

Jerry Colonna:

Hey, Rob, it's great to see you again. It really is. I mean, I just popped in and I was like, oh, I'm excited. I'm talking to Rob today. Before we jump in, can you take a moment and introduce yourself?

Rob Castaneda:

Sure. My name is Rob Castaneda and I am Australian with a mother from Malta, a father from El Salvador, wife from the Philippines living in California. So usually when someone says, where are you from? That's like, well, what context? But I'm the founder and CEO of a technical services company called Service Rocket, which operates in many of those countries and other countries around the world doing a lot of work with Silicon Valley software companies, a lot of work with Atlassian and helping customers be successful with their software.

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah, so thank you. And I actually really appreciated the sort of pause on Australian and fill in the blanks behind you. Because I think, as you know, it's relevant to the conversation I was hoping to have today, but it's also relevant. I remember when we first met, and I don't remember the connecting point, but I remember really resonating with you about some of the things that you were working on. And I'll also add that you're highly involved in the EO chapter in San Francisco. Is that correct?

Rob Castaneda:

Yeah, the Entrepreneurs' Organization has been a really big part of my growth. I actually joined EO in Sydney in 2006, 2007. And then when I moved to the US in 2008, 2009, I joined the chapter here. And I've been president before. And this year, I'm serving as president again. And it's just a great organization that's member-led and has a lot of mentorship and really, you know, that whole story of paying it forward and having things come back and help. I've met so many great mentors and people through the organization. So, you know.

Jerry Colonna:

You know, I was struck by that because, you know, as we began, and we'll unpack a little bit more of your story and the relevancy of this conversation, I was struck by, and this could be a projection, correct me if I'm wrong, but your commitment to that paying it forward. One of the things that...I remember you sharing was just how important it was, not only for your journey as an entrepreneur and a CEO, but really how you live in this way of service and really being involved in the community. And I was grateful for that and admiring of that. I think it's an essential part of what makes a great entrepreneurial community is that commitment there. So just thank you for that.

Rob Castaneda:

Yeah, thank you.

Jerry Colonna:

So I have this, when we first met, you shared with me a story. And in part because we were talking a little bit about some of the themes in my new book, Reunion, about the challenges of responding to a world that is rife with division and separation, and more specifically, the wish to belong.

And you told me a little bit about what you all have been doing at Surface Rocket, specifically as it relates to this diverse employee group, where diversity is measured, if you will, by the number of countries represented by your staff. Am I recalling that correctly?

Rob Castaneda:

Yeah, I've listened to a lot of your podcasts and material and Sarah Brown put us in touch and I shared with you because your latest book kind of in parallel or really reinforces some of the stuff that we've been doing at Service Rocket. And if I back up a little bit, like the belonging thing, I think for me, you know, I grew up in Western Sydney, half Salvadorian, half Maltese, and I only knew two other people of that makeup, and those were my two older brothers.

And so it was interesting growing up being, you know, in the group, out of the group and trying to work out where we really landed and kind of like different worlds. We would have, you know, Christmas and other celebrations with my grandparents from Malta who were there and that was our entire family. It was just my grandparents and my dad was always lonely. So he had moved from El Salvador to Sydney in the 70s and he moved alone and so he was always hard working, extremely hard working, but he was always I think keeping busy because he, he had left his life, right? And...

Jerry Colonna:

How old was he when he moved?

Rob Castaneda:

He was in his 20s actually when he left. And he was like 1970, 71 when he got to Australia. And he worked in a metal painting factory, a metal works factory where his job was painting the inside of the tanks that go in the ground under the gas stations. And so he used to tell me that was his job. And so, you know, if I fast forward growing up, I fell into tech and I managed in like 1997 to score a trip to the US and I... Ray, my manager then heard my story and said, Hey, can I, I asked him, can I go to El Salvador after going to Philadelphia? And, and Ray paid for the trip. He paid for the extra. And I went to El Salvador and I got to see where my dad grew up, the environment he grew up. And it was kind of weird in my head. I was like, I still remember the smell landing, the smoky smell. I still remember the the fires as your, you know, small fires of rubbish burning. And when you're landing on the plane and I had this excitement saying, Oh, I'm going to be reunited with my family. And then it dawned on me when I landed there that, you know, I didn't speak Spanish. Right? Obviously I knew that before, but, um, and I was,

Jerry Colonna:

Right. Right. But the visceral truth of it hit you.

