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Mike Paton:

Hello everybody, this is Mike Paton with the EOS leader podcast. And today I'm absolutely thrilled to be speaking with Ryan Vestby the CEO of CompuVision. One of Canada's leading IT managed service providers. Ryan started on the front lines as employee number three at the ripe old age of 21. He volunteered for every assignment he could and was ultimately tapped by the owner to serve as CompuVision's CEO. Under Ryan's direction the company has tripled in size and now employs 150 hardworking, innovative team members. Ryan also takes time to pursue other passions. He sits on the Alberta Innovates Leadership Council, he's an active member of the Young President's Organization or YPO, and he's happily married to his wife, Sarah, and the proud father of three boys. Ryan, welcome to the show. Thanks for making time for us today.

Ryan Vestby:

Paton, thanks for having me. I'm excited to have this conversation.

Mike Paton:

Yeah, you bet. So here's where I'd like to start. Tell us a little bit more about your entrepreneurial journey. Walk us through all of the moves you made and where you've landed.

Ryan Vestby:

Sure. I feel like it was a little bit by accident. To be honest with you, when I started with CompuVision when I was 21 years old, I also had a side business, which was a hard rock band. I play guitar in a hard rock band that we toured the country and recorded two or three CDs. So if you would've asked me back then, where's my life going to take me, I would've probably told you I was going to be a rockstar. And so what's interesting, you talk about entrepreneurship, I learned so many lessons being a leader in a band. We had to print t-shirts, we had to create our own store. And back then, I remember we would print t-shirts and you'd try to figure out what the margin would be like. And it was always one challenge on how we sell more shirts.

And we ended up selling more shirts than any other band that we ever toured with. And a couple of reasons why... and you got to remember, this is back in the early '90s, like '97, was everything was cash. And so most people that went to a bar or went to a show, they wanted their money for beer. They didn't want to buy a shirt, even though they loved the band. And so we figured out early on and said, "Well, we got to figure out how do we get more dollars from these folks?" And we were one of the first bands ever to have mobile interact machines. Now you see them all the time, like the square and the tap. But back then, there were really, really rare. And so we were a band that had a mobile interact machine and we literally tripled our sales just by having this.

Because you could imagine, you've got a few beers in you and somebody goes, "Well, what do you got there? You got shirts and a CD and some stickers, I'll take one of all." And we'd take their visa and tap it. They would remember in the morning they got all this stuff, but it was amazing to see that. And we would tour with signed acts from LA when they come up into Canada. And we would be just independent band that we would just crush them in regards to sales for our merchandise.

Mike Paton:

And that's a great lesson. What was the name of the band?

Ryan Vestby:

It was called Broken Nose, believe it or not.

Mike Paton:

I love it. And when you say a hard rock band, what class of hard rock? Hairband, metal?

Ryan Vestby:

Yeah, it would be probably like hard rock metal, it would be bands like Pantera, a little bit harder than Metallica.

Mike Paton:

Got it.

Ryan Vestby:

But it was funny, if I could tell you one more story. I realized just very quickly, we needed to get some sponsorship and we needed to get people backing us, and we were a whiskey fuel party band. It would be like if you're going to a family reunion once a year and you're seeing that other side of the family that, this is going to take us on a journey, that's literally what our band was. And back then, I actually don't think you can do this now, but we used to throw out pill bottle shots of Jack Daniels. And so we found that if people in the crowd had one or two Jack Daniels shots in them, that they enjoyed the show way much more. They bought more merchandise and they actually bought more liquor because they're almost primed. It's like a primer and an engine, and here we go.

The challenge was, it was costing us a lot of money. We'd literally take a 60 ounces of Jack Daniels every show and get, I don't know, 100 plus pill bottle, these little pill bottle shots, and we'd throw them out to the crowd, and so people would catch them. And then later on as we got more notoriety, people would come to the shows Paton with ball gloves, and they would come to the shows to catch these whiskey shots.

Mike Paton:

Yeah, there you go.

