

CHRIS: Okay. Excited to dive into a conversation here with Mayor Pete Buttigieg. Stan and I recorded this now several months ago on the front side of the pandemic.

Mayor Pete was just coming off his run for the presidency, which he really, you know, obviously broke out early, won the Iowa caucus, and went on to have a great run, and then was the first major candidate to endorse now-President Biden. He's been nominated to be President Biden's Secretary of Transportation – may have been confirmed by the time this is released.

We wanted to go back and revisit this because Mayor Pete makes some great points in this discussion around the lessons he had learned as a leader in the military, transferring over to a leader of a smaller city as a mayor, how those lessons mapped over to the national stage, where suddenly he's moving at this accelerated pace running for president, which would be obviously a tireless endeavor and your team grows very quickly, so it's a much different machine to try to lead and manage.

We wanted to spend some time listening to his thoughts then, and we're sure you'll map those lessons over now, as he moves on to the national stage as a member of the Cabinet. So, hope you'll enjoy this - a proven track record of leadership here. I'm excited to see Mayor Pete now Secretary, move on to his next position and certainly a name that the country will continue to hear about. Now over to Secretary, soon-to-be Secretary Buttigieg.

Thanks for joining us today, having a discussion with Mayor Pete Buttigieg, myself, Chris Fussell, and Stan McChrystal. Our goal on these series is just to continue the discussion around the current state and future of leadership. So, speaking with serious and experienced leaders from many different parts of life: from politics, to social leaders, to business leaders. And so, it's really an honor for us to have Mayor Pete joining us here today.

Mayor Pete, thanks again for making the time.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, sure thing. It's an honor to be with you today. Thanks for having me.

CHRIS: I'm going to try to moderate a little bit, but by all means, let's turn this into a discussion. But starting with you, Mayor Pete, would be curious first and foremost just your thoughts on how this change, what we're seeing inside the nation, especially, and then globally, how it's impacting leadership. Especially from your paradigm, that local mayor level, that is now the critical frontline leader in many ways in this fight.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, three things come to mind. The importance of leadership, the importance of government, and the importance of local leadership.

Well, I'll start with the importance of leadership. You know, I remember when [the former President] was elected, a lot of people I knew who were from the same political party but didn't think he was going to be good leader, also comforted themselves by saying it doesn't really matter. It doesn't matter that much. It's hard to sink a ship. And one of the things I think we're

experiencing right now is a reminder of just how important it is that we have real leadership in our most important positions.

A second thing that I think has been clear for some time, but it's becoming more and more visible is the importance of the local. You know, our Federalist system has always been designed for state leaders and local leaders to be able to take the reins, to try different things, to move with a lot of freedom of maneuver. But also, right now we're finding that often the local level is better able to get things done. Less crippled by bipartisanship, I think forced to be responsive to fact in a way that is just more immediate. I always explained it in terms of potholes, you know, when you're a mayor, and somebody says there's a hole in the road, you can't say, you can't claim otherwise. You can't throw out alternative facts because everybody can tell. And I think that creates a different kind of orientation at the local level that serves us well in a moment like this, where we're seeing a lot of fact-driven decisions by governors, by mayors, from both parties, that are really taken without regard to politics.

And then the third is the importance of government in general. The fact that, you know, there are some things that you cannot expect a business or a philanthropy to deal with. And that includes things like the massive mobilization in this country we will have to undertake to be capable of doing the testing we need to reopen safely, to the simple fact that there's just no other resource available to us as a country, as a species, than a well-run government to coordinate some of the large-scale actions and small-scale actions that need to happen without a profit motive. And with a view toward getting something done.

CHRIS: Yeah, it's great points that I'm going to ask Stan if you could build on that a little bit... I came up in a world of small teams in the SEAL teams, obviously, and it [was] just hyper-focused at that small level. But to your third point, as I got more senior and the world got more complex, [I] started to really understand the importance of big systems. And it's not intuitive for a lot of folks that we work with to hear people from our background talk about the importance of these large ecosystems, corporate models, government models, et cetera. And Stan, I'm wondering if you want to build on that just a little bit – how important that's becoming.