Rob Castaneda:

Oh yeah, it was like, oh, I belong but I don't belong. And I felt very welcome. But it was again, one foot in, one foot out. And that whole experience for me, I think it's helped me in, or definitely has shaped my leadership style and where I am, because I always have this feeling of, you know, who's in the click and who's out of the click and what is the click and what is the, what are those things? And so it's enabled me to just be comfortable actually be able to see it like very black and white and and then work out okay well I have a lot of empathy for that insecure feeling of not feeling like you're belonging... that even if the other group is totally unaware of it. And so it's not like, you know, deliberate.

Is it systemic? You know, I think it's just situational, you know? And in a multicultural world where migrants are moving, there's a lot of things that aren't seen, aren't remembered, or are asked to be forgotten, you know? And so I bring a lot of that to our company and in the culture that I'm trying to foster and we're trying to build. And...So yeah, so that's been a big thing. And I think the last five years in particular, that's really, really bubbled to the top.

Jerry Colonna:

I appreciate the background on that. Would you be okay if we just talked a little bit more about your father's story?

First of all, is he still with us? So what is his first name and what do you call him?

Rob Castaneda:

Oh yeah. So his name is Francisco. He likes to be called Frank. And we call him Chook, which is short for chicken.

Jerry Colonna:

Oh. I had no idea that there was a nickname like that. How wonderful. No, but I love it. I totally love it. And I don't know if we'll have the video clip of this, but folks should see how lit up your face is as you think about calling him that. And so I just want to go back in time and just imagine somebody who is in their mid -20s emigrating from El Salvador to Australia to Sydney and climbing inside or stepping perhaps even in half inside of a metal tank to spray it and just imagining what he left behind and what he encountered when he landed there.

What do you know of that story?

Rob Castaneda:

So he has this map, this world map in his little area at home, and he kind of traces...He has the trip traced on that map and he had to go.

Jerry Colonna:

The trip from El Salvador to Sydney.

Rob Castaneda:

Yeah. And he had to go from. He couldn't land in the U S so he had to go via Canada and then. You know, back down around. Um, the story he told me was that his friend was working. His friend also from El Salvador was working in that metal work factory in in Seven Hills. And um...the foreman had asked his friend, hey, do you have any other friends? We're short on labor. We need help. And his friend said, sure. I've got a friend who can be here next week. And he called my dad and said, get over here. And I know my dad borrowed some money from an auntie who's still with us. And he goes and visits her quite a lot. And so he landed and kind of made the trip on a whim. And he would they would share because they lived on campus. And so although he...

Jerry Colonna:

In like workers housing or something?

Rob Castaneda:

Yeah, in workers housing in the camps. And he didn't have a spot. So he actually shared with his friend. And my dad in his humorous way would say, I was like the employee of the month. I was the best worker because I would get up before the guards came by and I would jump the fence and I would go and wait outside at the gate to get in. And they're like, hey, Francisco is always the first one here. So.

Jerry Colonna:

Right.

Rob Castaneda:

So there's a lot of, um, savviness or I think when you're in that situation, those little things you do to just get by or to get through, you know, they, they all, um, yeah, they kind of stick with you and you like, those are things where if you put it in front of somebody right now saying, Hey, this is your opportunity...You're going to do this. You're going to get on a plane with less than a week's notice. You're going to go there. You're not going to know where you're going to sleep. You're going to sleep with someone else so that you have a bed. And you're going to jump the fence every morning and turn up at work and then get into the into the gas tank and paint it. And that's your that's your future. Right. And that would be hard to convince someone to do that these days.

Jerry Colonna:

Yes, it may have been hard to convince someone to do that those days. And so the only thing I can surmise is that alternative was better than what he was facing at home. Is that a fair statement? And if so, what was he facing at home?