Ryan Vestby:

And that was the thing. And so I realized I'm like, "We got to get somebody to sponsor us, we're promoting Jack Daniels. We've got to see how we can get them on side." And so I went and negotiated with the local rep and I said, "Hey man, we're pushing Jack Daniels. We love your product, we share it with everybody, can we get some sponsorship deal?" And he says, "Yeah, 100%. We'll give you a whole bunch of swag to throw out and give to your fans. But we'll also give you for every show, a 60 ounces of Jack Daniels and we'll cover the spread." And so we would do a tour and we'd have like 20 dates and we'd have 20, 60 ounces of Jack Daniels, and that's what we were known for. So we would have these record ring outs with these bars and it just helped us negotiate our contracts up front because there

were like, "You guys sell three times more booze than everyone else when you come to town," and really the case was, you give people something free, they'll end up buying a little more.

Mike Paton:

They ended up buying a little more. Nice, that's an old school marketing promotion. You probably cannot market CompuVision using the same technique, I'm guessing?

Ryan Vestby:

No, you can't. But I think you can still take the same creativity-

Mike Paton:

Yeah.

Ryan Vestby:

... to be honest with you. And I don't think sometimes you maybe learn in business school is just, there's other ways to be creative on how you can really differentiate yourself. And that's one of the things I think we pride ourselves on is just that, we can really look at our business through a different lens. And I relate back to those band days and what we learned from there and apply it to our business even today [crosstalk 00:06:40].

Mike Paton:

What I hear is you understood your audience, you came up with a promotional idea that would appeal to your audience and serve the organization's purpose. And it turned out to be a win-win-win because my guess is Jack Daniels did pretty good in the bargain as well.

Ryan Vestby:

Absolutely.

Mike Paton:

So tell me a little bit about your early days at CompuVision, and how you applied what you were learning from your rock band days as you became a leader in that organization.

Ryan Vestby:

I think it was instilled early days from my mom and dad, that once you take on something you see it through and you do your best and you make it happen. But really I was against the gun right from the beginning. I don't come from a technology background. I took multimedia and graphic design in school, way back when, when computers were starting to be cool. And I just landed on this job. And I remember the owner of our business coming to me and he says, "Hey, your mom actually believe it or not, told me that you took computers." And I always tell people there's... God bless her, but she didn't know anything about multimedia graphic design, she just knew I did it on a computer.

And so she just generalized that I'm in IT support and all this stuff. And the analogy I always give [inaudible 00:08:01] is like, just because you own an oven, doesn't mean you're a chef. And that's the exact same scenario of where it was. So I remember when our founder, a guy named Bernie Bourgeois came to me and said, "Hey, your mom said you're in computers, I'd love to hire you, we need a guy."

And I said, "Thanks, but no thanks. She's got it wrong. Like I took Photoshop and Macromedia." And he's like, "I get it." And he said something to me that really stuck with me, even to this day, he just said, "I get it. You might not have all the technical skills..." I was on a plant site believe it or not, like a 1200 person chemical plant.

And he said, "I've seen you interact with all these people and you have just amazing attitude, and you've built these relationships instantly with all these people." He says, "We can teach you the technical skills, but we can't teach you attitude. And you've got that and we'll figure out the rest." And so we both took a leap of faith and here we are, 24 years later, I'm a majority shareholder CEO. And sometimes I drive home thinking, "How the heck did we get here?" I took on everything that I possibly could. I knew I had to learn. I had to be willing to work harder than some of the other people in our organization at that time that things came naturally to them to troubleshoot and resolve technology. But I use this analogy and I tell all of our staff, especially people we hire new.

We do an onboarding meeting and I meet with them and I said, "I always have viewed my career like a stock. And either I can do things to increase the value of it, or I can do things to decrease the value of it. But regardless I have control over this." And so I said yes to everything. They needed somebody to train, to become certified in printer support, well, no one wants to do that. I'm like, "I'm in, I'll do it." We needed somebody to go to the middle of nowhere in rural Canada for six weeks because we lost a guy there and he moved on, and they needed to go tomorrow, I'm like, "I'll go." And so I just knew, regardless if I liked it or not, my value of my career stock is going to rise, if I put my hand up.