STAN: Yeah. It's the tapestry of the two. As Pete outlined, the reality of the pothole is there, but people who aren't close to it may say, wait a minute, why do I care about potholes somewhere? Well, they break down vehicles. They cost, they slow down transportation, and they affect all of us at some point indirectly.

So, I think what we've got to get is this - it's a hybrid. It is this hyper-understanding and sensitivity to what's happening local[ly], but also communicate across local boundaries so that we see the big picture. We understand where we have to prioritize limited resources, where we've got to allow lessons learned to flow, where we've got to allow our expertise to help each other. And that's what I think a nation like the United States has particularly will set up to do if we'll exercise that muscle.

CHRIS: Pete, I'm curious, are you seeing any sort of uniformity starting to evolve at the local level? The many mayor networks that are out there state, nationally, et cetera, in how sharing of

lessons, how they're viewing the problem, what data they should be looking for, and all these next ridgeline problems, school re-openings, et cetera. Is there a common model starting to evolve or is that still hyper-localized?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Maybe not uniformity, but there are certainly some patterns starting to emerge. First of all, mayors are really focused on ensuring that they've got the local players talking to each other. Remember, it's nobody's job officially in a local environment to bring together public health authorities, local government connections to state and national government, private sector actors to bring it together. And so, mayors are improvising.

Here in our community, for example, it was decided that the Chamber of Commerce chair would play a kind of quarterback role. Not because that's anywhere in his job description or in any local law, but because they wound up having the right combination of relationships between the hospital systems, the universities, the private sector and the public sector. And so, we see a lot of that kind of improvising happening among different layers.

As we look to those ridgeline problems, the one I'm hearing the most about from mayors, and this is pretty consistent, even though it takes different shapes in different states, is the simple problem of revenue and resources.

You know, a lot of local governments have been already cut down to muscle and bone. They're providing essential services. And, when you look at, for example, cities in Ohio that depend on income tax in order to be able to get their revenue, they're staring down the barrel of 20, 30, 40% cuts in a budget where there's no more fat.

We're talking about cutting police officers, firefighters, waterworks. There's nowhere else to look, when you get to those levels of cuts. And that's an example of something that is a very local issue that probably can't be solved without some kind of federal action, and it's why there's a lot of interest and attention to what Congress may do next, because it looks like the local governments and the local players have largely been left out this last round of negotiations.

CHRIS: Stan, if you can maybe make some comments on this observation. I hope and I'd like to talk more about some of ...the lessons, the positives that could come out of this on the backside... through a hard slog ahead. One around this idea the resiliency that we're learning it in an experience like this. That we have to have more interconnected and resilient models and Mayor Pete, you and I have spoken in the past about the fusion cells. You worked in one over during your active-duty time overseas, as did I. And Stan McChrystal had built those out in the counterterrorism fight.

I believe systems like that - give it whatever name you want - but that interconnected between healthcare, frontline healthcare operators, mayors, local leaders that are in the middle of a fight like this, for a disease pandemic or for the next sort of complex network threat, whether it's a massive cyberattacks or things that really can outpace the big federal system if we depend on us to do everything. Stan, can you talk a bit about your experiences in fighting network problems and how things like that started to evolve?

STAN: Sure. When we first started the counterterrorist fight, as Pete mentioned, as nobody in charge in many areas to bring different parts of government together, I used to ask the rhetorical question, “Who's in charge of the war on terror?”

And people would say the President is, and I'd say, okay, that's right. Who below him? And the answer was nobody below the President had authority to actually make different parts of the US government work together, much less our allies. So, it became a question of bringing everybody together, making them share contextual understanding that we cannot succeed in this unless we succeed in some measure in all of it.