Rob Castaneda:

Yeah, I would agree with that. I think El Salvador, those times, it was before the major civil war

broke out. But I know economically and just, you know, potential wise, things were not great. You know, prospects were not great.

Jerry Colonna:

Right, those were probably the conditions that helped foster and lead to the Civil War.

Rob Castaneda:

Yeah, yeah, parts of it, yeah. And so I don't think he was under any imminent threat back then, but from a, hey, where am I going? What am I doing? You know, where is my future? I think that was big for him.

Jerry Colonna:

And so he traced this journey. He went from El Salvador to Canada. Is that right?

Rob Castaneda:

Yeah, I think the trip had him go via Canada to get to Australia. I think at that stage, there was no visa, not allowed to land in the US or transit. So yeah, he went around.

Jerry Colonna:

Hmm. Hmm. So he went El Salvador, Canada, Canada, US, US, Australia.

Rob Castaneda:

I think Canada, I don't know whether they stopped in Hawaii or Fiji or somewhere in the Pacific and then into Sydney. So yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

I see. And you mentioned that he has a map. Why is the map there?

Rob Castaneda (17:19.374)

I can understand what he's doing or why that was important for him to retrace that trip. I think that trip for him is one of his biggest achievements. Like, hey, I did that.

Jerry Colonna:

He's proud of it.

Rob Castaneda:

He's very proud of it. But I also think that that comes with a lot of regret. So I think he left a lot behind. And there's that opposing balance of when you leave family and friends behind in a particular place and go to another place, the more successful you are, the more, or the more, or the more, success is the word, but the better off things happen for you as a result of that. The counterbalance is what you feel for those who, right? who didn't, especially in a mindset, you know, not of every man for himself.

Jerry Colonna:  
Right.

Rob Castaneda:

And so, you know, I think that weighs on him. And, you know, he has a very humble and modest house and all the things that go with it. It hasn't moved from where I grew up. My parents are still there. Many things are still the same.

Jerry Colonna:

I can't help but think about...And this is obvious to you when I say it out loud. But parallel, you just made an observation about one who moves away. It's sort of the classic immigrant migrant story, the one who moves away towards a better life, feeling both the pride and the regret, the loss of what was left behind.

I think about the poignancy of landing, you landing in El Salvador not knowing Spanish. Right, because language is such a powerful carrier of culture and belonging. Who do we belong to? Can I speak with and to my ancestors, my family? And in no way is service rocket equivalent to standing inside of a gas tank and painting it...And yet your father's journey across all those states and all those countries in some ways landed you right in San Francisco, paying it forward to other entrepreneurs. Am I seeing that correctly?

Rob Castaneda:

Yeah, I'm now the migrant on the other side of the Pacific.

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah.

Rob Castaneda:

Although I think the... the...The energy I take is, because I'm blessed to be able to go back a lot. And so I don't have this feeling that I've left something. But the energy I take is how do I enable other rocketeers and others who are going on similar journeys to my dad or my grandfather on my mother's side, my grandparents.

Jerry Colonna:

The Maltese family.

Rob Castaneda:

On the, on the Malta. Yeah. And, um, you know, how do you, how do you, how do I, right? Take the, the vessel that we have as Service Rocket and how do we allow them to come in and use it for them to get to the next step? But also, I think as part of that, not erase their backgrounds, but embrace their backgrounds. And what they bring, what everyone brings forward in that, I think the part of me is like, it's a pretty boring world if all of us are exactly the same.

Jerry Colonna:

Amen, brother. I want to make the connection back to you said something before you said, the challenge of belonging, especially over the last five years, what's been your experience of that?

Rob Castaneda:

So coming into like, it's going on a bit more than five years now, but so 2016, so my grandparents were always around, always there. And 2016 was when my grandmother's health started failing. And I also took control of my health. Like that triggered me to say, okay, well I better start doing something as I'm approaching 40. And, um over the subsequent years and also, you know, starting around then our business started to go south and we were trying to do too many things.

And I think this culminated at the end of 2017 with, around that time my grandmother had passed away. The business was in a mess. And I remember being in the shower saying, okay, what am I gonna do? Hey, am I gonna, you know, do we make lots of sales? Like, how do we untangle this? We've got so many commitments. Do I sell this?