Mike Paton:

And you didn't have a plan, you just were opportunistic and took advantage of the opportunities that presented themselves to you?

Ryan Vestby:

Yeah. And 100% correct. This was not a long-term strategy where like, if I could put this together... But back in the day, we'd have these annual reviews and was always seemed to tie to comp, and where do you want to go? And that age old question, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" And I'd say, probably by year three... and our company was small, at that point, maybe six people. And I remember I'm sitting with the owner and he's like, "Well, where do you see yourself?" And I said, "Well, I see myself in your chair, I want to take your role. That's my goal." And at first you can imagine you have a, what was it? 23, 24 year old kid saying, "I want to become a CEO of this business." It was almost a joke at the beginning.

"Oh, good for you, way to have aspirations." He'd write it down, I think. But every year it came up and what was interesting is, every year it got a little bit less funny and a little bit more serious.

Mike Paton:

That's great.

Ryan Vestby:

And then 2009, that's kind of... I was 33 at that time. And I think at that point I had raised the value of my stock and I... We have this saying, "Reputation is built on results." You drive the results and you can't hold back a reputation. And that was it. And it was a natural thing. I wasn't surprised and I don't think he was as well. It was more like, it's time. It's just time.

Mike Paton:

That's awesome. Thanks for sharing that. I want to talk a little bit more about the company as it sits today, 150 people. What types of things are you doing in IT managed services in your unique interpretation of that phrase? I've found that it's a broad range of things. So help the listener understand exactly how CompuVision serves its clients.

Ryan Vestby:

Yeah. The easy way I can describe is we buy risks, we inherit risk. And so we outsource an IT department for typically small to mid-market businesses. We would outsource the entire ecosystem of IT, or just ingredients of the recipe to be able to manage and mitigate that. My definition of managed services is, somebody is inheriting the risk for a flat monthly fee and it's unlimited, you just go. And so our business has been around doing that for quite a long time. And our industry has changed over time of, do you charge per asset per user? What does that look like? And primarily it's per user. But the interesting aspect of it is, so we'd managed ecosystem of hardware, software and the end user experience. But what's really changing, and what I'm excited about it, where I think we're different than a lot of MSPs is, people will take it to the next level and build out strategy and their budgeting and try to get their life cycles of their equipment.

But I've taken this interest, probably in the last five or six years around digitization. And I got a chance to go to Singularity University through YPO about four years ago. And it was just a eye-opening and life changing experience. And I remember coming back and talking to my integrator, which is a guy named Dave. He's a great integrator because he's really good at managing my expectations and protecting me from the business, I'll say. And I came back, and you can imagine when you spend 11 days, basically in the future, you're seeing everything that is like in the early, early stages that are going to disrupt our society as we know it. And I came back and said, "Dave, man, we are so far behind, we got to go, we got to double down now."

And his demeanor is just always just like super chill. And he was like, "Okay, well, are you sure? Because I feel like you're living in this world, but everyone I talked to is not talking how you're talking." And what was interesting is when we unpack that it wasn't that we were so far behind in our thinking, we were actually coming up behind everybody in a race and almost lapping them in our thinking. And so we weren't last, we were first in our thinking in our industry. And so we started really unpacking that with our customers saying, "What are the things around business process that we could start digitizing?" We've gotten very good at, I'll call it simplifying it, and being able to verbalize this to customers, they get what we're trying to solve. So that's the thing that excites me the most and where our business is today. And I would say, it separates us from our customers, is we're looking at how do we remove friction from our customer's business process? And that becomes exciting.