It's like in a local area. If your schools are absolutely bankrupt, then the fact that you've got industries and go to work, because people aren't going to want to live there. No family's going to want to live in that area. There's so many things interrelated that we have got to create a shared consciousness for what matters in a society. And then we've got to understand that if we can't connect the pieces and create general, not perfect, but general solutions to those operating in our separate silos we'll be, you know, inherently ineffective.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: I just want to mention one thing. I love that phrase “general, not perfect” because I think there is this chase right now for the grand unified answer. And while there's some excellent theoretical work going on and some excellent comprehensive level work estimating, for example, how many tests per day nationwide is it going to take to be open safely? The reality is this is not going to get it. A group of researchers or leaders cooked up the solution, and then you go out there and deploy that solution exactly as it was invented on a whiteboard.

There's going to be iteration. It's going to be messy. It's going to rely heavily on trial-and-error expectations shifting. And so, I think we need to be thinking big enough that we have general ideas, general solutions that could be applicable everywhere. And at the same time, not let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

CHRIS: Mayor Pete, can we pivot off that a little bit to a discussion just around leadership in general - your views there. You've been through this amazing year being on the frontlines, running for President of the United States.

I can't imagine a more tiring thing to try to do day after day for an extended period. And now leaders everywhere are going through this similar [question]: how do we get from sprint to marathon pace to work ourselves through this? I'm curious first and foremost, your lessons from that last year, just how it changed your view on leadership being on the national stage and really trying to change the conversation.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, one thing that it did was really reinforced something that I guess I'd always believed, but never fully thought through, which is the importance of trust. When you are doing something as complicated as running for president, you really rely on your horizons being simplified for you, because it's simply not possible to keep track of all of the opportunities, all of the risks. It's not even possible to keep track of all of the coverage in major

news outlets of a particular remark you made the day before. And so just for deciding which things were going to require you to make a decision, understanding which things demand the most attention.

Believing that something that you say that an intention that you form and express to your team, will find its way through the leadership of the organization, out into the field, and ultimately the volunteers or supporters who aren't even on your payroll, but maybe they're there at a meeting or on Twitter on your behalf, and it matters that they carry the tone and the principles that you care about.

The only way any of that works is a colossal amount of trust. You know, even just the way you move through your day. Things reach such a pace where I only barely knew someday some moments what city I was in until I looked up from the briefing I was reading on the airplane or in the vehicle. To move at that speed really requires a level of belief that the people that you've entrusted with the key functions of organizing everything from your day to the execution of your mission. Trust makes it all possible. And then you have to reflect on what's being what trust is being placed in you in return - that you're going to make decisions consistent with the values that motivated them to be part of this in the first place, that you're going to try to take care of them just as they're taking care of you.

The dependency in a way that comes along with being very senior, I think turns upside down some of what we think about leadership because you really do turn to so many people in order to get anything at all done. I'd say that's the biggest thing that I felt in both the day-to-day and the big picture when it came to when running for president.

STAN: Okay, can I jump right to take away in a second? Can I jump on that? Because I watched your campaign with a lot of admiration and I sometimes ask people, you know, what it is makes a good leader? And people come back with fairly similar lists. But to me, the difference is the self-discipline to actually hold yourself to that on a constant basis when you're on something like a presidential campaign, which is exhausting. It's almost disorienting, and it's got to be at times frustrating. How do you maintain the self-discipline, that seems so evident to us who are watching?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: No, we actually had it as a watchword in what we call the "rules of the road" that I asked again, not just of staff members and myself, but even people who wanted to contribute or volunteer, to pay attention to we called the "rules of the road."

And one of them was discipline for exactly this reason that, you know, sometimes, especially in leadership literature, a lot of what is suggested just seems so numbingly obvious, except in the heat of the moment, right? To actually hold these... Of course, you should trust your team. Of course, you should set priorities. Of course, you should gather good information. Of course, you should ask a question. But these things are sometimes easily said, but when you're just on the fly, they start to fall away. That's where I found a couple of things were really important. One was to... earn that trust. I also trusted the team would alert me if we were slipping on something.