And I went down the pathway of, hey, if I sell this, what would I do? I was like, great, I will, I could go and coach someone else's business and help them and grow something else. And I basically just said to myself, a voice came over me and said, why don't you just acquire your own business? And literally I switched and say, yeah, I know where all the bodies are buried. Right. I know.

Jerry Colonna:

Right. It would be the wisest acquisition out there.

Rob Castaneda:

I mean, hey, you know, and, and, you know, I've definitely been complicit in creating this scenario around me. So, um, how do I like, okay. Like, so I actually took that mindset almost immediately. And we were, you know, as a business, we were ready to be a statistic back then. And...

Jerry Colonna:

A negative statistic, I imagine.

Rob Castaneda:

Yeah. But like, hey, 20 years, you had a good run, right? It's like, well, you know, close enough to it, right? And so I actually literally reacquired my own business. And in here, we have this balance wheel exercise. I think it's pretty common, right? You look at your health, your finances, your business, your relationships. And I actually said, you know what? I'm going to reacquire my whole wheel.

Jerry Colonna:

Right. Right.

Rob Castaneda:

And so that started with physical work, health work, a lot of mental learning, psychology, things like that, coaching work. Amy, my wife and I, who we met at high school, we have three beautiful kids. We went to marriage coaching not to solve a problem, but to answer the question, are we doing what we can to be the best that we can be for each other? Right? That was an amazing experience. And then on the business side, and also back then I had committed to take my grandfather at my grandmother's funeral, I'd committed to take my grandfather back to Malta to his village.

And so, what five months before that we're almost dead as a company. And in my head I said I'm going, I'm taking pop. And I remember in April of that year, we did an all hands saying, okay, this is where everything's at and what we're doing. And you know, up until that date, all hands meetings for me were really stressful. Like really stressful. Like not eat, borderline throw up, just try and get, just to explain to the team what we were doing, regardless of the result. Right?

Jerry Colonna:

Right. So even if the results you were reporting were good, the stress was there.

Rob Castaneda:

Yeah. And I could never put my finger on it. But actually starting, you know, in April 2018, things were just clear. And we started sharing all the finances. Here's where we're at. It doesn't look good. Here's where we're at, right? We're going to change this. We're going to do that. By October, we were profitable.

Jerry Colonna:

And I imagine you've been unprofitable before then and facing, I gotcha.

Rob Castaneda:

Oh yeah. Yeah. And, and, you know, part of that was we were trying to be a product business and a services business and trying to do multiple things. And, um, you know, I think around that time, if you're trying to build a SaaS product, the amount of investment in security and other things that you need to make is just. And, um, so we actually shut down that whole part of the business and...

Jerry Colonna:

Product side.

Rob Castaneda:

Yeah, the SaaS side of the business, the SaaS product. And, um, but since then we, we, we've just been every month, we share the finances and where we're at and our old hands is more like a variety show. It's like, you know, I'm an MC and okay, let's go over to this team. And I don't



even see the slides until they present them. Right. It's the there's, there's absolutely no vomiting. I still get worked up because I still put a lot of energy into.

Jerry Colonna (32:37.162)  
And there's no vomiting.

So let's make some connections here, because I have a feeling I understand something here, but I want to make sure I'm not projecting something. So you were facing an unprofitable business with a bad outcome after 20 years in the business. Vomit -inducing times. And there's this connection. You're going to take Pop back to the village. And there is this passing of his wife and I want to acknowledge, I mean, how many countries do you have employees in? And how many nationalities would you say? How many identities in that?

Rob Castaneda:  
Um, I think it's between 26 and 30.

Jerry Colonna:  
You mentioned to me when we first met this this experience that you have, I think you said you use. Metas internal work platform and my remember you use workplace and and you were talking to me about those employees.

Rob Castaneda:  
Yeah, we use Workplace. Yep.

Jerry Colonna:  
sharing their cultural attributes. Am I getting this right? Tell me a little bit about that. And more specifically, I'm curious as to how ServiceRocket is doing now. And is there a thread that pulls this all together?

