Part 3

[00:00:00] Well, greetings Cannon Nation. It is Phil Buchanan back with you for our third and final installment with Captain Dave Adams, United States Navy, retired. Dave, we have, uh, we have had quite the journey so far. I'm looking forward to our final conversation today. Well, it's great to be with you, Phil. And I, I've also looked forward to that and to kind of transition from some of the operational, uh, lessons of USS Santa Fe and Afghanistan.

Uh, kind of two things that I've been doing the last eight, seven or eight years and how some of those principles apply, but in a [00:01:00] different way. Well, Dave, I, uh, I shall never, uh, forget the, uh, the day that I met you. It was on a, uh, a men's retreat. I walked in to the area where there was a outdoor fire going and I saw a, uh, I saw a Texas Longhorn.

cap on you had no idea the, the history of your great contribution to, uh, the United States military. The obviously the work that we've, uh, we've heard about, uh, to this point, you transitioned. out of the Navy and, uh, like, like a lot of good, like a lot of good military professional, you kind of stayed connected to, to all things military.

Tell us about your, your transition out of still remaining very actively engaged with, uh, naval issues. Well, because of my writing experience, I was invited to, uh, go to the United States Naval Institute, which is a non profit that [00:02:00] really looks at issues. It's a, it's a forum where you can publish, which I had published in, um, and they have Naval History Magazine, they have Proceedings Magazine.

Um, so I went there for a short stop. kind of learn the non profit world. Um, and that led directly to me getting a position, uh, with the National Museum of the United States Navy project, which was something near to, dear to my heart. We need a museum. I'll talk a little bit more about that. Uh, the Army has one, the Marines have one, the Coast Guard has one, the Air Force has one.

Uh, and we struggled to get one for the Navy, so I was asked to help with that. But I think it leads directly into how, Some of the things that I learned on when I was in uniform both applied in ways that I have not talked about in this series and really apply as I've moved into really large program management and what I would call innovation, uh, innovation principles.

So we talked a lot about how, how, if you can emancipate your, your workforce to [00:03:00] take ownership through clarity and competence, how that can be

very, very effective. And I think that's even more effective in the world of innovation. So when I wasn't at sea or in Afghanistan, I was working innovation projects for the different, uh, admirals, everything from the electromagnetic rail gun to studies on undersea warfare, to, uh, Uh, to innovative, highly classified technical projects to get at specific.

Uh, innovation challenges, how innovation could overcome specific challenges, especially in the Pacific, and you can add some principles, uh, to that empowerment because the people involved in innovation are naturally owner owners, you know, they you don't have to convince them. They have great ideas. You're trying to drive those forward.

But what that misses a lot of times is what I call disciplined. Undisciplined innovation leads to not a lot of progress. So how do you discipline that innovation through using that competence and clarity, [00:04:00] but also how do you get that creative friction among your team to get great ideas and then discipline those ideas back to a plan that can lead to You painted a nice picture of the future, and then, but what do you have to do today, and tomorrow, and in six months, and in a year, to maybe move that vision forward, instead of it just being a vision?

Visionaries are great, but, you know, what, what, what people have taught me over the years is realizing the vision is a lot harder. It's great to be a dreamer, but you got to make that dream come true. And I think discipline, and I learned this through engineering and through nuclear engineering, Applying discipline to innovation, if you do that, and discipline to program management, that really, and it gives you a path to possibly be successful at something that's very difficult.

Um, and if you study history, I think that, that will prove to be true. Whether it's, um, Admiral Rickover's discipline he brought to the nuclear power program to build nuclear powered submarines, or, um, Admiral [00:05:00] Rayburn's, uh, discipline to deliver the ballistic missile sub launch. The ballistic missile or the guys who built the Tomahawk or the Aegis radar.

There's a lot of learning there that I learned how to bring discipline to innovation, and it gives you a better chance. It doesn't give you the total chance, but it gives you a better chance. So kind of forwarding those clarity, competence and empowerment and then helping people who already have that. to discipline their processes and build programs.

And so I've seen that, uh, both at the Pacific Fleet and War Funding Innovation and in trying to, uh, help these non profit folks you talked about and pro and government come together to, to do something really, um, exceptional by building a new National Museum of the United States Navy. Got it. So, let me ask you this, at what point in time, and I can hear the passion in your voice as you, uh, as you talk about the Naval Museum, at what point in time did you, your, your energy [00:06:00] level, your focus, your passion, ratchet up to, uh, to, to where it is, had you so involved in, uh, helping champion that?

