



Hi, Rob.

Hi! Welcome. Welcome, welcome to my show.

Welcome.

The Rob Reily Cannes Live Lives.

Cannes Lion Live?

Got it! Love it! [MUSIC PLAYING]. My current role is Global Chief Creative Officer of WPP. [MUSIC PLAYING] I always gravitated towards doing things that had some kind of stage or crowd, or whether it was sports, or being in a band, or eventually being a bartender, you're always sort of on stage, you know, in front of people. So, I think I wanted to be a soccer player. I think that was my dream to be a professional soccer player. I was really a good player when I was young, and I've slowly progressed to terrible right now. [MUSIC PLAYING] I don't know, you know, I had been at McCann for seven years, and I loved it, and, did all I wanted to do. And was looking for a new challenge, and somehow, got hooked up with Mark Read. And his ambition, to be the most creative company in the world, was something that I was definitely down for and loved hearing. And frankly, I didn't need to hear too much more. And then, when I started meeting the people that I currently working with, it just felt like the right move.

[MUSIC PLAYING] My first job was at a place called Taylor Gordon and Company, a small agency. And we were probably about six people in New York City, and I was, at the time, a secretary. You know, I was the guy who answered the phones, I would get my boss's shoes fixed, and I would do everything. But we would end up renting office space from companies that had offices to rent, and those companies were usually doing poorly. So, I did work a couple of places where they eventually went out of business. So, it was a great lesson to work hard, because you never know, this great business could fall apart at any point. And yeah, it was my first job. And I would work on my portfolio while I was doing all the work of an assistant.

[MUSIC PLAYING] One of the companies that we rented office space that actually wasn't necessarily doing bad there, an amazing company called Grace and Rothschild, a very famous company in the '90s, and before, and they used to do all the great Range Rover ads. And Roy Grace was there in Diane Rothschild, but Roy Grace was like Elvis Presley for me. So, to be in the same building, even though I didn't work at his companies, I just sat in his offices, to see him every day was super inspiring. And I did get to meet him a couple of times. He actually signed an ad for me. He was very shy. He wasn't, he was very shy about doing it. But he did it because he knew what it meant a lot to me. I still have it.

[MUSIC PLAYING] Someone said early on to follow the work, not the money. And listen, that works for me in particular. I ended up having a fairly big job when I was about 33. And I thought I could do better. I thought I could do better work. So I ended up sort of cutting down my salary significantly, and my title back to copywriter, and I started over, going to Crispin Porter + Bogusky. And I think that's really where my creative career kicked off. I had

all the other skills, maybe, of a good creative person, but I didn't have the body of work I needed, so I started over.

[MUSIC PLAYING] Well, I'm a copywriter by trade, and I still do the writing when need be. I think anybody who's in a kind of job like mine is still a player-coach. I think those days where the CCO just sits and doesn't get their hands dirty are gone. And all the people that I know that are my friends or CCOs are still doing the work. [MUSIC PLAYING] I don't think I'm a name, I just think I'm someone who works hard and tries to do the best by clients and coworkers. But I think, listen, going to CPB was the moment that changed my career, and starting to make the work as a copywriter that got recognition and won Cannes Lions. I didn't win my first Lion until I was like 34 years old.

So I was, I want to say, it was a late bloomer. I had done a lot of good work. But maybe not the kind of work that was iconic, and that's what I wanted to be part of. And I certainly got that opportunity at CPB. So, I think that was, I think when you win your first Lion was maybe where you started to make at least a name for yourself within the agency that you work at, which is an important step. You've got to get the respect of the people who work with you, regardless of the people outside the industry. But you know, what's most important is that your coworkers see your value.

[MUSIC PLAYING] It's hard to get great work done, and that's always the challenge of getting the good assignments, and you know, and turning sometimes these very small or maybe less glamorous assignments into award-winning ideas. So I think that's always been my challenge, is to-- and I think that's what I'm most proud of, that most of the things I've done in my career are for big brands or tough brands that had real results. So I think that's just by nature. I didn't always get the glamorous assignments; I always got more of the ones that no one else wanted to do or work on brands that no one thought could do good work. So I think that was probably the challenge, but also the reason maybe why I have this job.

