



**Complete Transcript: HALO Talks with Alessandro Biggi & Francesco Brchetti  
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Pete Moore ([00:03](#)):

I want to do a quick commercial here for our friends at DCO. That is D a X K O owners of club automation, CSI spectrum Motionsoft BFP. Next, these software platforms go beyond the current club software and provide best in breed solutions to the halo sector. They wake up every day. They're thinking about your fitness community. They're trying to enhance your member experiences, the facility, easy to use software for the staff. If you're looking to change your software, if you're looking to get ahead, if you're looking to get to the next level in the halo sector and win, do me a favor. Go to <https://info.clubautomation.com/theexperience> that is forward slash theexperience. Pete Moore PT Mo checking out. And now back to your regularly scheduled podcast.

Pete Moore ([01:05](#)):

This is Pete Moore on halo talks NYC. On this episode, we are going to talk about healthy fats, healthy salads, and avocado toast. Welcome to the show Alessandro in Francesco from avocado. Welcome.

Speaker 3 ([01:24](#)):

Thank you. Thank you very much. We're excited to be here.

Pete Moore ([01:27](#)):

Thank you. Awesome. So you guys are based in New York delivering food to all of us new Yorkers through the pandemic. So I just want to say thank you. Why don't you talk about, you know, starting a restaurant in New York city and your backgrounds that maybe weren't necessarily sequentially designed to be restaurant tours, but here you are, and you're on your fourth location.

Speaker 3 ([01:53](#)):

Yes, definitely very unusual sort of path to hospitality <laugh> and restaurants cuz Francisco and I actually met in college in Milan and we started define us together. And I actually started my career in finance then did a bit of consulting and specialized ultimately in tech and Francisco also worked in tech and business intelligence for, for a few years. But you know, I would say we both shared the same passion for, for restaurants and hospitality. And so when I was living in Seattle, working at a different company, I had this idea for a for <inaudible> because I realized that it was really hard to find healthy

food. It was also really satisfying, you know, they would not, would not leave me hungry, not leave me, you know, hunting for like unhealthy snack then would keep, you know, sort of like full food for the day.

Speaker 3 ([02:45](#)):

And so I started playing with the, the idea of creating really delicious avocado based salads and, and dishes and shared that with Francesco who was living in Mexico. So in the country of avocados. And so together, we decided to, to get started with the, this concept because ultimately realized that there is a, a segment potentially that what we like to call healthy comfort where, you know, you, you are able to serve food that is really good for you, but it's also a reach with this type of healthy fats, which could be, you know, avocado could be better cheese can be almonds like goat, cheese, and so on and so forth. They make the meal extremely satisfying enjoyable and leave you food for the day. So our, our own idea is that if we're able to get people, you know, more people to try and it better because it's a little more comfort, then we'll get more communities, treat better food overall.

Pete Moore ([03:40](#)):

Gotcha. And France could talk about you know, your background and why you agreed to partner with Alessandro.

Speaker 4 ([03:48](#)):

Yeah, sure. So we, as and mentioned, we both studied financing college and after I graduated, I moved to Mexico to work in tech slash eCommerce. I was doing all the business intelligence and data for this German company called rocket internet. And I spent several earlier there, and of course I started to an avocado every single day because as you may know, your Papa avocado is not big, it's starting to become bigger, bigger now, but like back in 2013, there was really any, any avocado. And when I came to Mexico, I started to eat pretty much every day in the morning with smoothies. And then at lunch is like the, the butter for, for the French, the avocados for the next. And when Alessandro called me and came up with this idea of starting a, an avocado based Italy in, in the us, I thought, I mean, this is perfect. You know, like I'm eating a avocado every day. I cook it in a thousand different ways and it's really something that I enjoy eating and I see every person loves the avocado and it's really hard to find something that's like healthy and place at the same time.

Pete Moore ([05:06](#)):

Got it. So you, you guys funded the first two locations on your own. Some entrepreneurs, you know, start businesses and go to friends and family. You know, obviously that adds another layer of stress you know, to basically do an experiment. So did you do a lot of market research? Did you have a consultant? Did you kind of know all right. For this type of concept to work, here's why my rent needs to be as a percentage of revenue kind of talk through what you already knew and then what types of people you spoke to. And the reason why, you know, maybe you said, Hey, this is our first thing. Like we can go get money from other people, but let's just test this on our own. Cause I think that's a, a decision point that entrepreneurs need to say, let me go all in and, and do the experiment myself. And then if we want to grow it, you know, people can see it.

