in that role three months, six months a year. Imagine front loading that before the actual application and interview process, and that's really of opportunity. And then the end result of that, you re you, you're not going to have the same attrition problems that the athlete's going to have an idea of your culture and the systems that you use day one when they come onto the job. Like, so that, that's the opportunity. That's a long term opportunity. That's a, that's a built to last type of strategy that game plan can offer.

Max Wessell:

Yeah. And to, to touch upon that a little further. So, you know, you're hiring someone directly out of college for an entry level position. There's a huge risk associated with it. You know, the why athletes is usually an athlete. You're, you're diminishing some of that risk because, you know, an athlete, you know, had some level of discipline in college. So you have that, that, you know, just added factor of someone being a student athlete. And then like Ryan said, you can take a student athlete and pre-train him, you know, that combination, you have an entry level employee, unlike any other candidate that, that you're going to find in the market

Ryan Drummond:

And then the employer branding aspect of it. Right. So Pete represent integrity, square, imagine the integrity square badge, you know, they, they have now received that. That is something on their res that's in their profile. And they're ready to do, you know, health investment research.

Pete Moore:

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, they, they, the reference a gallon here, but you know, we should have like a halo certified badge, you know, as part of this curriculum here. And you, I think focusing on the software side could be really interesting as well, which are all backed by, you know, big VC investments. And they obviously want to bring in that town pool. The other thing, just to, for a lot of the franchise wars that are listening to this podcast, if you want to put up a hundred, 200 new locations, you know, a lot of it is not based on lease availability. It's not based on construction costs is based on people and how we're going to staff it. So I think what we're going to be in position to do here with game plan is really make sure that you've got the pool of candidates to meet your growth objectives. And I think that's going to be key. So talk a little bit about you know, if I'm an orange theory franchise or and I'm at that level, and I want to provide content to athletes as part of this, you know, journey give us some analogies of what's been done for some of your historical clients that have been starting to put content up there, you know, maybe focus on what they're doing in the financial services market.

Ryan Drummond:

Then do you want to take that on Wells?

Vin McCaffrey:

Yeah. Happy to. So a few years back P we, we fielded a call from a, a friend who Wells Fargo has different sponsorships around the country with college athletics departments. Part of the sponsorships were that they would provide financial literacy to student athletes, but they would do that in person. So the local branch banker would go down to campus and talk with the student athletes about financial literacy, all of a sudden one day student athletes stop coming. Well, what you realize it's really hard to go to campus and corral folks for a session like that. Albeit really, really, really important stuff. So where we stepped in to partner with Wells was to be able to provide their, their hands on banking, financial education package, to athletics departments. And we saw a skyrocket and we're talking 300, 400% growth in use and thousands and thousands of e-learning courses activated. That was the aha to say, we're on to something here. We can actually align a brand who may even be the expert in that space. Like Wells is for financial literacy directly to the student athlete. That's a good, that's a good business. Duka do well. Was, was valuable there. Yeah.

Pete Moore:

When, when you take a look at you know, the information you have on these athletes and the more and more information you're going to get, the part that I find intriguing is if, you know, I'm an, an area developer of, you know, okay, we'll stick with orange theory year. And I own the state of Texas as an example, you know, I'll able to geo target, right? These are the athletes that are in the area. They've filled out a form somewhere that says after college, I want to live in Austin, or I want to live in San Antonio. I want to be within a 60 mile radius of this location. And I want to work in the halo sector, you know, to be able to kind of funnel down and not have to go on indeed or LinkedIn or Craigslist, or what have you one filter through a thousand resumes, but also get to the point where you got halo badges on these people, you know, is this kind of like the next evolution of recruiting and targeting that, you know, I've put in my book of, you know, where do you source your talent? And, you know, you going to be able

to game plan and say, all right, these 25 seniors are graduating in Texas that, you know, all want to work in in Austin. You know, you just gave me a great, you know, use of my recruiting and, and interview schedule. How do you think about that going forward?