And the other thing, even though we had a pretty well-established structure for our campaign, was actually the role of informal information gathering. The sort of, tilt of the head I might get from somebody who was quite junior in the organization who might be at an event or from a supporter or from my husband who was the person best positioned to deliver ideas or information or observations outside of the traditional channels. Right. And that stuff actually adds up in very important way, to check on your discipline because when you're drifting, you need to know that somebody will be able to spot it.

And by the same token, you need to be able, even as you have an exquisite level of trust in your top team, to be able to help them see when maybe the organization is starting to drift on some important principle.

CHRIS: Can I build on that? Just to ask a follow-up question? This is one of the things that Stan and I had long conversations about this personally, and then with students that we work with, around personal routine.

And one of the points we try to make to young up-and-coming leaders is you're probably got all these strengths, right? You're one of the smarter people in the room, you're incredibly motivated, et cetera. Right. But as your life gets more complex, you're going to have to figure out how do I maintain my balance?

How do I stay mentally fit? How do I maintain some level of peak performance? How do I not go off the rails and get angry at people all the time? Again, back to the pace you've just been through for the last year: how did you do that? What was your routine? Whether from morning to night, how did you stay physically fit, et cetera?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Yeah, it became really important to be intentional about these things. And while a routine, as such is pretty much impossible on a campaign, we could create what I call the sort of "rhythm," which is the next best thing to a routine. Knowing that more than two or three days would go by without having a consistent team find a route and enough time for me to take a long run, making sure that there were certain things that we could just count on kind of cycling through from time to time: a little bit of time to read, even if it was just enough to read something that it wasn't related to the campaign. Just to get your mind firing on, you know, to get those cylinders, working.

One of the things that I concluded as mayor, and certainly it was true as a candidate, was that when you reach that level of intensity in terms of your schedule, actually the best way to decide something is important is to make it a scheduling. Even a person - one of the best ways to express your decision that a person is important is to make a norm of committing some of your time and attention to them. And when every minute of your time is programmed, that means communicating that to staff. I made sure that there was a little bit of time between when the day ended and when I actually went to sleep, even if it was for stumbling line was like television, making sure that, that something went through what was left in my mind before my head hit the pillow.

I'll say now I'm in a very different reality where, of course, we don't have the constant motion of travel with campaign. I would argue routine is maybe more important than ever in this pandemic situation. I mean, some of those might vary depending on personalities and what people are like. But for me, for example, I thought it very important to just take some little steps that make weekends different from weekdays, in order to have some grasp of the passage of time. And in order to frankly, make leisure more leisurely, as well as work more productive - something that I didn't get to do much during the campaign.

Literally, the only way I knew if it was a weekend, was the television programs were a little different when I was drifting off to sleep, or if I was headed to church or a Sunday show, I knew it must be Sunday, but usually only after I've woken up. This is an opportunity for me, I think, to discover a little bit about what makes me more productive and I'm trying to make the most of it.

CHRIS: Stan, can I ask you to build on that? Because I think this question is so important and a lot of the leaders, we're talking with now are trying to figure out this isn't a three-week problem. What's this going to look like for me and my team for the next six months, 12 months and beyond. You've been hyper disciplined in your own rhythm and schedule for years, but how has this affected and how are you pivoting through it?

STAN: Yeah, it's great. I smiled when Pete talked about being intentional, because I even put when I take a shower on my calendar, My wife thinks I'm an idiot, but I literally....

CHRIS: It's a bit extreme.

STAN: Yeah. I agree. [It] forces me to do that, but you're exactly right. I have to be very... I have to work out every day or mentally I don't do very well. It's almost not related to others... So, what I try to do is set myself up a set rhythm. In the morning, I try to work out first thing in the morning. I go through things. I do certain times when I connect, there are times when I find that I let a priority slip.

