

Michael Shaw Transcript

Michael: My leadership style is to give people the space and platform where they can have courage. And I want to demonstrate that to them. And then there's a type of infectious energy, right? You see it. Every great leader, there's an infectious energy that not only makes you feel better, but also it's actually going to propel me too.

Matt: To thrive in a rapidly evolving landscape. Brands must move at an ever increasing pace. I'm Matt Britton, founder and CEO of Suzy. Join me and key industry leaders as we dive deep into the shifting consumer trends within their industry, why it matters now and how you can keep up. Welcome to the Speed Of Culture. Today we're going to be speaking with executive business brand leader Michael Shaw. Michael currently serves as the vice president of brand marketing with the Miami Dolphins, Hard Rock Stadium and his properties, including the Miami Open and F1Crypto.com Grand Miami Prix. Michael's also an experienced keynote speaker, ad week and brand week executive mentor, as well as global Institute of Sport Advisory board member. Michael, so great to see you today here in Miami.

Michael: Thank you so much for having me. Welcome to Miami.

Matt: Oh, thank you. Love it here. Love it here a little bit more, maybe in February and March.

Michael: Most New Yorkers do.

Matt: Exactly. But it's all good seeing the palm trees and being down here. I have to tell you, you know, I'm a huge sports fan and there were many times growing up when I thought I wanted to be in the industry. I knew pretty early on it wouldn't be as a professional athlete. But as you know, there's lots of other roles in the sports industry. When did you know that you wanted to be in the world of sports in your career?

Michael: Yeah. So I had that dream that many young folks do. Like, I want to do this as a professional. That dream.

Matt: What sport?

Michael: Primarily, I was playing basketball and baseball as a point guard. Played center field and pitched in baseball. Left handed. So there's only a couple of positions you can play in baseball. First base pitcher, you play outfield. And so one of the first reality moments for me was the 14 year old AAU National Championship tournament. Quentin Richardson, there's a team from Chicago. Let's just say that they're starting five. All of them played, made it to the NBA. And I had at 14 years old, had the realization that these guys are six, six, six, seven, six, eight. I think I've leveled out.

Matt: And so reality means maybe I won't be a professional athlete.

Michael: Maybe I won't be a professional athlete right? But I love the game so much and have an opportunity to play kind of on a walk on basis. Very early in my career, I went to Middle Tennessee State. Very brief cup of coffee to play. And then I realized I'm more interested in the sport, the business of sport. I was interested in contracts. I was interested in media rights. I was interested in

how the inner workings of the sport went. So I started to transition by the end of college. But certainly about 14 years old, I realized that maybe the NBA is not the thing. But there are certainly some opportunities to get in the business of sport.

Matt: Yeah. And after you left college, I mean, you worked for five years at the preeminent place that anybody who wants to get into the sports industry would want to work at, which is ESPN. Yeah. So tell us about your experience of working at ESPN and what some of your key takeaways were from during your time there.

Michael: I often tell people who have not been to Bristol.

Matt: Did you live in Bristol?

Michael: I did. I was in a very small town right by Bristol called Southington. And you have to be from Connecticut to know where that is. But I would say that I often tell people who went to a college like University of Michigan in Ann Arbor or Tallahassee with Florida State or Gainesville, it is a college town. But everybody that's not the college, it's that everybody who lives there works at ESPN. So it's very much the town is run by those who have a collegiate atmosphere, which for somebody coming out of college is a lot of fun. There's really competitive basketball leagues and there's a lot of great athletes that work there. So from a learning standpoint, I don't know if there was one for a few reasons. One, understanding the business of sport, understanding media rights negotiations, understanding most of all corporate relationships. I will tell you that 90 percent of the people that I consider friends, I met them when I started ESPN. And so most of the contacts that I have that are in the industry, I met them in

Matt: They've gone to different places.

Michael: They've gone to different places. They've gone, you know, they've gone to social media companies, they've gone to investment firms, but they haven't started there. And so it was a really great training ground, but also relationship building and an opportunity to really learn the industry. And it's valuable years, I think, were so important to the foundation of my career.