Mike Paton:

Well, and ironically Ryan, my co-author, Lisa [Gonzales 00:14:45] and I are working on the process component book to add to the traction library as we speak. And I think the root cause is less about an aversion to technology or an unfamiliarity with technology. It's an aversion to process in the first place. And so in order to identify what might be digitizable in your business, you really need to understand all of the processes that are being followed today. And where are the opportunities for simplification and ease and elimination of redundant steps, and automating something that might take three people a week to do that's done by a machine in a day? That is exciting work. And I think the speed of that kind of innovation is accelerating at a rate, we can't even understand because the technology is just improving

itself. And so you're right, all of us are going to be behind very quickly if we can't buy into that idea. Couldn't agree more.

Ryan Vestby:

Well. Yeah. And I agree, and I always just use the term friction because people understand friction. And I'm like, "Well, if you haven't mapped your process yet, how the heck are you going to know where the friction is for your customer? You have no idea." You might get some data points and some way to explain it. The interesting part is when I talk to business leaders, they all think they had time. We give office tours here. We've set up our office as almost like this living, breathing ecosystem of the future. And so if you're a prospect in our business, we would never just send you a quote or proposal, you have to come for a tour. And if you're not willing to invest time to come for a tour, you're not a fit for our business. And so it sets a parameter or a gate that is like, you have to be serious enough to invest the time to come and see us, or we're just not a right fit and that's okay.

But what I found is as I tour people through our organization and the things we've digitized and I show them some cool aspects of digital dashboards and those type of things, everyone's excited. I've never met anyone that says, "This doesn't do it for me." But what's interesting is the majority of the people they all said, "This is great, and we do want to get there at some point, but no, not right now." They've created this mindset that they've had time to fix it. And all of a sudden you throw a world pandemic in the mix and that clock ran to zero very, very quickly. And you could see the problem now where organizations, I call them the analog gap... And there were so many analog gaps that people didn't realize that, "Gosh, I can't sell my product, we don't have a good website. Or I don't know how to distribute the product without this manual interaction of human beings." And that just pressured everybody to think, "Okay, the clock's run out, we've got to take technology serious around how do we change our business and what does that look like?"

Mike Paton:

I have a client that might fit your user profile, your target market. That the CEO, probably first quarter of the COVID outbreak really going haywire, I did a check-in call, sort of a wellness check call with him. And I said, "How are things going?" He goes, "Actually pretty good." He goes, "What's ironic is that for four or five years, we've been talking about creating a remote work environment and requiring people to come to the office less and equipping everybody with technology that would allow them to be productive at home. And if I could get somebody to agree, that was an idea worth talking about and they would agree to answer the question, how long do you think it would take? The average answer I got was two years." He said, "We did it in two weeks."

Ryan Vestby:

There you go.

Mike Paton:

And so I do think people tend to gravitate towards the reality they're experiencing today. There's an inertia for status, staying still, that you either are going to decide to overcome yourself or a crisis is going to force you to overcome. And in this case, all of us had to overcome that crisis.

Ryan Vestby:

Yeah. It was a major inflection point that no one could avoid. That no one could avoid, and we all had to make a decision. I will say though, we were early adopters of the global talent market or the gig economy. And so just think about it, if I go back to the digitization example, is like some of these work sites like Toptal and Upwork and all this, they digitized how we access talent. That's all it is, supply demand. Same way as how Uber has digitized access to a ride. And Peter Diamandis is one of these guys, he's a co-founder of Singularity, he talks about the six Ds of disruption. And man, I took to that so hard, it's the gospel for me in our world, we have the six Ds in our boardroom as big as we can on a wall, and just as a conversation piece.

And I'll just say, the global talent market pre pandemic, it was in this deceptive stage. It worked and you'd have to sift through people to find the right talent you want. But fast forward 15 months later, world pandemic, literally everyone in some capacity was in a gig economy, even if they worked for a business like CompuVision. And so it excites me because we have probably out of those 150, I'll call it CompuVision badge employees, we probably have another 60 people we use in the gig economy on a daily basis, all over the world. And they're the best in class.

Mike Paton:

Yeah. My stepson is in Zimbabwe teaching young entrepreneurs in the making how to code, because that is a skill that can be done well from anywhere and is going to be in constant demand. I believe technology is a great leveler of geographic differences. That if you can have access to the internet, which is still a struggle in a lot of areas, and you're going to work hard and you have some skill, you are going to be a very marketable asset around the globe very quickly, so.