Rob Castaneda:  
You know, we're, we're a self-funded services company that was founded in Toon Gabby in Western Sydney, and we're operating here in Palo Alto. And, you know, I drive by Google every morning to get to the office and.

Jerry Colonna:  
Right.

Rob Castaneda:  
You know, so we're, we're competing. I don't know if we're competing, you know, we can throw it around in the washing, right? And, um, you know, a friend of mine works at Google and around that time was telling me about, Oh, there's a, a stop work meeting. Cause we're on strike for some, something we're fighting the company for. And then there's, there's BLM and then there's all these different movements and people getting days off for this. And then there is the the

reactive folks who are in those companies who believe in different causes who then cause an uproar of what have you. And I'm sitting here, my head's saying, oh my God. And at the same time, I had taken over the chief people officer type role in the company.

And I truly believe that a CEO needs to run the culture and what is traditional HR in the company. It's in set the piece. And I think till then, I had always given it to someone else. You do that, I'll go and run the business. But the people are the business, right? And so I'm looking at this and I've got, you know, at that stage, eight or nine countries or what we have. And I'm like, well, there's this Me Too -ism and not the Me Too movement, but like, hey, there's...

Jerry Colonna:  
Right. What about me?

Rob Castaneda (38:28.59)

There's a public holiday in Sydney for the Melbourne Cup Pulse Race. Why don't we get that? There's a public holiday in this country for that. Why don't we get that? And I'll...You know, our mindset previously was like, oh, let's just take what everyone has and level everyone the same. And I think that just caused a whole bunch of other problems because those that already had the benefit got nothing and felt unfair. And what kept coming up for me is individuality and fairness. Those two things. And when we...when I paint a bunch of people with one brush and say, well, that's them, they need this. And I don't understand the perception of fairness from their perception. What is fair from their perception? Then I think things fall apart. And so I think fairness is an inbuilt thing.

Jerry Colonna:  
Right, so we will say beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Part of what you're saying is fairness is in the eye of the beholder. How do I experience what is happening in this moment?

Rob Castaneda:

Yep. Yep. And so, and so we're trying to navigate this me too ism of holidays and different things. We, we, we came up with this program called Cultural Heritage and Community. And the idea was, the idea is, cause it's a thriving program. Um, you pick a, um, an employee, any employee picks, um, picks a day of significance for them for the following year. So this is not reactive. This is planned ahead. And you in exchange for sharing a story and some photos, you get the day off.

Jerry Colonna:  
Right. Solving an HR problem, if you will.

Rob Castaneda:

Right. And so from a tactical business perspective, this basically solves an HR problem because it gives everybody, it gives the company, Hey, if that's what's really important to you, use your cultural heritage day and plan it and do it. If someone says, well, my cultural heritage story is too

private, I'll say, well, pick your second best one. Right. Or your third best one. And so that kind of gets over that. But the amazing thing, Jerry, is just the stories. And I shared a couple with you back when we first met the stories and what's shared. And it really dawned on me, like if you're a migrant, I go back to my grandparents or my dad. If you're a migrant, whatever you celebrated back home is erased when you go to a new place.

Jerry Colonna:  
Especially if you leave behind the language.

Rob Castaneda:  
Yeah. So if you're Islamic and you go to a Christian country, you're not going to get Eid and your holidays. And the same with every culture and every religion. As you move, if you're away, you don't get to celebrate that. And so I'm literally brought to tears by the stories the Rocketeers share, especially those introverted folks that you don't hear a lot from.

Jerry Colonna:  
Right.

Rob Castaneda:  
Or that in your mind, you might stereotype, oh, they're an engineer from Malaysia. You know, there's 15 people in that team. And in my mind, I see their photos and I see their posts and they're kind of similar. But then I see these amazing photos of family, of food, of dancing, of pets, of ancestors. And you read the detailed stories. And it's...it brings you to tears. It really brings you to the essence of fostering a tribe. It's a global virtual tribe, but it's a place where people belong. And the part that really helps is that everyone is seen. The empathy in the company rises dramatically.