Matt: Yeah. So what makes you decide to leave a place like ESPN? Because some people obviously never leave. I know that living in Southington probably wasn't your dream. So maybe that's something to do with it. Certainly not as cool as Miami. But what made you decide to leave?

Michael: There are opportunities. And this is one of those learning lessons there. Sometimes when you're in a large organization where sometimes you gotta go somewhere else to grow and perhaps whether it's a compensation opportunity or whether it's just a larger title. And so there was an opportunity to grow a company called Silver Chalice run by Jerry Reinsdorf, who owns the White Sox. He's starting. He was building digital media platform companies. He was hiring individuals. And there was certainly a wave of ESPN that was certainly starting to go digital. Yeah. So ESPN3 was in the works. They were called ESPN 360 at the time. And so there was a real opportunity I saw to have a bigger role and certainly have another, a bigger title and have some more responsibility to take a lot of what I learned. And quite frankly, an opportunity to advance a bit without some of the corporate structure that comes with the red tape at a huge, huge corporation. But I saw that as a great opportunity. And again, using those same relationships, the person that hired me also worked at ESPN. So that's where you start to see those relationships come into play.

Matt: And then from there, you went to Groupon. So I imagine you lived in Chicago for a little bit.

Michael: I was not, my wife was not the biggest fan of it, but I was commuting between New York and Chicago throughout the week. And so I went from Connecticut just South to the city. And so my wife and I were living in Harlem and we did probably for almost 10 years, completely from Connecticut to New York city. And I was commuting on Monday leaving to go work in Chicago. And then I'd come back on a Thursday. So it's almost like a traditional consultant kind of like where you like to leave on Monday, work through Thursday, and then I'm back home for the weekend. And so what happened is I had an opportunity, a friend of mine named Brandon Gale. He's COO for the San Antonio Spurs. At the time he was in the role as the head of sports at Groupon. He had an opportunity and he called and he basically asked, hey, there's I'm leaving and there's an opportunity. Would you be interested in this role? This role is interesting because Groupon at the time, I would say Groupon was Amazon before Amazon. Right. And so Groupon.

Matt: A lot of people don't realize that.

Michael: Yeah. And so Groupon at the time was still a rocket ship. And so they had created a live sports vertical where they were helping the industries of sport, live entertainment and theater and arts to help sell those last minute distress tickets so they don't go unsold. And then Groupon had an audience that was untapped.

Matt: Once tickets don't go sold to a game, that's it.

Michael: That's exactly right. And so I had an opportunity there. So if you think about ESPN, it was really my introduction to sports, but learning the media business and digital and digital. Right. And then I moved and transferred that into Groupon was really about ticketing. Right. It was about ticketing and business development. So as I'm thinking about my career, ultimately, one day thinking, I think I want to be CEO or I think I'll be a general manager. I just saw a few opportunities to continue to add to the toolbox of skill sets to say, now there's an opportunity to learn about ticketing, learn about the revenue sharing, learn how teams divide up their revenue and where there can be some growth. And Groupon was a great opportunity to really build on the team side because I'm working directly with either the team presidents or the revenue officers. They're making the decisions about how to divvy up their tickets, what they're willing to relinquish to Groupon and we can help them sell. So it's a great opportunity.

Matt: Yeah. And, you know, it strikes me that you are very intentional about your career decisions, which I think a lot of people might just chase the money and money is obviously always a part of it. But you're also trying to piece together different types of experience to kind of put together the piece of the puzzle that will be who you eventually wanna be. And I think having these different experiences, meeting different people, understanding how these companies work allow you to be diversified in your skillset.

Michael: There's a few different approaches, right? I think we all know there's certain individuals, you've seen them, they've been lifers at companies, they've been at a company for 10, 15, 20 years, and there's advancement there. And I think, God bless them, there's an opportunity and that's a path. I didn't see that as my path. I thought my path would have to be a diversity of skillset. I can't take credit, I gotta give God credit because sometimes I landed places and I wasn't sure how I got there, but there was a really great opportunity for me to learn a different skill set. So it went from learning media, to learning ticketing, to business development, to leading sales teams, and then

ultimately getting to brand and brand development and leadership. Well, then you look back at your toolbox, you're like, well, I think I have a nice skill set that can offer up to an organization a really inclusive leadership style that I can help a lot of people.