Speaker 3 ([06:03](#)):

Yeah. So I, I, I think not having the restaurant background actually helped us. We didn't know what we were doing in a certain way <laugh> and so we could actually apply a lot of knowledge from the other fields, you know, that we, we worked with before. And so our initial idea was to create an MVP, which is

a very usually tech word for a minimum viable product of a restaurant. And so we, you know, we opened the Instagram account and started reposting pictures of a, you know, recipes like really healthy, delicious recipes using avocados and, you know, saying avocado world first avocado bar coming soon to New York, even though the sun was very indefinite, cuz I was in Seattle, Francisco was in Mexico city. So it was like, you know, we'll, we'll eventually make it there, but that really helped us sort of like start to create to start creating community around the idea.

Speaker 3 ([06:53](#)):

Cause people got really excited. We started getting some you know, organic press out of it. And ultimately we realized people were really into the idea. And so we, you know, we got more and more convinced about the fact that there was an opportunity to build a concept like this and that we could have a positive impact on a, on, on the community that we were targeting. And finally, you know, we spoke to a lot of food entrepreneurs, especially in New York that sort of does remember in the right place. So as you mentioned, like, you know, the ratio, the, the sales and you know, where to find the first hires and so forth. And then again, I think a lot of, a lot of it was also our ignorance in a way <laugh> in the field that sort of like made everything possible. Like it wasn't when you don't know something, you just do it in a way, you know? And now I think that we know a lot more, it's actually harder <laugh>

Pete Moore ([07:50](#)):

Now, now for all of our listeners, you know, avocado is a fruit, not a vegetable. Have you had any you know, contentious you know, patrons thing, you know, we need to move this into the, you know, different to the vegetable group and, and, and then I'll let you put it on any salad

Speaker 3 ([08:09](#)):

<Laugh> yes, absolutely. As say just it's smoothies, it's sandwiches, we have these delicious B. But yeah, I just through that, you know, the end of the day are solid and bolts because we wanted to build the business from the beginning that would enable us to create a habit, you know, in the mind of people. So like what can we, you know, fuel your days with when you, when you only have 30 minutes break for lunch and you want to keep going the rest of the day, feeling good for satisfied and, and without falling asleep, because you hate too heavily <laugh> and so on. And so that's how, that's how we developed the menu, as well as a principle

Pete Moore ([08:47](#)):

Who came up with the actual ingredients, the menus, you know, who was your first chef is one of you guys?

Speaker 4 ([08:57](#)):

So we, we started a three partner and the third partner is the one that help us shape the initial menu. His name is Al Alberto and he's based in Italy, but he comes from time to times to, to New York, to, to help us like boost the manual with like new ideas. It's actually here this week. But we started with the manual that was very limited in a way because we wanted to try out and test more. And as we evolved with the, with the offering, we moved definitely more toward solids involved because ultimately that's what ourself would eat like four out of five days. And we see that this is the trend that people want because S ball are very much a Monday to, to Friday item that every person need.

Speaker 4 ([09:54](#)):

And then during the weekend, we try to like have different offering to play a bit more. So we have these branch bands that we just launched. We are working on more branch targeted manage because the weekend you, you want to indulge a bit more. So that's, <laugh>, that's kind of the, of the trajectory that we are taking right now. And of course, every season we includes seasonal ingredients. Right now we have Aspar on the Mac that is like hip seasonal in New York. It just available for like a couple of months. So we, we pay a lot of attentions on what's available, what's available nearby. And what's the being ingredients be the blessed table.

Pete Moore ([10:35](#)):

When you started the business, if both of you guys basically live in the store,

Speaker 4 ([10:40](#)):

<Laugh>, <laugh>

Speaker 3 ([10:43](#)):

Soon up to this day.

Speaker 4 ([10:44](#)):

Yeah, <laugh> I think the first year was probably 14 hours a day, seven days a week for like 360 days. That's, that's a fact. But as we, as we developed the team and we developed the businesses was still a lot of work, but less and less work in the, in the physical store.