In Afghanistan, we did something when I was the commander that I'd learned from the chairman. My staff at the beginning of every month would get all my priorities for me. And we'd write down what I'm going to spend 20% of my time on this and 20% on this. And, and then at the end of the month, they would take my calendar and they would compare what I had said I was going to do and what I did. And I would invariably go, well, I'm going to stop doing that, that, and that. And there were certain things, of course you couldn't dodge, but it was a great way to go back and sort of check yourself. Am I doing what I really say is important to me?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: One thing that I think is really interesting about that is deciding what to, cut up your time by. What's your lens going to be? We did a similar exercise in the mayor's office and some was by issue area. How much of the time I were working on the economy? How much of the time am I working on housing?

Another way we thought about it that I found very helpful was the balance of internal versus external. When am I with my top team? When am I with people in the organization who are not

the people in the organization, you get to see me all the time - a more junior people. And when am I with external stakeholders?

It was a member of my office who put together a different cut on my time that we hadn't paid much attention to, that turned out to be very important - which was geographic. You wouldn't think that you'd pay a lot of attention in the local level to geography the way you might in a line of work that had a lot of travel, but, you know, one of the most important dynamics in our city, which experienced a lot of racial segregation and a lot of neglect over the years, right, was that certain parts of the city felt that they were getting less attention, fewer resources than others. And by mapping the way that my time was spent, we realized that we could be more intentional about where I was going and even take something that could be held anywhere and be intentional about where it happens.

So, it got to where our cabinet meetings were almost never held at the office because we knew we could make a choice. Having it at an organization or someplace else made sure that, in addition to doing our thing, there was an interaction with a group that was hosting us. And so often it's actually the least obvious part of that process of analyzing your time is what's your unit of analysis.

I think you can learn a lot by asking people, "Okay, how would you break this down? Is it by type? Is it by place? Is it by people?" And you can do that so many different ways. This is speaking my language and it can definitely be taken to an extreme and, and sometimes things have to breathe a little bit, but even then, sometimes it's in the, when you discover the gravity pulls you to one side from how you think your time ought to be organized. Sometimes that teaches you something about yourself too.

STAN: I obviously break it into a quality as well because Chris knows me very well from our time in combat together, there are certain hours of the day from Stan McChrystal that aren't worth very much. Later in the day, you know, you can engage with me and I, you know, I could do anything stupid. And so, I have certain periods when I'm better than others, and I have to sort of mentally allocate and prioritize those as well.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Quality and quantity. That's great.

CHRIS: I'd love to pivot that discussion a little bit towards business leaders specifically. And then one last topic I'd like to hit on around sort of what's next.

But I think that's a critical point that we're trying to make consistently with leaders, especially as we're now in this remote connected environment. I mean, something, Mayor Pete, you had to live in running for office, right? You're talking through a camera to people all the time.

That's the new behavior for a lot of leaders as the only medium. And we're trying to remind them, you don't have the hallway anymore. So, if you have a bad meeting and everyone closes their window, that's the last time you're going to touch them for maybe three days. You can't clean that up in the hallway. So really thinking through: how do I time and get myself at peak

performance for those moments is going to be critical. I'd be curious, Mayor, your thoughts on the positive outcomes we may see long-term from this - because sometimes it can be hard to see in the moment. Obviously, we have a lot of challenges in front of us, but I do think we're learning a certain set of sense of resilience and grit as a society. I'm just curious what you think may be some of the long-term benefits of struggling through this.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Yeah, I think there's a lot to be learned. It can see [or] feel sometimes a little odd or even improper to talk about a bright side in a terrible situation. But the reality is the bigger a shock, the more consequences they'll be, and those would be good as well that, some of the things that I'm seeing that are encouraging. First of all, our renewed sense of purpose. I'm seeing a lot of folks finding ways to apply themselves, to help deal with the situation.

Another thing that I think is really important is a different level of awareness on our interdependence and how much we rely on each other - and trying to make the most of that. I think we are going to learn more about different methods of interacting and communicating. I think that we'll come out of this with a much more keen awareness of what we can do tools like video conferencing, but actually I think the biggest thing we'll learn is how important certain kinds of in-person interactions are that we didn't think about. I think the hallway is a great example, you know, reflecting on it now, again, I'm thinking about things like my cabinet meeting here. One of the most important functions of that was that it created chance encounters between senior leaders who were peers, who didn't always interact with each other.