Matt: Yeah, and you also had to be willing to bounce around. So you were in Connecticut, you went to Chicago, and then you ended up in Miami, where you still are today, but first working for the Miami Marlins, which I still look at as an expansion team, even though they've been around for quite a long time. But I remember when they were sort of like a new school expansion team. What was your experience like working for the Miami Marlins and being part of a major league baseball team?

Michael: Yeah, it was an incredible experience. A lot of learning lessons, a lot of incredible moments. One being, I had the opportunity. So I was hired, Derek Jeter had just-

Matt: I was just about to ask you about Derek Jeter.

Michael: Yeah, so Derek had just purchased the team in October 2017. And so he was very new into ownership. He was the CEO, and it was really a great opportunity. So I got hired in May, so it was just months later, after the beginning of 2018. And the opportunity really was, it was his vision of what he thought the Marlins could be. It wasn't about what they were. We knew coming in, and I knew when I took my job, there was a full kind of rebuild that needed to happen. One, on the field. Yeah. That wasn't my job.

Matt: Because they were very successful for a while, and then they kind of disbanded. That's right.

Michael: And one of the big challenges that I quickly discovered is that there was a lot of broken trust between the fan base and between the organization, for whatever reasons. And so those reasons were that the teams had been broken up, and even the teams that were successful, then they got broken up after they were successful. And so there was a lot of fractured trust in the community, a lot of fractured trust with the fan base. And it seemed to be one of Derrick's missions to really try to build trust, meaning, hey, if I say I'm gonna do a thing, then we're gonna do that thing, right? And so, I think he certainly is a man of integrity. And so he kind of brought me on as part of the leadership team, I saw an opportunity, it was a new vision. So it wasn't about what the Marlins were. I really believe in the vision of Derrick and what they could be. And I think for almost five years, it really was an exciting opportunity to really help start to build something and really build trust with the fan base. And the success wasn't evident immediately on the field. I think on the business side, there were some really, really huge wins and something we're really proud of.

Matt: And how hard is that when you're getting success on the business side of things, but you're not the coach, you can't control how the players perform on the field. Is it hard to feel like you're successful in working for a sports team when maybe the sports team itself isn't at the top of the standings?

Michael: It can be very frustrating, man. Right, like candidly.

Matt: Because winning solves all, right?

Michael: Well, you know, like I made the joke on my panel on Monday on stage is that marketing is a lot better when the team's winning, right? It just works that way, right? And so you could have some

of the best ideas and some of the greatest strategies, but if the on-field product is not up to par, we're struggling. There's always so much you can do.

Matt: Somebody could get injured. It's a lot, you know.

Michael: That's exactly right. It's exactly right. Like, so one, there's a few lessons to learn from that. So one of them is, is one, we control the controllables. The controllables, we're not out playing the game, right? So win and lose, we won't make excuses. Whatever the team does, the team does. But what we should be doing is preparing for when the team is more successful, right? And so we won't use records as an excuse of why we can't do our job. We know what the challenges were. And so how do we work around them? What is creative? And in some instances, Matt, it forces you to try to be more creative, right? Like you have to be more creative, even more grassroots, and think like, what are the things that I can do from a game-to-game basis to get an extra 500, a thousand fans in the seats? What are the things from a brand perspective that we can do to get people excited from a customer service perspective? And so I think what came out of it for me personally, professionally, was a renewed sense of kind of rolling my sleeves up and figuring out how to strategize in very challenging circumstances, even on the business side or on the on-field side. And I think when you look back, you say, well, wow, look what we learned and look what we accomplished and look what we can take to the next stop, right? That we can integrate and be really excited to look at our on-field product for the Miami Dolphins and say, wow, we got a lot to be excited about.

Matt: We'll get to the Dolphins in a second, but the last question about the Marlins is, I think what a lot of people don't realize is that baseball is so big in Latin America and Latin America is such an influence here in Miami that there are a lot of fans who really look at that as their home team and have a different level of pride attached to it. And we also see that happen with soccer, with Messi coming here to Miami as well.