Ryan Vestby:

Totally. So still the way I look at this is, is a massive redistribution of economic opportunity. And it's over 3 billion people don't have access to the internet, which is going to be solved. I think about, I have a Starlink on my acreage. And so when Starlink came out, we were in the beta testing in rural Canada. And so I signed up for it, I got it. And what blew my mind because I'm in the customer service business as well. This box showed up Paton, and I don't know if you've seen a Starlink or you've seen it up front, but it shows up in this big box, and talk about frictionless install and everything. I opened the box up, the only instructions is like three pitchers, no words, no nothing, it's universal. Like and so-

Mike Paton:

That means even I can figure it out.

Ryan Vestby:

[crosstalk 00:21:32]. And so literally three steps. I put this dish on the stand and the app tells you, and it's like, boom. And then all of a sudden, this dish is finding the satellite in space and boom, I've got 150 megs per second download. And I said to myself as I did this, that was the most seamless install understand, I've ever experienced, to be honest with you. And I said to myself, I'm like, "This guy deserves to be as rich as he is." But my point with this is that 3.8 billion people are going to get internet here within the next two to five years. They're going to have more drive than the Western world because we've had great lives and we've doing it, and they're going to have economic opportunity unlike anything we've seen. And so this should be a wake up call to the Western world.

Mike Paton:

Yeah. Interesting stuff. All right. Let's turn the tables a little bit and talk about leadership in general. I want you to go back to the first moment in your life, maybe as a very young boy, when you saw somebody lead and took note. Either because they were so good at it or they were lousy at it. Who was it? What was the situation? And what do you remember thinking?

Ryan Vestby:

I've worked from an early age. I think I started cleaning our junior high school when I was in elementary and I've always had a job, I'd say probably from 12 years old and up. And I delivered papers even earlier than that. I think I remember Mr. [Pollard 00:23:02] was the guy, that he would want the paper at 6:30, well, and I delivered everything else at 7:30. He would be willing to pay a premium, but he sucked at AR, he just wouldn't pay his bill. And so just imagine this, so accounts receivable, I got to go and collect for Mr. Pollard but he always wanted the paper because he went to work earlier than everybody else on my road. And so I'd appease him to the point that I had to just say, "Man, if you don't pay your bills, like you're getting your paper at 7:00 my guy, help me here. Help me help you."

And so anyways, I digress. But the one moment I think that steps out is I used to work at a gas station. And I remember my leader or my boss was a guy, [Miguel Shanya 00:23:45], working with him, and I probably worked with him for five years. And I probably started when I was early, like 17. He always treated me with respect, but he held me accountable for things. I'll just tell you this one story. I remember we... Playing in a band, we lived in the same house and we're all probably 18, 19, but we all worked Paton. at the same Petro-Canada gas station. And so we all had different shifts. One guy would be the seven to three, the other guy would be 10 to six. And then one guy would work the graveyard shift, from 11 to seven, all at the same house.

So it was literally we're passing each other in the night. But I remember this one... and you want to talk about leadership and how to control, I'll say emotions, is, we had a party one night, Friday night, big party, everyone's there, we're having a great time. One of the guys was supposed to work the shift, the 7:00 AM shift at Petro-Canada, and he didn't show up. And everyone's passed out, everyone's like, they're done for the night, it's the morning. And Miguel came to house and walked in, my door's not locked. He comes in, there's people on the couches and he comes upstairs and he says, "Hey boys, we got a shift that somebody needs to fill, somebody here was supposed to be doing it. Who's the guy? You guys, owe me that. Which one of you is going to cover this?"

And I just remember how gracious he was, he didn't get angry at us, he didn't fire... He didn't have to do any of that. And I remember I was probably the most cohesive to say, "Okay, I'll do it, I got you. I got your back." And I went and did it, and I took the shift. He didn't fire anybody. And then he reset the expectation a couple days later said, "Hey guys, cool, you're going to party, you're going to do what you need to do, but you got to figure out who's going to cover this spread, or this is not going to work." I just remember that story, because think about how that is today. Would people give their employees those chances, even though they're human beings and he's probably been there in that scenario? And so I remember that, it was like yesterday.