Well, as I left the military, while I was focused on war funding, I was looking for Influence. How do you have influence over something that's going to matter? You know, there's people who just want to accumulate wealth or have more employees or a bigger company. For me, it's always about influence. How do you influence something that's going to impact the national security of the United States, which is my passion.

Uh, so the museum was kind of, I had always favored history. I was the deputy editor of the magazine. Um, I'd written a lot about history, loved museums, uh, and knew the Navy didn't have one. So Just by accident, the, the editor of, um, uh, the proceedings magazine recommended me, you know, to help and said, if you really need help getting this museum going, you should talk to Dave Adams.

So it was kind of a match made in heaven, [00:07:00] uh, not a perfect match. I was not a museum professional or curator, but I'd spent a lot of my life looking at how to do things with innovation and apply those principles to actually. What do you do day to day on how, you know, I thought I could help day to day on moving this project forward.

And so, um, I really believed in it. I spent a lot of time studying museums from the History Museum there in New Orleans to the World War II Museum at Fredericksburg, uh, to our different historic ships. We have 96 of them, uh, which are non for profits who maintain those ships. Everything from the Bowfin in Hawaii to the The Iowa class battleship that's in Norfolk.

So how do we, how could we build a museum? How do you do it? And then how do you do it in a partnership with a foundation and the Department of Defense, which is harder than the Smithsonian. So how do you bring all those principles together and just applying those same principles of of innovation, of [00:08:00] clarity, of competence, of empowerment, and of discipline.

The most important part, because we've been trying for a while, but it was never disciplined to the point where you had a clear, um, objectives and you were tracking the meaning of those objectives and you were disciplining. You start with an open sheet, you allow people to be innovative, and then you bring it back to discipline, to the art of the possible.

So you, you centralize that friction and turn it into a product that can actually And you get buy in from the team and the entire thing, so you now have a pathway to try to actually hit the marks day to day to get to something that's very innovative. So give us a little history. How is it that the Army, the Air Force, the Marine Corps, the Coast Guard, they all wound up with museums.

Why, why is the Navy, uh, just at this stage of the game focused there? Well, I think there's um, I think they've been focused. I think the Navy has been better at bringing together its history enterprises, like all [00:09:00] the things that work in history. They brought it together under one command back in about 12, 13 years ago.

Uh, and part of that, we do have nine Navy museums. We have a wonderful museum in Pensacola. It's a world class museum, an aviation museum, but museums are built from passion. So, I don't think we've had, uh, The Navy didn't have the right people, and we had a small Navy museum at the Navy Yard, which we labeled the National Museum.

So it was an older museum, it had some great things in it, but it didn't rise to the quality of a Smithsonian Museum. But I think that was one detractor, and just the resources to do it, uh, seeing through the fact that Yes, you want missiles and you want aircraft, you want submarines. But in today's world, if you want to attract people to join the Navy, they have to have a connection when they're younger.

So bringing those people. So I think it's the argument just need to be made. And I think people came along, Secretaries of the Navy [00:10:00] came along very quickly, but, but there wasn't a piece of land to do it there. All the particulars that I talked about. So line of effort one was get land, you know, so that took, I thought that would take two years.

It took four years. But we got a beautiful plot of land. You know, less than a quarter mile from the baseball stadium in D. C. National Park. That community has really become great. And so we have a great plan. It's better than what the Marine Corps of the Army has. I don't want to, they are a distant destination.

Army is about 10 miles out of town. Marines are about 28. We're like half a mile from Museum Row, uh, when we get it built. So that took four years of time, and then I worked on some more funding problems for a couple years now. I'm back helping with that museum project. Next step is to raise the money and to get the matching funds from Congress to draw off loans.

And at the same time, you got to design the museum. You got to make sure you balance. You want everybody engaged, all the communities across the [00:11:00] Navy, all the different people The aviators, the seals, the surface, the surface guys, the submariners, the chaplains, every group involved. But then at the same time, don't try to be everything to everybody and keep a central focus.

Very challenging. But, uh, so those are all the pieces that are going on now. But the toughest part, which the Navy can't do, is to raise the money. So we have a foundation, the Navy Museum Development Foundation, that's working on that piece of it. You said, how did the others get there? Well, um, Air Force kind of always had their museum airplanes.