Michael: I think it's a big opportunity. So for those who are familiar with the World Baseball Classic, it is the World Cup of Baseball. And for the matches, the games that are hosted in Miami, they're completely sold out. And credit to the current Marlins Organization. It's an atmosphere unlike anything you've seen in American and US baseball. And so what we know is, and what we knew then is that, to your point, the Latin American, Latam audience, whether it be Cuban, Dominican, Venezuelan, it is an enormous opportunity, mainly because in what's different than, call it the NBA and NFL, there are a lot of Hispanic players. And so when you have players who are already carrying the flag with pride, and you already have players and families who are in the area, in South Florida, in Latin America, then you have something that's really special. And so there is some great opportunity for the Marlins. And I see opportunity because when they look at their team and they look at the makeup of the players, it represents who's in the community. And so there's a great opportunity for them. That's exactly right.

Matt: So I wanna jump to your current role. We're in the heart of football season and it's a great time to be a Miami Dolphins fan. You're currently a vice president of brand marketing at the Miami Dolphins at Hard Rock Stadium. Hard Rock Stadium is, when I went there, I went there a couple of years ago.

Michael: What did you go for?

Matt: I went to see the Miami Dolphins beat my beloved Eagles, even though the Eagles were better. It was the game when the Dolphins had that incredible fake field goal when they had the crazy formation. But I didn't expect the stadium to be so cool. I just, I don't know, I'd been to football stadiums in Miami in the past, and I just, it wasn't as modern and had a lifestyle feel to it. And I loved it. I can't wait to go back there. So for those of you who haven't been to Hard Rock Stadium, definitely go, but talk about your role at the Miami Dolphins and Hard Rock Stadium. What are you focused on and what do you hope to achieve in your role, which you're still fairly early in?

Michael: Yeah, I am. So get on your first point about experience. Give credit to our vice chairman and CEO, Tom Garfinkel. One of the things that he challenges his leadership team and everyone in the organization, it's like, how do we think like the customer? It's obviously seems very simple, but often forgotten, overlooked, is that when you're creating new brand ideas, new strategies, new visuals, new creative, when you're creating new experiences, are you thinking about what's convenient for you as the employee, or are you thinking about what would actually make someone who spent their hard earned money, what would make something memorable for them? Becoming consumer-centric. Very, very consumer-focused. And so when we think about the role that I have now, first of all, if we talk about Dolphins, we are very grateful for, for the first time we're not selling season tickets because we're all sold out, which is fantastic, right? And so what does that mean? Well, it means we have more bandwidth, more resources to focus on brand building, actually, right? Where we're not chasing necessarily revenue in a performance marketing way.

Matt: You're working on what's important versus urgent, like you have to sell tickets next to somebody's game.

Michael: That's exactly right. And so the fun in that is that we really step back and look and say, well, how do we want, one, our organization to be portrayed? How do we want it to show up across platforms, whether we're talking about social or out of home? What are the things we wanna say and who are we as a brand? And so I think we have a really firm idea of who we are, how we show up and what we look like in the community. And now it's a really fun opportunity to embrace the success of the team. And as we look forward, we're saying, let's make sure we're showing up on all platforms consistently. So one of the things that you'll notice if you're riding around in Miami, so right now you'll see a Marlins win. If you drive, sorry, you see a Dolphins. So if you see a billboard, you're gonna see something on our social channels and it's gonna match what's actually on the billboard. Cause we're actually trying to create kind of an all in one experience where it's like Dolphins win on Sunday and then Monday morning you're gonna see on your way to work, the score. You're gonna see a cool image that's gonna mirror something that's on social media. And so we're trying to take the time now to really get people really excited because what we are trying to do, much like your Eagles, we wanna get to the Super Bowl. We wanna have some success, some sustained success. And so top priority as a Dolphins and leading the Dolphins brand is really how do we create more brands? How do we find that younger audience? How do we create the type of experiences, music, entertainment that they want to engage with us in, whether it be at the game or whether it be on our digital platforms. And then we have the other business verticals which could be the Miami Grand Prix and Miami Open, which in themselves are their own huge businesses, which we spend a lot of time and spend a lot of time focusing on strategy.