Mike Paton:

So how has his leadership style influenced your development as a leader? What are you trying to repeat or replicate for yourself that helps you be effective?

Ryan Vestby:

We do a lot of personality typing here at our company. And I think it's more of just really understanding data points. I love knowing personality type. There's one called the Enneagram and we use it in YPO all the time. And so I'm a type eight, which is a challenger. Which low functioning eights have a problem with their temper and they can come across arrogant, they can really, really suck the energy out of a room very quickly. And so I've learned to be quite self-aware of that. And I think about like Miguel was not an eight, he was not an eight. He never used anger or intimidation and those types of things. And so I just think as I've grown as a leader, it's been really important on how we can motivate people to do the right thing and have these great conversations.

I will say I'm a horrible manager, Paton. I'm not great, because I'm not a details guy. Obviously in the EOS world I'd be the visionary, but I don't want to do one-on-ones. I don't want to get into the detail. I want to have great conversations with the people. So nobody reports to me in our business other than my EA, just because I probably should have somebody. And I actually feel bad for her because I feel I'm like a single parent manager. Like, "Here's some money, good luck, go get some food, and..."

Mike Paton:

My guess is your EA is smart enough to know that you report to her and manages the relationship that way, and that solves everything.

Ryan Vestby:

It's funny you say that. So she just had her four year anniversary. It's hilarious, you'd say that. And I'm always joking like, "Hey, I'm just really happy you came into our world." And she's like, "No, I let you hire me four years ago. You're right. You control this."

Mike Paton:

Good.

Ryan Vestby:

But I will say I learned what I'm really good at and what I'm not good at. And I'm a great color commentator. I'm good at getting excitement, getting people rallied around these things, but I'm not a good manager and I'm not good at drawing the boxes around of growth and those trajectories. So I also realized... Like, it's a unique journey. I went from being an employee to an employer and that's rare. Because I literally spent the majority of my career being an employee with no ownership, no nothing.

And so one of the things... I remember the day when I got a piece of equity in the business, I just said, "I remember what it's like to be an employee. And I know what I liked and didn't like about being in it. I don't want to forget those moments so that people have that same feeling." And it's funny, I'll tie it back to when I played in the band, we'd tour with these bands that were huge, that were bigger than us. And they were our stars in our eyes. And I remember there would be certain artist that I'd go up to, "Hey man, I love your stuff," And they'd give your autograph or get something. And there would be two types of musicians, the ones that would give you the time of day and like really appreciated you for being there and saying that, and then the other ones that wouldn't give you the time of day.

And I remember saying that to myself, going, "If we ever get there is I will leave when everyone else leaves. If somebody wants an autograph wants this, wants to know about a story, I'm going to give them my time because they're the reason why we're even on this stage." And so I think those are the things that we learned along the way. And I love it. To be honest with you, I don't take a lot of the

airtime in our quarterly updates and our manager meetings or our weekly jams, I really don't. And it's our integrator that does a lot of it. And then just also our managers, I want them to develop those skills and really own this thing like they would themselves, right?

Mike Paton:

Yeah. That's good stuff. Have you ever watched somebody lead that was doing it poorly and said to yourself, "I need to quit doing that. Or I got to get better at that?"

Ryan Vestby:

I learned to [inaudible 00:29:40] a while back around intent and it's actually came from YPO. And if you think about conflict, we talk about conflict a lot in YPO forums and stuff. And a lot of times I misinterpreted conflict, because I didn't look through a lens of intent and I just assumed. It's how it was landing for me, so that's how I respond to it. And I didn't stop and think about intent. And so I've seen this in our business and I try to course correct it and have these conversations. I'll give you a real life example. We had one of our technicians, he was short paid on some overtime and he was a little functioning at the time I'm sure he would say the same thing, stormed into our CFO's office and said, "Hey, you short paid me and you're ripping me off. And you didn't pay me for what I did."