It's out of Wright Patterson Air Force Base. Uh, the, the Marines went all in back in the early 2000s. One of the commandants wanted it and they made it happen. And it's a great project to study. Um, the Army was very, took them 25 to 30 years to do it, uh, but they did get it done. And then, uh, and it was much more of a torturous path than the Marines who just, they kicked off the project in 2001 and they opened phase [00:12:00] one three or four years later.

Army kicked off the project about the same time and opened the museum about three years ago. Uh, so, and, uh, our project has been on and off, but it officially got kicked off, I believe in about 2018. And we worked on the land, we worked on these other things, but the land is done. It was a complicated land exchange we had to do inside D.

C. to get that land. It's dedicated to museums. Secretary of the Navy on September, in mid September, made the announcement that the Navy was building a museum there, so. We're off and running, but there's lots of hard work to do and lots of different equities that you have to bring together in order to make that happen.

Well, you know, as you were kind of rolling through that, I got to thinking about the, uh, friendly, not so friendly, sometimes competition that takes place between the different branches of the military. And, um, of course, recently I was texting you during the Army Navy football game. And, uh, of course the,

the, the Navy won that one much [00:13:00] to the surprise of a lot of people, but happiness certainly on your end.

But I also get to thinking about all of the different component pieces that make up the Navy and is, as you were going through, uh, the different, uh, different players, the, the folks that are the submariners versus the aviators versus the seals. I can only imagine that they've got their own perspectives and own points of view about, you know, what should be taking place.

So marshalling together those, those, you know, disparate points of view and coalescing around a, you know, a cohesive vision. I can just imagine that that that will be as much of a challenge as the money will be right. Absolutely. And they all have their own museums, smaller museums or in the aviation. So what we've done is yeah.

We bring their team together at the museum at the submarine force library museum in New London or at the Naval Aviation Museum or at the museum in Norfolk. We bring everybody together and we get their museum involved. We [00:14:00] get their curators, their director. In trying to say, Hey, how are we going to have the vision at the National Museum that when translates out to these other museums, the same thing with the historic ships, we're not going to have historic ships at the Navy Museum.

So how do we connect ships to the other parts of the story we're going to tell? So we do all these focus groups, uh, which we've been doing now for two, three years and then bring them together and then brief the results out to the leadership. So everybody gets by in it. Then the hard part, which is disciplining all those different inputs.

Into a cohesive vision of the National Museum of the United States Navy. We're not there yet, but at least we've got the thought process and we've established the culture, as we've talked about of the way you centralize creative friction, you allow everybody to have a say, and then you discipline that into a, uh, into a centralized vision and then you capitalize on leadership's approval to drive that vision to reality.[00:15:00]

Well, if if there is one thing that I've heard you repeat time and time again is applying discipline to the situation. And you are so right. The world is not thirst for great ideas, but where great ideas often get lost in the sands of time is the failure to have that, that discipline to execution or implementation, uh, of those great ideas.

And, uh, when you apply your principles and you mentioned it just, just a few moments ago of clarity, competency, and empowerment, you can, you can unleash some fantastic power, but that has to, That has to follow another word that I'm very big on, and that is intentionality. Uh, you have to be intentional about, uh, about what you're doing.

Maybe that's the synonym for extended synonym for, for discipline, but, um, all, all too many times, uh, good ideas go by the wayside. So it's great to hear about, uh, about your leadership efforts in that. So your, You [00:16:00] know, several years ago, three, I guess, three years ago now, you're in the midst of the museum and the phone rings or you get an email or you get a text or, or something happens because all of a sudden you were, uh, in D.

C. And you, you let some of your buddies know that you were headed back to Honolulu. What, uh, what in the world, uh, tell us about that experience. Yeah, I got a phone call from a team member of an organization which had been tasked to do innovation. And I had previously in my life worked very closely with that innovation with that team.

And that member's like, you need to be the guy who comes to help with this. And because I had done this innovation process at several stops along the way that we didn't talk about. And, You know, um, the problem is, you know, how do you, how do you deter defeat China using some innovative concepts? And so I, I was asked to go out and help with that.

And, um, um, it took, and you know, [00:17:00] the land was taught, we had secured the land for the museum. So I thought that there would take some time to move from that to the next phase, which is actually, we're still in that, uh, raising the funds. So I spent about two years working with a really creative team. Like we've talked about what is the universe of ideas and specifically with unmanned systems, but there were other systems that are highly classified too, which I can't really discuss, but specifically, how can we use things like artificial intelligence and unmanned systems to really not solve the whole war fighting problem, but to augment what we get from our.