Matt: Yeah, so we had the head of Allegiant Airlines who runs the stadium in Vegas. And Miami and Las Vegas have a lot of similarities in that they're places where people come to have fun. They're about entertainment and Miami itself is a brand. And I would imagine that you have to reflect the virtues of the Miami brand when you're building the Dolphins brand, meaning it's not Pittsburgh.

Michael: Yeah, I grew up in Nashville, right? It's not Nashville, it's different.

Matt: Exactly, so you have to inject that into the experience, I would imagine.

Michael: That's 100, not only do we have to, we believe that's the expectation. And so when you're from out of town and you come to an event at Hard Rock Stadium, what we want to do is deliver what we believe is an authentic Miami experience, whether that be from the food that's offered or the music, how it sounds, the look and feel, the lighting, the colors, right? All of those things are considered. So what we hope is it's an overall integrated approach, meaning that our color palette from what we're wearing in our uniforms should also give you that vibrant feel of the colors that pop and the things that are happening around the city, the vibrancy, the excitement, the music, the drums, all those things should.

Matt: The culture, the flavor. That's exactly right.

Michael: You should feel that in an authentic way when you're at a sporting event or when you're at an entertainment event at Hard Rock Stadium.

Matt: We'll be right back with the Speed Of Culture Podcast after a few words from our sponsors. You mentioned the younger fans and the fans of today are consuming sports differently than I did. I'm a Gen Xer growing up where I would just hope that my team was on television, right? And then look at the box score the next day in the newspaper where now you have fan duels and fantasy sports and gambling and you have TikTok where people are following players and not teams and they're all about the highlights. How does that affect your content strategy and what you put out there to make sure that, because you guys have a lot of exciting players you have Tua, you have Tyree Kale, who's probably the most. And Waddle. Yeah, we got lots of players. Yeah, incredible players that I think in some it's just transcending the team. Especially with young kids who wear their jersey even if they don't like the Dolphins. I imagine you need to lean into the songs and not just the album so to speak when you're promoting. You're absolutely right.

Michael: So growing up, obviously, like many people, I loved Michael Jordan. So guess what? I was a fan of the Chicago Bulls. Because I love Michael Jordan, right? And so I think in your point, I think what we don't need to do, we're not shying away from those that love Tua, that love Tyree Kale, or that love Nick Chubb, or whoever your favorite player is, right? So we think that's a great entry point into getting to know more about the organization of the franchise and getting to know if you want to know about the player. So the way that we look at it from a brand and a marketing perspective is what information, what details, what can we share with you that goes outside the lines of football? And so a lot of the time the platforms, when you think about, especially Instagram and TikTok, it's an opportunity to learn a little bit more about the individual outside of what they do on Sundays. And so we see an opportunity with the fan base, they care about more. They care about what sneakers they're wearing. They care about what shows they watch. They care about the lifestyle, right? And so what we want to do, we want to make sure that we're providing, yes, we want to have all the game coverage you want, but more than anything, we want to give you a reason to care about them and care about what they do, care about what they do in the community, care about what they wear. And so we believe that kind of all integrated approach builds a fan at a very early age of like, hey, I'm a fan of Tua, so guess what? I'm rooting for his team now. And so then we see the opportunity to make them a fan, make their family a fan, and then we have something really special.

Matt: Yeah, you've probably seen the Google campaign, because I mean, Google, they've done a great job with YouTube TV finally taking over Sunday tickets this year. And within that, they're playing this spot where you see the players, I'm sure you've seen them walk to the locker room, and then you can snap a photo of it and see what they're wearing and-

Michael: What bag are they carrying? What glasses are they wearing? I think that's so cool. I give a lot of credit to David Stern and Adam Silver, because I think the NBA more than anything is about the individuals. You know, when I say the NFL is about the team.

Matt: It's hard too, because in the NFL, they're wearing helmets.

Michael: And there's so many people in the field. The roster is so much bigger, right?

Matt: And you're not as close to the NBA, you really get to see them.

Michael: That's right, but in the NBA, what they have done really well is they made kind of the entrance, it's become a runway, right? So in the NBA, when a player is getting off the team bus or they're getting out of their cars, it's literally like New York Fashion Week.

Matt: You can go to Westbrook, you see what they're wearing.