[MUSIC PLAYING] Burger King, you know, I'm pretty tied to that brand at CPB. You know, it wasn't necessarily a great account or didn't have a great reputation, had gone from agency to agency. And when it came to CPB, people were wondering, why would we take this account? And it's kind of what I always loved working at that company because we didn't shy away from the hard things. And the brand wasn't doing well. But you know, Russ Klein was the Chief Marketing Officer. They had a great marketing department, a lot of great people, but Russ was the leader. And he's a good as good a creative as anybody, you know? And he was such an inspiration and such a great partner. You need a great partner on the client side, or many partners. I think Burger King was the one thing that people thought, you know, whether it was me, or certainly CPB, couldn't actually make it great. And we did, but a lot of the credit should go to Russ Klein and his team.

[MUSIC PLAYING] I thought as a junior, in which I think a lot of juniors feel like, they're never going to crack it or it's just not good enough, you lack the confidence. I think confidence is like the most underrated quality to have as a creative person, the ability to sell your idea, or present your idea, or that your idea is good. I mean, it's all subjective, right? To what one person thinks is interesting or funny. Or you know, powerful the next person might not, right? But as a young person, like you really listen to your bosses. That's why it's important to work for people that you really trust and respect their opinion because they are deciding what work goes to a meeting.

On the flip side, I think it's up to the leaders. Certainly, when it comes to people that aren't necessarily from a background that you're from, is to listen more like and let people explain

their ideas a little bit more. Often, we're so quick, "No, no, no, no, no." I think we have to be better listeners going forward. I think the world is changing. And I think our workforce has to change. And part of that is giving more time for people to really explain what they mean.

[MUSIC PLAYING] Well, listen, part of the reason I joined WPP was because of the scale. And you know, CPB was one stage and one size of a company and had a certain amount of impact, and at Cannes, certainly is a big network and it has an impact and has had an impact. But being a partner to Mark at the holding company level and having all these great companies that you don't necessarily have authority over, but you have influence over and can help. That was what attracted me. So, on a personal level, could I impact as many people as possible within my company? You know, there's 100,000 people here. How could I help them? And then, on a corporate level, when you have this many big brands and many important brands, to be able to maybe help them impact the world in a positive way. So that's why I joined. That's what I think the future is. I think brands are so so incredibly important to helping people. And it doesn't mean saving the world. It can make people laugh, is helping people. But I do think brands are going to play an even more important role in people's lives. So I'm excited to be part of the largest company that has the most impact.

[MUSIC PLAYING] I talk a lot about Alex Bugosky. He was obviously a great mentor to me and a teacher. Hard, but you know I learned a lot. He said, the first thing he said when I first started, he said, "Be honest." "Don't lie to your coworkers. Don't lie to clients. Don't lie to anybody. It'll always come back to get you." So, I've always had that in the back of my head, which is, just be honest. Be honest with the client, what it's going to cost, or the implications. Be honest with your coworkers, what you think about the work. It always will serve you well. It's not always the easiest decision. But it's the best decision.

And I think one of the other ones was, from my executive coach. I did coaching back then, I don't know, maybe eight or nine years ago, and it changed my life. I'm what they call, you know, I was a hard person to work for, probably, at CPB. It was a tough, awesome place, but we were tough. And I had to go to coaching to be a better leader. And you don't need to be an asshole to get great work out of people. I think the business has evolved where those people will not be successful. I think you have to try to be inspiring and supportive, but not soft on the work. You have to be really hard on the work. But you have to be supportive and nice to the people. I don't think fear is a motivator anymore. A friend of mine said that years ago. I always remember that phrase. I think that's a great piece of advice be hard on the work and good on the people.

[MUSIC PLAYING]