Vin McCaffrey:

Yeah. What you just described is, is effectively our model. There's a hell of a big difference between an 18 year old student athlete coming to campus and a 22 year old ready to leave campus. And so allowing us to be able to engage the athlete through that entire journey doesn't mean they're just coming in to, to, to look when they're looking for a job, we're introducing brands to that student athlete when they're coming on campus. Now it's not saying here's here, let's go work. Now, it's just introducing, what do these organizations do? What does orange theory do? What industry is it? What type of career opportunities are there by the time that's a sophomore or juniors to play, right? Like at that point in time, I've heard about it for the last two, three years. This is an internship opportunity. They've prospectively participated in. It's a full-time gig.

Vin McCaffrey:

They've learned about the industry. They may even been badged up for the industry. They're ready to make that transition. They what's unique on game plan as compared to some of those organizations. You just mentioned, Pete, like the Indeed's is we see the athlete all the way through and they have to be in our platform because the compliance education and more so now we're marrying things that are required forms of education with the good stuff. You learn education around the employer brand and the opportunities all the way through their journey. And we think there's really goodness there. So is that, is that the evolution of recruiting? We think so, you know, a lot of folks will call that employer brand growth. I that's what we're absolutely dialed in on.

Pete Moore:

Yeah. So Ryan, when you look at some of the events coming up, what your key initiatives are, you know, over the next several quarters, can you talk about the U S C a H and some of the other events where, you know, this is going to be launched now is game plan initiatives and, and what you hope to do there and, and what types of brands you're looking to have affiliate with them.

Ryan Drummond:

Yeah. You know, getting back to like that, that beacon of light game plan has an insight section with inside game plan, where this allows certain groups that are experts leaders in their fields to share information. SCA is one of those organizations. So that's athletics, healthcare administrator, administrator association, and we're hosting their annual symposium. So think every college athletic department has to have an athletic healthcare administrator, the and this, this organization really started to form during COVID. How, how are we handling this with our students? And it has now grown. So on June ninth and 10th, we're hosting their virtual symposium, this a great opportunity for any one of those, you know product companies maybe that are inside an athletic training department that maybe want to get in front of 500 college athletic healthcare administrators to get in front of them. So we, we offer a lot of sponsorship opportunities, and this is where they're going to have a number of speakers panelists going through those two.

Pete Moore:

Yeah. So the evolution of the, of the halo sector you know, if we were talking about this 10 years ago, there was, there was a limited amount of private equity and, and venture capital in the sector, you know, fast forward today, we've got planet fitness, lifetime fitness, ever, commerce, F 45 beach body. All these are companies, then you've got at least a hundred private equity firms invested in bricks and mortar, you know, area developers. And they view recruiting is not an expense. They review, they view it out as an investment. Every time we go out the deal, you know, they want to see the financials obviously, but then their next question is how's the team, you know, what, what is that comprised of? So as you guys' kind of look at what fortune 100 companies are doing on your platform, you know, talk a little bit about best practices that you're being able either to develop or lead these fortune 100 companies too, and then be able to say, Hey, look, what here's what these guys are doing now, I'm actually going to let you kind of do the same thing.

Ryan Drummond:

Want to take that in, or yep. You know, I, I think it comes down to, you know, position yourself as an industry leader through teaching, right. And, and, and what, what we have here is the database to do that. So if you're teaching as a thought leader, our team can help you do that. We could help create that content with you. But we could position it in a way, so that it's part of the journey, right? And so that we're, we're piecemealing this out to the athlete at the right time of their career at the right season. So they're not in season doing this. And ultimately, like I said before, this is going to help them understand your culture, understand, you know, for instance, what we're looking at cryptocurrency right now, now the, the industry leaders that we're talking to, they're going to be teaching cryptocurrency concepts, but they're going to be doing that through the lens of their platforms, through their blockchains and through their tokens. So what is, is the value then of building that lifetime adoption through the first time learning about it? Right. So I, I think that's really the power and, and the advice to these brands is what are you doing to kind of better the next generation through education? Are you delivering it correctly? And if not, we could help you do that at

Pete Moore:

Yeah. I mean, if you, if you think about, you know, Microsoft strategy back in the day, it's like our, every high school student, you know, gets free Microsoft office. And then when you know, when you grew up, it's like, well, I'm not learning any other platforms. Like, this is what I do. Like the user interface today is pretty much the same user of face I had before. And it's, there, there is no switching costs because I'm not switching. You know, so game plan kind of becoming a defacto platform here, you know, it, it, it, it will be how people learn about the, the journey that they want to go on. And quite frankly, I mean, all of us have been, and you guys are better athletes than I were in your, in your specific sport. You know, I was all around athlete, but I wasn't as good as you guys in your specifics.