Just seeing the person in charge of the fire department, sitting next to the person in charge of the police department and having to, you know, just filling in a couple of minutes of small talk. "Oh, by the way, I meant to ask you," or, "Do you notice this?" And it helps the kind of collective culture form and problems get solved and you're right, it also helps you correct for things that happen on the official level, in a conversation, that really don't get built-out or corrected or addressed if there's no other interaction - if there's no other occasion to see and deal with people.

So, I think we're going to learn a lot about ourselves. We're going to learn a lot about how people, teams, communities, and organizations function. I think we will come out of this with a greater readiness to pay attention to facts. You know, there's been a lot of talk of us living in a post-fact reality where everything from intelligence assessments to scientific discoveries are being waved away by people in positions of responsibility.

I think that'll be a lot harder to do now that we've been brought face-to-face with the terrible consequences of ignoring science, but also hopefully the tremendous virtues and advantages of the inventiveness and discipline of the people who are working right now to offer the technical solutions to this problem, including, but not limited to, a vaccine.

CHRIS: Yeah, I couldn't agree more. Stan, what are your thoughts on that? You've been having tons of conversations with senior leaders. Can you describe some of their views right now and sort of the near-term and long-term potential upsides here?

STAN: Yeah. I think the one that jumps out and, and Pete alluded to it, it's understanding how society actually works when you stress it, and you learn where the supply chains really are. And you notice when we said all nonessential central workers go home and then a good percentage of the essential workers were people who aren't at the top of the income scale. And you suddenly say, "Oh, wait a minute. Who really matters compared to another thing?"

And we find out that local matters a lot, but in today's world of sort of celebrity-based news, we had this tendency to always look at that at the top of the mountain. But it's the mass of the mountain that matters. It's how America works or doesn't work. And so, I think it's a wake-up call for us as leaders to look at the interdependencies, look at that the things that, that matter most to us and to focus our efforts, to make sure that they are strongest.

It gets to the trust you talk about during your campaign. We trust that there's going to be food in the grocery store. Most of us don't know how the food gets there, but we trust there will be. We're actually not trusting plants or animals but trusting and a bunch of people who make all this work. And to the degree which we can re-educate ourselves on that I think will be hugely powerful and positive.

CHRIS: Just a final sort of closing comment here and Mayor Pete, to get your reaction to this. I think one of the hopeful upsides in all this, I've a good friend who's a member of Parliament and we speak a couple of times a month. And he told me recently, so, you know, no one in Europe knew what a mayor did in the United States until three months ago. He said, now your mayors are all over the headlines here in the UK and beyond. And you're really starting to understand how the US governs itself locally, which he saw as a great upside benefit long-term.

So, all that to say, I think you've done an amazing example over the last year of just presenting that on the national stage. All of us are better for it. And especially now it's good to see that local level leader step up and really help those around them in their community.

Over to you: any closing thoughts as we wrap up here?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, I appreciate your naming that. I of course [am] a little biased from my background, but I think it's something that deserves to be paid... deserves a lot more attention. And I think it is a global phenomenon. The waves that cities even on the most global problems, climate is a good example, where a lot of cities have now reached out to support one another and meeting climate goals, because we got tired of waiting on our respective national capitals to catch up. Again, at the same time that local problem-solving is that it's most impactful when local leaders are networked well with each other, and when there are larger national systems and processes that can put all of that insight to work and support it. So, I think a different kind of understanding of federalism, you know, just like a different kind of understanding of our interdependence, could be one of the fruits of this, uh, of this moment.

And we're going to need it in order to deal with the other 21st century security challenges. Right alongside global health security, we've got cybersecurity issues, climate security issues, that just

aren't going to fit into the old boxes. And now's the time to innovate and to expect more of our ourselves and each other.