Michael: That's exactly right. And so the NFL, so we found opportunities, because all the athletes, they know each other, and they want to be competitive at everything. They want to be the best. This guy's wearing that, and that person's wearing that. So there is an opportunity to really continue to tell the story through fashion or what the guys are interested in. They're interested in so many different things. And so that's what we want to do. We don't need to create anything. We just want to tell the story. Yeah, you amplify it. We amplify what's already happening. We have some really, really great individuals and some really great stories. And so we'll see how we amplify it and allow our fans to enjoy that content.

Matt: Yeah, I mean, and athletes today, they want to build their own personal brand. That transcends the team as well, so they can get involved in business opportunities. One of our investors is Kevin Durant and the coverage climate from Boardroom. And that's a perfect example of Kevin building his own personal brand and getting involved in so many things that go outside of the basketball court. And I imagine a lot of your players want to do the same thing.

Michael: I really am a big proponent of it because I believe when players are aware of their brand and when they're aware of a life after they're on the field or on the court, I think it actually makes them a better teammate. I think it actually, because they're thinking about more than just the day to day. I think they're thinking about the long-term. As they should. As they should, right?

Matt: Just like you and I are.

Michael: That's exactly right. And so I'm a big proponent of, I want the athletes to have their own brand and to have their own camera crews within reason of obviously where they can be. Of course. Allowing them to have that own personality and persona because I think ultimately what happens is they become better educated about what the process is. They become better aware of what they like to do post their career. And I think it just makes them a better all around individual.

Matt: Yeah, for sure. One property you work on, which I'm not as familiar with as a fan, but I'm very much familiar with Impact and Culture's F1. Oh yeah. What is this F1 thing? Why is it taken off so much here in the United States? And what's some of the work that you're doing with the Miami Grand Prix that's unique and that you're excited about?

Michael: Formula 1 has become a phenomenon. I would say it's big everywhere else in the world, much like soccer was many years ago, right? The rest of the world is like, we've been on F1 for a long time, right? But what I would say, there's a few reasons why. One of the things that I know has played an impact, I won't say it fully, but certainly dropped us five on Netflix. During the pandemic, there were a lot of people who were introduced to F1 through this documentary.

Matt: It's like they were chess with Queen's Gambit.

Michael: That's exactly right. So everybody's in the house, you gotta find some stuff to stream. And so, Drive to Survive numbers were incredible. And I think, especially in the US, what it did was help people understand personalities and teams. And so much like your favorite basketball player, your favorite NFL player, once you are a fan of their personalities. That's what you were just talking about,

Matt: What you're trying to do with the Dolphins.

Michael: That's right. So what I believe from an organization perspective, I think F1 sees tremendous opportunity in the US. I think similar to the way that Commissioner Roger Goodell sees tremendous opportunity internationally, because the NFL has already matured here in the US.

Matt: More and more games are happening in Europe every year.

Michael: But as you look internationally, there's more games. Well, I think it's the reverse effect for Formula 1. So Formula 1's looking to continue to grow in the US because they see an incredible financial opportunity, incredible fan-based opportunity. And so Miami is one of the three US races. So Las Vegas will have their first race this year. And Austin's been around for quite some time. And so in Miami, the way that we look at it is that we are, I think you said it really well before, Matt, when you come to Miami, you want to feel like you're in Miami.

Matt: Yeah, no matter what you're doing.

Michael: No matter what you're doing. And so what I would tell you is that the goal of our race is to create an experience unlike anything else you've done. Not unlike any other Formula 1 race, unlike any other event that you've gone to. And I think through the first two years, we've had some very, very good fortune and some success. A lot of celebrities and notables. And just racing fans have been able to come and enjoy themselves. And what I believe our goal is is to create individual unique experiences. So if you're a hardcore race fan, then you can come and watch the racing and then you'll feel thrilled to do that. But also if you're a first-time fan and maybe you just watched Drive to Survive, there should be an incredible experience for you. You don't have to be a racing enthusiast. You should be able to come and have a great-

Matt: His spirit should be accessible to his casual fan. That's exactly right.