Pete Moore ([11:04](#)):

So lemme ask you a question, you know, as the pandemic hit, you're basically relying on delivery. You guys seem like pretty personable guys, you know, people come in, you want 'em to have a good meal, but you also want 'em to have a good experience. So how did you kind of feel about we're creating this, this, this place, this ambiance you're going eat here, you're going to enjoy it. And now it's like, alright, basically in the delivery and supply, you know, we'll make it look nice, but it's going on a bike in the back of some guy's you know box and he's going to just tear up the streets and try and get it there, you know, in some format that might not have it turned upside down.

Speaker 3 ([11:45](#)):

Yeah, well, that's I think first of all, is a design project when it comes to ensuring that the manual travels well, so that's one of the reasons why we decided to really focus on salads and bolts is because those type of dishes travel really well. And we also serve them with the dressing on the side to avoid, you know, the salads to get soggy. And so that you can decide your, your amount of dressing. And then it's about really trying to transform that hospitality feeling to, to the delivery experience. So we add the, you know, handwritten notes our, our like customer seekers, we have funny napkins with some, you know, sentences on top. So we try to bring the, the brand to your home in a way while first of all, ensuring that the quality of the food is the best one.

Speaker 3 ([12:33](#)):

You know, that can be that you can receive, even though you, you might be eating it like 45 minutes after you order it, you know, or 45 minutes after you, you know, the food is being prepared because maybe it takes quite some time to do and so I think it first starts with engineering the menu in the right

way. And Francisco was currently, you know, working on the culinary side sort of did a lot of tests <laugh> in that, in that sense. So we started by sending it to all our friends, all around town you know, and get their feedback. And then once that's there, then it's about really moving that personal experience to the, to, to your place. So adding, you know, personalized notes. And then one thing that we do is we, we send an automated feedback, SMS which is, you know, sent by me where I ask the, like, how, how did I enjoy the food? And I recommend a couple of songs for them to enjoy the food read and so, so forth. So there's a little, like a lot of little things than I can be developed. And I think there's a lot more, you know, potentially that we can, we can play with. But yeah, I think it's been delivery is definitely like a big part of, of the business right now. And it's going to keep, you know, drawing. So definitely it's about us to embrace it.

Pete Moore ([13:46](#)):

Yeah. Now, as you think about companies bringing employees back to work you know, having a pizza party, you know, that might be you know, a thing in the past. So how have you kind of angled your way either on the catering side or, you know, group meetings and, and said, look, you know, bring us in here. And it's not just great food, but you're also kind of making a statement that, you know, we're a healthy living company or a halo company.

Speaker 3 ([14:14](#)):

Yep. <Laugh> absolutely, I think catering and, you know, we've been working a lot particularly in the last couple of months on, on the catering, because as you said, a lot of people are actually incentivizing, you know, their work is to come back to work by offering free, delicious meals. And so, you know, we, we kept developing the, the offering that direction. We have an offering the, you know, people, companies love, which is the build your own which could be either build your own salads. So like, you know, we serve big trays of our premium vegetables and proteins, you know, so, so people can assemble their own bowls and salads straight in the office or the build your own avocado toast as well, which is a breakfast eat. So, you know, we provide the bread avocado mesh and then a lot of fun topics on top. So it's, it's actually a new type of offering that we haven't seen, you know in, in in other restaurants. So I think the, the way I see that definitely a benefit, huge benefit, you know, when, when companies are providing a healthy meal, you know, to their, to their employees and the feedback so far that we got is great. And that's why, you know, we have a, a really high return rate of guests, both for, in ordering and for caterings.

Pete Moore ([15:26](#)):

So you guys are both finance guys. So you put this concept into an Excel model. You make a prototype, you say, we're going to do eight stores a year. Here's the prototype, multiply it through, here's my IRR on this deal. When did it hit you? Like, wow, this Excel model's really easy and actually executed on it is hard work.

Speaker 3 ([15:49](#)):

<Laugh> day one, they want zero.