So, I'm looking forward to remaining in touch about the different insights that we're seeing and the ways I think to apply different kinds of models from across the world, to business, military, government and health, because there's every time to draw threads from across different sectors in different disciplines and different ways of solving problems we're in it.

CHRIS: Indeed. This certainly is the time for innovation. Mayor Pete Buttigieg, thank you for taking the time to join myself and Stan McChrystal. Good luck to you and your team.

SECRETARY BUTTIGEG: It's a pleasure. Likewise. Thanks very much.

CHRIS: So, as I mentioned at the opening, this recording goes back to the beginning of the COVID pandemic, and Mayor Pete, as we all knew him then, soon-to-be-secretary Buttigieg was kind enough to offer some thinking right out of the gates because he had come off of his presidential campaign and obviously has been very busy since that time. But there are reflections from his time, you know, 10 months ago that I think are equally, if not even more so relevant now, around what's going on nationally and where he's about to go on the national stage as a member of the Cabinet under the Biden administration.

So, the one idea that jumped out to both Stan and I we'll spend some time talking about is towards the middle or end of the discussion where Mayor Pete is talking about the development of trust, right?

Because he had gone from, in the military... where trust is obviously critical, to running a city as the mayor, but still in a community where there was probably a lot of personal understanding. He'd grown up there, in that area. And then suddenly on the national stage and his recognition that to move as fast as I need to move to run for President, I have to trust people in every direction, some of whom I've probably never even met, to keep me on heading, give me the right talking points, keep us organized, et cetera. So, Stan would love to just frame up a discussion on that and your reflections on his views there.

STAN: Yeah, I thought we witnessed him talking about his personal journey with trust, and I'm going to take it to yours in mind. You were a Navy SEAL and in the early years, as a young SEAL officer, you were the very limited number of SEALs. And you know them, you know their families, you know how they walk in the dark, you can see it a shadow and know who it is on your team.

And then suddenly when we got into the larger fight in Iraq as Joint Special Operations Command became this machine, suddenly we had to trust people [that] we didn't have years and years with. We had to trust people that we had fairly limited interactions with. And I thought I saw Mayor Pete on that same journey. He had been a mayor. And that's still somewhat bounded. And then suddenly he's in this political campaign, which by nature is an ad hoc entity. You're bringing all kinds of people who volunteer and he's trusting his message, his reputation, not to

mention his wellbeing and his transportation, and all that to a bunch of people that he's had very little interaction with actually, and to people who this is probably the first time for them as well. And I found the fact that that seemed to imprint itself on his psyche really interesting.

CHRIS: Yeah, I agree. It'll be fascinating to watch him take that then to, to the national level, because he's learned the right the right lesson, one of many, but that is a point that I can say personally, and I think a lot of folks from our background would say this: most people fail at that the first time it hits them in the face. And for me, it was somewhere between leading those small units, as you describe, and I say that to folks all the time, like when they try to understand what special operations units are like, I say, well, imagine, you know, 20 people, well enough where in the pitch dark, you can recognize someone by their gait from 20 yards.

That's how close those teams are. Most people think you're making that up, but it's absolutely true. So that level of trust is different, and you can't be around that many people at scale, right, to develop it like that. And there was a recognition somewhere in the, you know, X number of years in where suddenly your unit is a couple of hundred people and you realize you are defaulting to the old behaviors with your other leadership team and trying to create that team-based mentality, which isn't a bad thing.

But I know I was forgetting, there are people outside of this office that I also need to develop a different type of, but also trust-based, relationships with. And I think some people avoid it, some people take on a caricature to try to develop in a way that is not natural, but I think a lot of peers and myself, you struggle with that first point when you realize I can't develop trust-based relationships with all these people, with the tools I've developed so far. There's just not enough time in the day.

I'm sure you remember moments of your own career going through those transitions.