Michael: And so we believe between the entertainment seeker, the music lover, the art lover, the hardcore racer, we think we have several personals that can come and we can have an incredible experience for those individual personas so that we wanna build something that we would call legacy. Meaning when you think about the Kentucky Derby or you think about the Masters or you think about some of these events where people plan traditions, right? We don't want this to be a one-time thing where you come one time and then you say, I've done that. What we're trying to build is a tradition where families and friends come together every year on the first weekend in May. And then there's like, we're going to the Miami Grand Prix because that's where the action is.

Matt: Yeah, I mean, what we're seeing in the US economy, at least, is just the boom of the experience economy is back. It was strong and then there was such a panop demand during COVID-19 and now you saw it in Europe this summer and in Italy and places where you couldn't go to a restaurant and even walk on the sidewalks in Venice. It's obviously happening. I'm sure you're seeing that here.

Michael: People are excited to come back together, right? I think there was certainly, when you think about 2020, 21, people were just excited. I think we all, and I certainly put myself at the top of the list. We take for granted some of the freedoms and options that we have. And I think we all kind of looked and said, oh, if we had to spend the rest of our life in our house or in our apartment, what kind of life would that be? And so I think we realized the importance of personal connection, right?

Matt: Even during this interview in person, I do a lot of these podcasts over Zoom and it's just different. Our conversation would be different. The vibe would be different.

Michael: Yeah, yeah, no question. And so I do think that our primary goal when we take away, whether it's football or racing or tennis, our goal is bringing people together and creating moments, right? It's like what Disney would say, right? Make memories. Our goal is, what I love to hear outside of the fact that we beat your eagles, but what I would love to hear is you're like, hey, me and my friend, me and my son, me and my, whatever it is, we came, we went to an event. That's what people remember. And we never will forget the time we came. That's what they remember. That's exactly right.

Matt: That's what it's about.

Michael: Yeah, and so that's what it's about. And so when we think about what our aim and what our mission is, we're trying to create those lifelong moments so that we will always know that you, when you came to Hard Rock Stadium for whatever the event was, it was something that you'll never forget.

Matt: Yes, I love it. So switching gears as we wrap up here, Michael, I mean, this has been an amazing conversation and you strike me as somebody who likes, you're entering your prime of your career and it's clicking. I hope so, man. I feel good. It feels like you feel good.

Michael: Yeah, I feel good. You look great. Thank you.

Matt: You have all kinds of pieces and pillars that you put in place to get you here. They certainly shine through.

Michael: Can I hire you as my agent? I don't know if you can afford me,

Matt: But what are some of the things that you think you've done right to date as an executive and how does that impact, I guess, your leadership style? Because I imagine you also have people that report to you now in your current role as you grow as a leader in your career.

Michael: Yeah, I believe first and foremost, there's some important DNA that great leaders have and I think it's a shared DNA. And I believe this with every fiber in my body. There are some things that I like to use as sports analogies because people understand it. But if you think about when I was growing up, the Celtics were really good. And when they got Kevin Garnett and they had Ray Allen, that was a big three.

Matt: Paul Pierce.

Michael: Paul Pierce, right? But Kevin Garnett was an emotional leader. There were things that Kevin Garnett brought to that team that didn't really show up in the box score. Oh yeah. So I believe there's some DNA in great leaders that can create great performance that doesn't necessarily show up in IQ. It doesn't necessarily show up in EQ.

Matt: Charisma is a part of it.

Michael: That's exactly right. Those things to me that impact my leadership style, so courage, right? Like how do you show courage? Courage to me is like the ability to go in and be able to ask tough questions, to be able to ask a question when nobody else is willing to ask, even if that means that you're CEO or superior, right? And so my leadership style is to give people the space and platform where they can have courage and I wanna demonstrate that to them. And then there's a type of infectious energy, right? You see it. Every great leader, there's an infectious energy that not only makes you feel better, but also it's actually gonna propel me too, right?

Matt: 100%.

Michael: Because energy like, like, like, you know what I mean? And so I believe this type of energy-

Matt: Passion is part of it.