Pete Moore:

But, but having said that, you know, we didn't really have a career journey. Like we got a co we went to a couple of job fairs and, you know, if there wasn't a long line, you know, I waited to talk to the recruiter or people go on and then they realized a couple years later, they didn't really know what the job entail. So, you know, I feel like what you guys are doing is, you know, utopian from the standpoint of actually putting people in the right teams, you know, after they graduate from their, their current team you know, which hopefully increases retention because people actually know what the job is and not, you know, reactive where people are changing jobs, you know, every 20 of months, and looking at resumes of like the, you know, do you know what you want to be when you grow up?

Pete Moore:

You know? So I think that's great, but back to max for a minute here, just give a little background on, you know, guys been around for 14 years as, as been mentioned you know, you, you're, you're backed by you know, strong capital. You've got big SA revenue coming in now obviously, you know, deploying on several different flanks. So, you know, partnering up with game plan, you're partner up with a very solid company and, and a strong team, you know, gives some background here that, you know, this is you're the authority on this.

Max Wessell:

Yeah. So basically to make a long story short, I found an index athlete, which was as has been found a game plan, was the idea of being kind of a job board for student athletes. We quickly realized we need that student athlete engagement, and we need to engage 'em through the whole journey. Like Ryan said, being transactional in this employment space for student athletes is, is not the right approach. So we approach game plan from because game plan was the leader in student athlete engagement across their entire journey. In that process, we actually next athlete and game plan were up until we reached out mostly bootstrapped driven by organic growth. When we went and through the NX athlete game plan merger, we took on capital from the w three family office, which I am the COO of. And after the merger, we used that growth capital and the kind of student athlete and engagement that game plan has had to really drive the employer and brand side of the business, which led us to the acquisition of the athlete book.

Max Wessell:

So really it's, it's, it's a huge strategic initiative for us. We see this, this side of the business as probably the most exciting side of the business from both the standpoint of helping us accomplish our mission and helping student athletes have a better journey through college athletics and helping them land, where they're going to be valued. And from, from a business perspective, you know, there's obviously great revenue to be had on the, on the employer side of things because there's, there's huge need for, for good talent right now. And we believe we, we offer a very niche solution, a very unique solution that isn't offered by anyone else, if you want to hire student athletes and do it successfully.

Pete Moore:

That's great. Well, we're, we're very small investors and stakeholders and, and game plan, and we're excited to contribute everything we can. This is somewhat of a combination of everything we've been thinking about and want to make sure that the industry does. So we're excited that this transaction got done. We're excited. Ryan's got the support to affect what needs to be done and that you guys are you know, aligned at the hip here to make this a reality. We see this as a huge opportunity, really, nobody's doing this in the halo sector and you know, it makes complete sense to us. We want to I'll drive this. So as in closing here thank you guys for getting the deal done. Thanks for continuing to include us in, in all these discussions strategically and making sure that, you know, we're on top of all the key accounts.

Pete Moore:

I think this podcast is going to do a lot to bring some inbound in and the show notes, there'll be Ryan's contact information and cell phone number. I encourage everybody in the sector to really focus on this, cuz it's going to change the quality of your team. It's going to allow you to recruit much more effectively and efficiently and you know, the best teams win. So think about that. As you're thinking about your recruiting, the types of people you want discipline to grit, hard work and you know, it's wins and losses

here, and this is all about winning. So thank you guys for getting on here, look forward to working with you. And everybody now knows who game plan is. And we look forward to seeing you guys at the trade shows and helping us out on halo academy and making sure we get as many people jobs as deserve to be in the sector. So thanks for your work. Thanks for having us. Thank you.