Pete Moore ([15:52](#)):

They want, yeah,

Speaker 4 ([15:53](#)):

The first real estate space that we, we saw in in the city when we asked for additional information we called the broker. And the first question was are you guys American? No. Do you guys have a green card, a visa, no tides probably going to take between 12 and 18 months security deposit. So if you are looking at something with the rental 25 K a month that's your starting budget just for the deposit. So it was it was pretty clear that we needed to find an alternative plan. And we, we started to kind of explore the, the full city. And that's how we ended up with the first story here in university city in south park where we, we founded very collaborative landlord, the Dell parts, and like really believed in us and the project. And that was what, like really got us to, to start on the, probably the best possible way we could have started with the project.

Pete Moore ([17:01](#)):

So as you look at, you know, having four locations, kind of living through the pandemic you guys are both finance guys, so I'm assuming you've been not say tainted, but that success means big things, you know, and, and, and a lot of growth. And I sold my company for X, you know, but I had a miserable life in the process. So how do you guys think about defining success? What kind of milestones do you have? You, you guys grew up in other countries that have different, you know, cultures, or maybe life more in general, you know, versus the average American, you know, take a month off. Like nobody does that. Right. But you should. So how do you think about defining success as a number of locations? Is it brand equity? Is it wake it up every day and have opportunity and not stress? So how do you guys think about it?

Speaker 3 ([17:59](#)):

Yeah, I mean, I think and Francisco add whatever you, you feel, but like we discussed about, about that a bit. I think it's a mix of a lot of, a lot of elements. Like one thing that we're extreme proud of is the amount of, you know, people that we employ and the jobs that we created. I think this is for me, it's, it's the, the best feel like, you know, when, when they say like people, you know, work at and I get to say like, yeah, no, it's 30, 35. Like, wow. I feel like it's great because we're providing you know, we're trying to, to become the employer of choice in hospitality industry, which is extremely challenging because you know, you have to really rethink the way you, you build this, this job because hospitality is really, really hard.

Speaker 3 ([18:42](#)):

Working hospital is really hard, like for a, for, as a team member, you know, you get to work to work your for day for a very low salary. So you have to really try to build the experience in a way that is not too heavy, but the salary is fair that you, you then can set the benefits, you know, that that makes sense. And that I really appreciated then. And then of course, that's the base to build an internal growth process that would allow anyone to that that has the wheeling in the mindset to go from team member to GM in a, in a general manager in, in 18 months, something like that. So for me, that's something that really makes me really proud and I made successfully a lot based on, on the people that we do. We hire, we're able to nurture and grow and they can become leaders for, for the future.

Speaker 3 ([19:25](#)):

Of course, this works well only through the, the whole company's growing. So right for then we open more location, more stores, then we, we're going to be able to provide more opportunities and, and so on and so forth. And then I think as a base of that, you know, Francis and I are best friends is college. So ultimately it's true. That is we definitely like each other more when we're in college than now because

working together every day <laugh>, but no, I mean, it's great to work, to work with a friend. I think it's a, it's really sort of big success in a way

Pete Moore ([19:57](#)):

Jessica, you want to apply on any of that or?

Speaker 4 ([20:01](#)):

No. Yeah. I think it was interesting what you were mentioning in the beginning because it is true that the, the work life balance in the us is completely different than what we have we have in Italy and it just came out study a couple of days ago about the, the work life balance ranking. And Italy is always on the top three last year was number 1, 9, 9 0.4 out of 10. And I think sometimes we indulged a bit too much, but at the same times we, we want to bring kind of this aspect of the work life balance in the us mentality. And it's very hard, especially in this industry. That's why we are trying to like come up with idea and like brainstorm or how we can give our management, our team members a bit better balance than most of the, of the other companies. And that's something that we I think we really care it's, it's not an easy answer. It's not a straight answer, but we are doing as much as possible to make sure that we, we can do the best for them.