And our CFO he's quite gracious and he's a calm demeanor guys. So he's not an eight. And he just said, "I'll look into this. I don't know." And then that employee just stormed off. And I heard this just from the hallway. And so I went after him in a non-confrontational way. And I just said, "Hey man, I want you to think about something for a second. I want you to think about intent. Do you think the CFO's intent was just, 'Hey, you know what, we're going to short pay this guy this week. We're just not going to pay him for his overtime.' Do you really believe that that was his intent?" And of course our egos just cloud everything.

So he was like, "Yeah, he screwed me over." And I'm like, "Just breathe for a second. Do you really think he consciously did that?" And he's like, "Well, no. If that wasn't his intent, then should that be the response on how it landed for you?" So I saw those things, but I would have been that guy at 23 years old, where I would have stormed in and said, "How dare you?" And so I just think this self-awareness thing... And ego is a big problem in our societies. And I think it's the construct of structure has made us elevate these egos because we can't be real or vulnerable or open because gosh, that's looked as a weakness and it's wrong.

Mike Paton:

Yeah, there's a couple of things there. So first of all, I love you talking about intent. And I've found that teaching a team how to assume positive intent when their IDS-ing issues, gets them to solve a lot faster. Because the emotions associated with the assumption of negative intent go away, and then you can really focus on the issue at hand. And the issue is emotion. And sometimes it's driven by ego and sometimes it's driven by something else. And oftentimes it's stuff happening outside the business, but whatever it is, we tend to bring that stuff to work. And then when we hear people at odds with us, we assume there's an intent to create problems in our lives that exacerbate those things.

I think what's ironic for me, Ryan, is that egos also serve a super valuable purpose. Your career is owing to your desire to be really good at any job you've ever been given the opportunity to do, and that's an ego-driven mindset. It's this-

Ryan Vestby:

I agree.

Mike Paton:

... desire to be effective and exceptional is really a powerful tool. And so learning to moderate the throttle on that thing and recognize when your ego is bumping into the ego of somebody else, that is what makes for a great team work and great leadership, for sure.

Ryan Vestby:

Yeah. You make a great point. Ego definitely has its purpose. I'll tell you a funny story though. My wife always says to me, "Nothing's ever enough." It's never enough for you, you always want more. And I'm sure people can resonate with this. I'll call it type a personality types are always striving for more. And she uses this term all the time, it's like, you're enough. And I try to take that and go, "I agree, I'm enough," and be able to try to enjoy this, still want that drive, but not to dismiss where I'm at today. And that's a hard thing to do, a easy thing to say. But everyone talks about enjoying the journey, it's not about the destination. And finding that balance, I think is just so important to be able to not only enjoy your life, enjoy what you're doing, so.

Mike Paton:

That's great stuff. Tell me what the future holds for the organization. What are you hoping for over the next five or 10 years?

Ryan Vestby:

Yeah, I'm really excited about where our space is going. There's some external drivers, external forces that could be viewed as negatives. One is cyber crime. Cyber crime's exploding right across the globe. I just recently did a presentation for the business council of Alberta. And some of the stats are just so staggering. Like right now it's costing nations about a trillion dollars per year for cyber crime. And I think it's 700 billion more than natural disasters. And so this isn't going away, it's exponential growth. Everyone you know would have some type of story about a cyber crime, but that's just created crazy opportunity for our industry, we're needed more than ever. And so I see a huge growth in the cybersecurity side of things. Once you build the trust with the relationships and those types of things, they're naturally customers are turning to the people that have helped them along the way, they're going to be able to manage that.

So I see some exciting opportunities for growth. I do believe the historical consolidation of our industry over the last 10 years. And what's happening is a lot of private equity and a lot of money has just really paid attention and go, "Gosh, recurring revenue. We like this, it's predictable." And so there's this almost feeding frenzy that's happening in regards to placing capital in our industry. But I do believe for our industry to survive and do well, I don't believe smaller MSPs are going to be able to survive and implement what they need to do to protect their customers from cyber crime. And they just won't have the capital to do it.