It's easy for those companies that are based in the US to think that everything happens in the US and nothing else happens outside of the US. And for us, 10 % of our workforce is in the US and 90 % is outside where we are. I think we have more Islamic women in our company than employees in the US. And what I don't want to do is I don't want our company...to have to stand for political decisions or stand for political stances. I want to empower rocketeers to have their voices heard. And they do it once a year. And they can take that time to do community service. Some of them just do community service. There's nothing really personal in their story. And that's OK. And some of them go in depth. I think there was one.

Rob Castaneda:  
The one case that I thought, wow, this really shows how it works is that on the same day, we had a Rocketeer that was celebrating a very ultra Christian holiday on the same day that someone was celebrating gay pride, right on the same week that I think it was Persian Christmas or there was some other Islamic holiday for a denomination within, you know, what we would normally know, right, or commonly know about. And to have all those things celebrated and liked and respected at the same time or near same time, I think was just like,

great. We have given everybody a voice, allowed everybody to be seen for who they are and their family and whatever they wanted to share. We've protected the company because we have this mantra internally of grow the tree and share the fruit which is something I put in with the reacquisition was basically the first thing is like, you know, stop chopping down the tree and then asking for fruit. And I think it protects the company, gives everybody freedom and flexibility. And you'll, the stories are just like for me, they're, if I'm ever having a bad week or even a bad day, you know, scrolling through those stories is. It's hard to measure on the balance sheet, but it's definitely fulfilling.

Jerry Colonna:

Well, I appreciate that story, Rob, and I want to react a little bit to it.

I'm even more moved hearing the fullness of the story now than I was when you were sharing some of it when we first met. And what comes to mind are a few things. One, we're at a critical moment in our societies, in particular, though, in kind of a Western-oriented societies where we're trying to grapple with difference. We're trying to grapple with...the systemic ways in which we may make, unconsciously make people feel that they do not belong. And I think about, you know, I think about this story that you've told and I think about even the experience of questioning the viability of the business, but also connecting back to your ancestors.

And I think implicit in the totality of the story is something quite beautiful, which is that this story doesn't end in a fairy tale that says, and profit is up 300%. It does end with the company being stable and healthy. And so that is an important aspect of it. But what I also hear is there's almost an arc of an experience, which is, you for a variety of reasons, perhaps, for example, your grandmother's becoming sick, being even more connected to your own experience, your own journey, your own story of being a migrant in so many ways, but also the journey of your ancestors. And coming at a time, we're talking 2018 through now 2024, so six years, where the social upheaval that at least in the United States went through was profound.

And as you made the connection, your friend at Google is facing walkouts in reaction to systemic racism, walkouts in reaction to perceptions of a lack of fairness, and you, I don't know that you consciously thought of this, but you backed into what I would say is a beautiful solution, if you will, which was a celebration of difference. See, in my experience, this is counterintuitive, despite the fact that people like Bell Hooks have taught us that difference, appreciated and celebrated in precisely the way that you have done actually creates greater and deeper community and connection.

And there's so much about the last 60, 70 years, at least in American culture, of which I am most familiar, that would have us negate difference. We even throw around terms like, oh, this is identity politics, and somehow that leads to divisiveness. And yet yours is a living example of the opposite. Because it's not celebrating one culture over another culture, or one heritage over another heritage, it's creating space for recognition of all the cultures. So that which binds us together, the work of being a Rocketeer, the joy of being a Rocketeer together, becomes an

expression of community becomes a place of belonging.

I wish to heaven I knew about your story before I wrote Reunion because I would have included it in the book. But I want to applaud the fact that your awareness of your own journey and that of your ancestors, I think, and you correct me if I'm wrong here, I think it made you more sensitive to the experience of others.

You know, dude, in our world that we live in. With your accent, you don't present as Latin.

Jerry Colonna:

And yet you're fully aware of Malta and Salvador. You're fully aware of all of that. So you just Rob in the fullness of that. And by the way, you've never lost sight of your responsibility to create a profitable container for the work. It's not as if these things need to be in opposition to each other. Am I seeing this correctly?

Rob Castaneda:

So thank you for reflecting that. It's not, I think as an entrepreneur, you don't get a lot of chance to get good reflection. So thank you.