Pete Moore ([21:09](#)):

That's great. So last question, as this growth continues in the health club industry, we talk about this all the time that if you want to keep your employees and you want to grow them, you got to open up another location, or there's nobody put no way to put this, the assistant manager or the, you know, next head of personal training as you guys have looked at this. I love the fact that you're only in New York and you've got four locations here and you can get to everything. Some entrepreneurs come to us and say, I've opened up two locations in New York, two in San Francisco, two in LA, two in Miami. It's like, you have no idea what those flights and what that you know does to you mentally and physically, obviously it's been deliberate. As you grow, there's usually a, a point where you say, Hey, look, I got to bring in outside investors because you know, I'm not signing, you know, personal guarantees on leases and on debt financing, you know, I've proven it out. And I know that I can scale. So how do you think about that as the next phase and how do you think about, you know, letting someone into the boardroom where, you know, your best friends and now there's some random, you know, guy or girl in the room saying like, Hey, let tell you what I think it's like, okay, let us make you money, but don't, don't get in the middle of our, you know, our friendship and will listen to you. How do you think about giving up some control for reducing the risk?

Speaker 3 ([22:37](#)):

I mean, I think it's you know, if, if we, we approach this business from day one, really with the mental building, a big company, you know, like a lot entrepreneurs do not everybody does that when it comes to restaurants, you know, sometimes you just want to have a restaurant because you choose that as lifestyle shops for us, it was really about like, how do we get as many people as possible around the world, around the, you know, the us first and then eventually around the world to eat better, you know, to eat our food. And then how do we employ the, the highest possible amount of people, you know, to work in, in a good environment. So when you have that mentality, you know you definitely need, you know, that extra capital, you, you need to open your board to someone else.

Speaker 3 ([23:18](#)):

And I, I do think that the defeat, you know, must be also not, not just like from a, from a money perspective, I should be also culture perspective. So you would want to find, you know, a partner that sort of understands as well, what really matters to us like those, those elements that we mentioned about, you know, positive impacting, like communities with, with, with the healthy comfort food, and positive impacting community by providing really good jobs. And I think there's a lot of people out there that would be happy to marry this type of mission and approach. And I think, you know, that's in a way that's very exciting and it's a good opportunity for us. Like, you know, when I think about, about growth, you know, we clearly three green is, is a great company. You know, it's a great example of success of coming.

Speaker 3 ([24:03](#)):

That's having not just a positive impact on you know, on the financial returns of their investors, you know, because they just went public for a \$3 billion valuation, but also on a lot of like <inaudible> communities. And so on the same time through green right now only has 150 locations. If you compare them to the big, like fast food chains, that's absolutely nothing. Like, look at subway, like look at they have like 20,000 locations look at you know, McDonald's like I think they have like 13,000 taco bell, 7,000 and Chipotle, which is, you know, you must say probably the, the healthiest amount, the option, they already have 3000 rest. So, you know, even though solid chains, LD restaurants have been growing fast lately, there's still so much a niche. So there's a huge opportunity. There's a huge like market share to capture because consumers are changing their habits and they're demanding for better food.

Speaker 3 ([24:58](#)):

They're demanding for brands that actually care more about them, about the community they're part of and so on. They, they look for brands that offer that type of delivery food that is made for delivery, not just adapted to delivery in a way. And, and I think that's where it becomes interesting to really create a win-win situation both financially and in terms of responsibility, like of, of what, what we can do. So we would want to bring someone on board for sure. I think as, as next stage and we definitely want to focus more on New York stage one. So we want to B build a critical mass in New York and reach maybe 10 locations in this market so that we can create a stronger network effect and have a, a really good management team that would be able to really control sort of the dynamics of the, of the market. And that would free us also, and enable us to go into the, let's say, close markets, because we wouldn't go to San Francisco connects. We would go probably to Boston, Philadelphia, or Washington DC as a, as a, as an destination for,

Pete Moore ([26:01](#)):

Yeah. I would tell you real estate broker to get a Metro card. And if he gets off the Metro card, the subway lines, you know, he gets electrocuted. They like a dog cart, stay on the me, stay on the subway system. Well look, great work. Getting to where you guys are, wish you continued success. You are officially a halo restaurant tour, boom <laugh> magic state. Thank you. We'll get all the information up on the show notes here and you know, make sure that all of our health club and studio enthusiasts are doing their doing their workout, doing their workout recovery and, you know, loading up on, on salad bars and

Speaker 5 ([26:42](#)):

Avocados. <Laugh> awesome. Great, perfect guys. That's great. Thank you so much for having us. You got thanks a lot. Awesome.