What people call conventional forces, but they're actually not conventional. They're highly capable and asymmetric in their capabilities against the enemy. When you talk about our aircraft. our submarines, our surface ships, our special warfare capability. But how can some of these things that are emerging, uh, be disciplined and brought into government when we have an extremely difficult acquisition process to actually [00:18:00] field them quickly enough that hopefully they can deter adversaries who are thinking about being aggressive.

And then if they don't deter, really make a difference, um, in the war fighting, uh, capability. So we not only win, because I believe we'll win. against any adversary, uh, who comes at us with, um, you know, large high tech forces, but not only win, but win with fewer losses, uh, and less risk to, uh, the American men and women we have been entrusted to have to go take this fight on.

So lowering their risk. Uh, so that's, and we spent two years really working that. And those same principles, Really putting those into play with a team that was already ready to go, but just helping them with how do you put a disciplined program together? Great idea. How do you take that idea? How do you experiment with it?

Which we do a lot in the government, but how do you move that experiment closer to something as reality? And then how in the world do you get a very antiquated [00:19:00] defense acquisition system to be open to acquire those systems quickly. Let me ask you the cap matters if it could. Um, and again, I know there's there's limits to what you can chat on with regard to this.

But I know that you were involved in a lot of I call it, you know, gamification scenario based threats. And, you know, how you know, we might respond to how our allies, you know, might join, might not join how allies of the opposing force might, you know, get involved. That to me is incredibly interesting because I don't believe that Corporate America, particularly smaller businesses, and perhaps they do this more more rarely with the largest of large companies in the U.

S. But a lot of smaller businesses really don't do the gamification scenarios as as actively as they could, putting different scenarios on the [00:20:00] table and, you know, playing that out and identifying how different different outcomes can emerge. What are some lessons that business can take from the scenario based strategies that you, uh, you undertook and, uh, were part of, uh, part of your research?

Yeah, I think it's really important that you do, we call it war gaming in the military, but there are different types of war games, everything from a tabletop to a, to a very complex, sophisticated war game. So I think the principles that they come to it are the same as when you're trying to innovate. Yeah.

When you're looking at a product line, you said intentional, but I think it's three levels of discipline that lead to that intention. It's discipline and leadership. In other words, to field something, in the end, you have to have a very strong

leadership model that allows your innovation team to make decisions and move those forward.

And then you have to have discipline in your technical discipline, [00:21:00] which I think is one of the hardest things to have, like technical discipline to ensure that. The innovative solution is actually achievable, um, in order to do that. So discipline in your leadership or your vision or your intention, disciplined in your technical discipline and discipline in the vision of what you're trying to do.

And so we've talked about drones a little bit, but drones can do all kinds of things. They can do. They can do intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. They can do refueling. Uh, they can do all kinds of things. But, you know, if you try to do everything, it's like a museum. If it's everything to everybody, it's probably not going to be as impactful.

So, identifying what the critical area of need is, and I would say the warfighting need, but in business you would say, what is the critical need we're trying to fill? And then coming forward to your team with, Hey, Here's the leadership model and the decisions you're going to be able to make. You know, here's the technical discipline that [00:22:00] we're gonna require of you to bring to that problem.

You know, and here is the vision. Here is that critical need that I want you to go after and not in a sporadic way. So a lot of times we try to fit the technology or what's going on to the problem. And I think it's Understanding the problem and then figuring out how the technology fits is a more apt model to do that.

Uh, so I'd have companies come to us and say, Hey, I've got this great technology. How does it fit your plan? And that's not intentional, right? And it's not that it doesn't, but if you're going to articulate as the cut, if the customer can articulate the need very clearly, then the team is ready to go. And the problem is sometimes the customer doesn't know.

Sometimes the government doesn't know that just creates a lot of activity, trying to match up over activity to the to the need. So it's matching those that that that technical discipline and that vision, [00:23:00] especially in industry to the need. So if you can understand the need, you're in really good shape.

Well, you know, it's, it's interesting juxtaposition. I want to, I want to push your way because I'm thinking about those technology firms that would come to you and say, Hey, this is, this is some cool technology. How does this, how does this

fit? I think one of the more successful innovators of our time, he is, has since passed away with Steve Jobs with Apple.

And, um, you know, he introduced the iPod and when the iPod was first introduced, there were There were other MP3 players that, that came before it, but I remember the first advertisement that I saw for, uh, for the iPod, and I think it said 100, 000 songs in your pocket. And I just, I remember seeing that and, you know, [00:24:00] instantaneously I got.