You know, at the time...that I first traveled and kind of connected some of those dots. And I really connected with my grandfather and more recently my dad. So that would, that's been more recent for me. There is actually no better power that you can tap into than that of your ancestors. It's undefeatable. It is, um, and, uh, not that they're that not that it's perfection, there are flaws, there are regrets, there are things that aren't perfect, but the energy and the that continual drive to move forward. You know, I feel it.

Jerry Colonna:

The willingness to stand in the gas tank and paint the inside.

Rob Castaneda:

Yeah. I have this exercise that I do with, with Adam, one of my peers in EO every morning, we fill out a journal. We take a photo and message to each other. We'd be doing this for about six months and we fill out this journal. And it's the, one of the questions is it's a Oak journal. One of the questions is my vision for today is, and it's the hardest question for me because I'm always in this state of just accepting the present and wanting to move forward.

And the energy of tapping into, especially my grandfather at the moment, and has been quite strong since that trip or even before that. It's like, what would Pop do right now? I mean, he was a stonemason. There's not a whole story there. And what would he do right now? And that...

Jerry Colonna:

Mm.

Rob Castaneda:

That's actually a positive question that I reflect on. And I think for everybody, you know, what I try and do also internally is I share a lot of stories about my grandfather. Like the company knew I was doing this trip with my grandfather. And I aggressively, you know, and I don't think you can do it too much, right? Because once your elders are gone, they're gone.

And so I aggressively encourage rocketeers to embrace the time that they have. And because that energy is just such fuel, unlimited fuel for progression. And in my deepest or darkest times,

It's infallible. It's there, right? Which is a good thing. And I think from a company perspective, that mantra of grow the tree, share the fruit is really embedded in our company that we have to take care of the vessel. We have to take care of the company, the vehicle, right? And have it then take care of us. And we still go through our messy middle cycles and do that.

I would say that the the commitment of the Rocketeers has been unwavering to all the various challenges that we've had and work at. And I think for me, though, the measurement is on a weekly basis I'll interact with a former Rocketeer. And we have a, you know, once a Rocketeer, always a Rocketeer philosophy. And that, just knowing that I can speak with them, talk with them. There's no ill feelings, no ill regards. And that's different than when I first started in business where like it was, okay, this is the business game. What do we do? Let's figure out what happens. And I still see, you know, I see that everywhere right outside of like, okay, everything is a business is a sports team, right? Business is not a family. And I'm like, hold on. Hmm. Does that mean after you have a victory and your quarterback is kind of injured, you just fire them and get a new one, but they've carried you maybe for 10 years to get to where you are. This whole business as a sports team probably lasts a year or two. So I think it's great for really short ventures. But if you're building careers aiming to have an impact for rocketeers, have an impact on their careers, their families and their communities. The sports analogy doesn't work.

Right? What does a major league soccer team do if you've got an ankle injury? You're done. And so I wish there was more out there about, you know what? We don't have to run businesses like fast food, right? The best restaurants you go to are the ones that don't try and get as many dishes served as possible. Right. And it's like quality is remembered.

And that's just taking the time to do it right as a stonemason, as a gas tank painter. Just do it right and build on it. And so that's the culture that I try and foster and build forward.

Jerry Colonna:

Right. Well, I appreciate, first of all, you sharing the stories. I expect it to be moved, but not quite so much as I have been. So thank you for that. And I also appreciate the wisdom that you're sharing and the connection between the emphasis on the craft, the emphasis on the long-term journey of what it is that you're delivering the importance of that in creating stability, financial stability in a business that, arguably at this age, I don't even know if you can call yourself a

startup anymore. So we'll talk about that separately. And then in addition, this notion of really approaching the question of community and belonging and the way you're doing it with a value set that honors your ancestors and honors your elders. It's a.

It's a beautiful story and I appreciate your sharing. Thanks for coming on the show, Rob, and I look forward to a long friendship as we move forward. Yeah.

Rob Castaneda:

Likewise, I appreciate the time and space. It's been great. All of your contributions and all the previous guests on the podcast as well. Thank you for those kind words, my friend. We'll talk soon.