I think we need to be 50 to a hundred million dollars to be able to be relatively safe, to be able to manage it. So for me, it's like chair one is irrelevant to me. Where can I do my best work? What can we do? I'd be happy to sit at a table with other smart people, all rowing in the right direction to make that happen. So I think we'll see some of those... Those dialogues and conversations are always happening and just to be interesting to see how this all gets unpacked.

Mike Paton:

Awesome. Thank you for sharing that. That is the great difficulty we're facing right now. I think that the number of the frequency of problems being created in all of our lives because of cyber activity is just crazy. All right, one last question. Go back to your 21 year old self, taking a job for the first time. You now see the future and you're a leader in the future. What would you tell yourself is the one most important lesson to keep top of mind as you're developing as a young leader?

Ryan Vestby:

We have a core value here and it's be curious. And it's probably one of the most important core values we have, it's just curiosity and really, really trying to just dig into learning about everything, everywhere. And there's this difference between fixed and growth mindsets, which we all read about and learn about. I would tell my 21 year old self to just never take anything for face value that that is what it is. Is there a better, different way? Can we think of things differently and be willing to adapt, to change? Adapt to whatever environment you get in, and just be curious and learn as much as you can, because that is going to serve you well and no one can take that away from you.

Mike Paton:

You may not like that your cheese is moved, but it's going to move, get ready for it and deal with it, right?

Ryan Vestby:

Totally.

Mike Paton:

Yeah. That's great stuff.

Ryan Vestby:

I'll tell you one last thing, and then I know we got to run. But my wife always tells me this, and every time I think, I'm assuming some leaders have these imposter syndrome and they have these moments, I know I do. And I remember telling her every once in a while, [inaudible 00:37:48] "What if we blow this whole thing up? What if it just all goes to hell in a hand basket?" And she's like, "Well, so what." She's like, "No one can ever take your brain. And so you're good. You'll adapt and you'll go..." And sometimes just that moment of clarity is what I need. And I think people need to tell themselves... I need to tell myself that, "It's okay, it's all okay."

Mike Paton:

Your wife's a very smart woman. And it sounds like just like me, Ryan, you may have out kicked your coverage here.

Ryan Vestby:

More than you know.

Mike Paton:

Yes. Excellent.

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Ryan Vestby:

Thanks for that.

Mike Paton:

My pleasure. So if a listener wants to learn more about you or your company, where's the easiest place for them to go find more information?

Ryan Vestby:

CompuVision.biz, BIZ is our website. My Twitter handle, which I spend more time listening than talking, which seems to probably be a smart thing, is @RyanVestby, so you can find me there.

Mike Paton:

Awesome.

Ryan Vestby:

And yeah, I'd be happy to talk to anybody. I love meaningful conversations and I find some of the best conversations or the nuggets are in the most unlikely sources. That's the best part about life, you never know where they're going to come from.

Mike Paton:

Well, you're going to get a lot of people asking if you'll start each of those meaningful conversations with a pill bottle full of Jack Daniels, so that's your fault not mine, just so we're clear.

Ryan Vestby:

Totally.

Mike Paton:

Okay.

Ryan Vestby:

Yeah. I got to renegotiate my contract with Jack Daniels-

Mike Paton:

I think you do.

Ryan Vestby:

It expired about 20-

Mike Paton:

I think a re-sponsorship is... You got to figure out how to digitize that distribution model though.

Ryan Vestby:

Right.

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Mike Paton:

All right. This has been Mike Paton at the EOS leader podcast. Ryan, thanks so much for being generous with your time and your storytelling, you're a compelling guy and I learned a lot today. Hope you all feel the same way. This podcast is about helping each of us be better as a leader every day and you've contributed greatly to my journey. And I hope you contribute to the journeys of a lot of other listeners. So thank you so much.

Ryan Vestby:

Awesome. Thanks for having me.

Mike Paton:

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