Michael: That's exactly right. And so the type of courage and the type of infectious energy and then the last one of the other components to me that impact my leadership style is, well, how do you have tough conversations, right? Because the ability, that's a different piece of courage, but it's a tough conversation, meaning if there's something that you need to talk about, and I've learned this in my marriage, but the better and the sooner you can talk about it- The better off. And guess what? That's where we build trust, right? Because if I'm willing to tell you, hey, Matt, there was something I was depending on and you let me down, but here's how we can improve it, then I think you're gonna respect me and I think it's gonna bring-

Matt: And you're doing them a disservice if you don't tell them, whether it's your spouse or your employee, or frankly somebody who you work for. You can't expect them to read your mind. I agree. And if you tell them and you can right-size, if you can't, well, then you deal with it then, but you have to always be sharing it. Yeah, those hard conversations are really, I imagine the coach of the Miami Dolphins faces the same thing as well, right? But that's how you get better.

Michael: That's how we get better. And if we can have that type of, and what my goal is, is to have that type of self-awareness to where if you're telling me something's gonna make me better, I'm not gonna immediately get defensive because I actually wanna see it as an opportunity to get better, right? And so you actually care about me because you're telling me. If you didn't care, you wouldn't say a word. And so I think in terms of leadership, how can I convey those things in such a way that it energizes and creates incredible performance across my team?

Matt: So where do you see yourself in five to 10 years? You had mentioned wanting to be a CEO or I could see you being a GM. Where do you wanna go eventually?

Michael: There's, I think, a leader of an organization, guess in certain instances, a lead part of an organization. But I would say to have primary responsibility as a CEO, I think is something that I certainly would be open to and strive for. It's interesting because you talked about chasing money. And one of the lessons that I learned some years ago is that I'm really focused on doing my job incredibly. And what I found is when I focus on that and shut the other things off, the knocks on the door and the opportunities just come. Exactly. And I don't worry about anything else.

Matt: And so I- What, patience, you have to have that patience.

Michael: Yeah, there's patience, Matt. And there's also some discernment and wisdom because the thing is, sometimes the opportunity is there, but to know if that's the opportunity or this is the opportunity, well, it's not, I've got to define kind of what's important to me. And so what's important to me, compensation is great, but culture is more important, right? The person and the ownership of the organization is more important. So I've been able to define those things. And so I would say, as I've gotten more clear on who I am, the opportunities that line up for me. And so in five years, who knows what that looks like. Hopefully a few kids, happy with my wife and an opportunity to continue driving with a great organization.

Matt: I love it. Well, I have no doubt you're gonna continue to- Thank you. Achieve great heights. Lastly here, Michael, is there a quote or mantra that you like to live by?

Michael: There's a quote. I don't wanna get it wrong.

Matt: Well, it could be yours, so there can never be a wrong quote. Even if you butcher it, it's cool.

Michael: Nelson Mandela has a quote that I love that I believe goes something like, courage isn't the absence of fear. Courage is having the fear and pushing through despite the fear Yeah, right and so that's why courage is one of those pillars because I was talking to some students

Matt: True, right

Michael: I was talking to some students Monday after I spoke on the platform and I wanted them to know it's like every time I get up and speak I get nervous, but I want you all to know that you got to push through it So the courage is so it will never you'll never not be scared or you'll never not be nervous But the courage is actually in actually pushing through there on the other side of it. It's on the other side of it

Matt:

It's so good. I love it. Well, it's been an amazing chat. I cannot wait for our audience to hear it. I cannot miss seeing you continue. Yes. It's been incredible. So and best you up to your dolphins this season Thanks so much. Of course they made the Awesome on behalf of Susan Addie team Thanks again to Michael Shaw VPA brand marketing at the Miami Dolphins Hard Rock Stadium and a bunch of other stuff for joining us today Be sure to subscribe rate and review the Speed Of Culture Podcast podcast on your favorite podcast platform We're here in Miami and until next time. See you soon. Everyone. Take care The Speed Of Culture Podcast is brought to you by Suzy as part of the Adweek Podcast Network and AX Creator Network. You can listen and subscribe to all Adweek's podcasts by visiting adweek.com/slash/podcasts. To find out more about Suzy, head to suzy.com. And make sure to search for The Speed Of Culture Podcast at Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Google Podcasts or anywhere else podcasts are found. Click follow so you don't miss out on any future episodes. On behalf of the team here at Suzy, thanks for listening.