I got what it was, you know, it, it, it made, made so much sense. You know, the innovation that we're seeing with technology today, whether it's AI, whether it's drone, whether, you know, whatever it is, it is. it's different than than the iPod watch because it's applicability is far greater than just, you know, a device that people could listen to music.

Of course, later on with the advancements of the iPhone and iPad and other things that came on. I mean, Apple certainly certainly advanced that. So You know, where is that, that, that perfect marriage of, and from your point of view, military and technology in the business world, it is, it is business and technology.

Every advisor that's listening to this right now works in an organization where they've got a technology stack. And I promise you that many [00:25:00] advisors Can focus on what the technology doesn't do. Well, uh, as opposed to, you know, exhort all of the things that it does exceptionally well. That's kind of the nature of of how we are.

We tend to pinpoint faults more than we do successes. What is that? What's that right marriage that we should seek on a go forward basis? Because, you know, you talked about it in the right way. You know, there are certain things that you need technology to do. You need a drone to be able to do certain things.

Mhm. Is that, is that the military's job to define that? Is it technology and a lot of their innovative ways that they need to be looking at, at, at the industry of military and say, here are some ways to, to, to bridge these gaps. What's the right way that that gets done? Well, I think let's start with Steve Jobs and I think we could spend the rest of the podcast on Steve, but, um, he was able to see straight to what that vision was [00:26:00] and he didn't need the customer to do it.

You know, he used to say, I can, I, I, I'm going to tell them what they want. They don't know what they want them and tell them what they want. And, um,

we could talk about the strengths and weaknesses of his model, but his leadership model, I see it differently when I read everything than some of the open things.

I thought it was fantastic in a lot of ways by, demanding discipline in the, in the, in the process, which some people would say wasn't, is a good leadership model, but I think he demanded discipline. Um, he, he was, um, unrelenting in his quest for that discipline, but he understood the thing that I talked about, which is, was how do you match the need?

He, he understood the need kind of implicitly and he forced it. There are many geniuses. There's not many of them, but there are a few creative people in the world who can do that. Um, and, and it works. Um, but I would argue in the military, I mean, I don't think we have as many creative geniuses, but the process that I talked about, about bringing a team [00:27:00] together, looking at the critical needs, working it together, allowing openness of thought, disciplining that thought into a vision, capitalizing on the leadership's buy into that vision and driving that forward.

It emulates. The team will be stronger than that one visionary. And we'll help be able to do that. So I think that's critical. Um, and then, you know, the small companies, you know, the big companies come to D. O. D. and they pitch things all the time, but the small innovative companies, um, you know, they're in Ventura, California or Austin, Texas or Atlanta, Georgia, they don't even know how to make that fit.

So I think it's incumbent upon once you have a team that understands that vision, then you go out, you hold industry days, it's You meet with the industry, you kind of pick the ones that sound good, feel good, then you go visit them and you can tell immediately which companies really are innovative and are willing to take risk to bring a product to [00:28:00] market.

And then you try to marry those together, you give them a chance to experiment with their product, and then you, a relevant venue. You see how that is, and you use that as sort of a, uh, shark tank to figure out which ones can move forward. And then you help them, and you help everybody try to get an acquisition program.

Let me tell you, it's really hard. Try to get a program using whatever authorities are out there to actually get the product in the hands of the warfighter, then let the warfighter tell you what's good and bad about that, um, and then make it better. So I think the Steve Jobs model can be done as a team, centralizing that

creative fiction through clarity and competence and team, and having a team mindset where you have a lot of good minds put at the problem, and then maybe you can out, maybe you can outperform Steve Jobs, I'm not sure.

But I do think it works. If you bring that discipline process of experimentation. And, uh, and that's where experimentation becomes beneficial, not to experiment to experiment, but to experiment for a purpose to [00:29:00] get to a specific need. But if you don't identify the need, and you're just running around trying to fit technology somewhere, that can work.

But I think it's, it's, it's, um, it's scatter shooting. It's vice being disciplined and targeting, um, that innovation. And I think it really sounds like, you know, some people are just throwing things against wall hoping something sticks as opposed to really, you know, from a, from a technology company perspective, you know, I would be just an absolute incredible student of the game.

I mean, yes, I want to be as innovative as I possibly can with my technology, but I want to be looking at my my customer, be it the United States Navy or, you know, if the, if the customer is, you know, uh, Home Depot or Lowe's, whomever, you know, to understand what the challenges are that they're dealing with and seeking to bridge that gap.