STAN: Yeah, exactly. It suddenly gets bigger. And at first, because you want to control things because you don't want to get hurt or disappointed. And so, you get to larger level units and there's a point of what you got to look at, somebody in the eye that you've never met or dealt with before and say, "I need you to do this. I can't check on it. I'm not going to be there with you. I trust you and it may be a life-or-death situation."

And I think that you have to come to the conclusion that if you don't trust, there's just limits on what you can do. They used to be an old saying in the army that I hated, and it said, "a unit does well, that's what the boss checks." And I hated it because it insinuated that they won't do things that the boss isn't going to check well. And I think that's a mindset that limits the scale at which you can lead.

CHRIS: I think there's an important aspect of that transformation and I encourage leaders to do this all time, figure out how you best communicate at those at those different levels, whether it's from the small team to the several hundred, to the several thousand and beyond.

I like to communicate at scale in long-form. You know this about me, and you've seen me do it. I'm better suited to write not every week, but with some regularity, quarterly sort of a deeper reflection to a larger team. Here's where I think we are. Here's why I think it matters. I try not to write just a standard like strategy update.

We're trying to put some personal thought on the page. Sometimes sharing experiences from the service, drawing analogies, talking about my family, stressors of the last quarter, whatever it may be or in the military context. That's one of many ways you can do it, but I do think it's important to figure out what are the tools that work for you so that your now hundreds or thousands of people can develop some sort of relationship that is different but has some similarities to being able to recognize silhouettes in the night. Right. A real honest understanding of one another.

STAN: I think your long form is remarkably effective in the way you use it, because essentially what you're doing is you're telling somebody, "Here's the background. I trust you with this." And I think communicating to people when you are giving them trust and expecting them to live up to that, is really important. I think we don't often enough in society. And I think that when he's at the Cabinet level, it'll be interesting to see what Mayor Pete runs into because there will be times he will be let down by political maneuvering or people who say one thing and then go to the press with something else.

And of course, I'm sure he's experienced that before, but how do you respond to that? Because you know the reflexive way is to get angry and not trust anymore and become a different kind of person. And yet, I think the people who can rise above that are capable of much higher levels of leadership.

CHRIS: Can I just one point in closing here, ask you to comment on ... a tool that I saw you use in a very genuine way. It was not a card trick by any means, was writing letters to people in and out of your organization from active-duty military to, partners, spouses. And I know that because when I was on your aid, I was in the team that coordinated that.

And it wasn't, just for those listening, a letter a week. There were times where there were seven letters being written in a day. There were well over somewhere between 1200 and 1500 letters the year that I was on your staff, which is in an enormous amount of traffic while you're also fighting a war. And, you know, there was a machine behind that, and it's a practice you continue to this to this day. Can you talk a little bit about how you leveraged that in this arena of creating this trust, that distance?

STAN: Yeah. Uh, from my standpoint, particularly in today's world, where you can communicate by telephone by VTC [video teleconference], by email—a handwritten note carries special power. Because when I get one from someone I said, now, wait a minute, they stopped what they were doing in for a little while. That's all they did, because that's all you can do. You're focused on it.

If you're writing one to somebody junior or outside the organization that you had limited interaction, there's also a moment when you knew their name. You stopped and you made sure I

knew who that person was because, obviously, [to] write the note. You have to write it personal enough to show I enjoyed our conversation about X, whatever. And it's my way of trying to build some kind of personal connection between people, whether it's my gratitude or whether it's just recognizing them for something, because I think it's one step away from just sort of mass communication. I can tweet out and I can tell everybody X, but when I communicate with that person, that way, I think it has power.

And so different people do personal phone calls more than I do, as you know, I don't love to talk on the phone, so I don't do that a lot, but whatever it does that allows you to establish a personal relationship with people. Each person I think is very, very rewarding.

CHRIS: Well, I'm confident Mayor Pete, soon-to-be Secretary, will carry those lessons on. I look forward to seeing how he leveraged that at the national level. Great discussion. We wish him in and the incoming administration the best of luck.

STAN: Absolutely.