I was thinking that it was going to be fundamentally different. with regard to the military, but it really is. I mean, at [00:30:00] the end of the day, there are, there are specific jobs to be done. You know, it's, it's protecting the homeland. It's, it's, you know, protecting our, our, our troops is protecting our allies and, you know, ways that we are more effective and efficient in doing that.

You know, that should, that should be the focus. And I know that that was a large part of what you were doing. Dave, let me ask you this though. A lot of A lot of things in the news recently about drones, I know drone technology, underwater drone technology is, is something that is a, uh, a passion of yours.

Did you ever foresee your very early days in the Navy that we would come to the, the time that we would have autonomous submergibles involved in, uh, naval operations? Yeah, absolutely. And, uh, because I've always been in that innovation space and. I think we're way behind on bringing the combination of of [00:31:00] artificial intelligence and bringing the ethical framework for using that, combining that with robots and underwater unmanned vehicles to accomplish critical missions that don't necessarily need to be done by by humans.

I think human accountability needs to be Injected in it from a U. S. standpoint, never turning over, uh, life or death decisions to computers or robots. But I mean, I think it's, um, I've always believed that there was a future and it's coming. For instance, um, in 1998, I was on an innovation team. That recommended, um, an unmanned squadron of aircraft on an aircraft carrier.

And I would tell you all the technology existed, uh, bringing that technology together to do it was a problem. Uh, but today, you know, we're just getting our first unmanned system, which does not employ weapons. Um, what are aircraft carriers? That was 25 years ago, almost 26 years ago. [00:32:00] So, uh, one of the most innovative militaries in the world.

Um, it's not as innovative as we need to be now to keep up with the threat, and we could talk a long time about that. But yeah, I certainly imagined a world of, um, of unmanned systems taking on those dirty, dangerous missions that you don't necessarily need a human to do well to, uh, To jump to, uh, a little bit of, uh, a little bit of fiction here.

I, I'm hearing the words of, uh, Rear Admiral Chester Kane as he admonished, uh, Pete Mitchell, Maverick, in, uh, Top Gun Maverick. He told him, you know, his, his days of, you know, needing to, uh, have manned pilots was, was coming to an end. And I remember Maverick looking at him, he said, maybe so, sir, but. And, uh, where, where, where are we from having, you know, a [00:33:00] majority of, and this isn't just Navy, but, you know, from, uh, from an aviation standpoint and from a submergible standpoint, you know, are, are we, Are we there?

Are we within six months? Are we within six years of fleets like the United States? We talked, uh, on our previous episode about, uh, the, the Royal Navy of the UK. We, you know, they're, they're different militaries around the world. How close are we to, to autonomous instruments being a primary, uh, the, the, the primary weapon of war?

I think we're a ways away. I think from a technical standpoint, we get closer and closer every day. And I think maybe in 15 or 20 years, you know, you'll be interviewing a robot on your podcast and you may not be able to tell the difference. I think it's closer. Then people think in the, in the decision making realm, um, AI is really big in companies like NVIDIA and other [00:34:00] companies, you know, it's way ahead.

It's, uh, it's pretty amazing, uh, the ability to, to do that, to make those decisions, but how do you put the ethical? So I don't think necessarily the technical

elements of war are the first to come. It's how you make decisions faster. Um, and I think that's the first element where AI is really going to revolutionize warfare.

And I think we have an advantage there, the United States, uh, in using the AI, we can trust it. Uh, with the rules to help us make decisions faster, get inside the enemy's what we call decision cycle. So I think that's the first step, and I think we're really close to being able to do that. Um, I think in terms of the technical elements of war, you know, some people think Herman Cain, Admiral Cain was the star of that movie, uh, because he was telling a truth.

And it's a truth, but it's a half truth. I mean, robots are not capable today. Of doing air to air combat. I mean, they're, they're going to be there someday, but they are capable of [00:35:00] bombing missions, electronic warfare missions, many missions that they can certainly do today. Um, if we applied the technology and the money and built those things, some of our adversaries are doing that.

So it's striking that right balance. I don't think we're, and then maintaining the human accountability. But you could turn it over, uh, to, to systems and allow them to make, uh, life and death decisions, which I don't, I think we always have to have a guy like you or me that's responsible for the decision.

So ensuring the human is inserted at the right, uh, moment, uh, to ensure, you know, someone's held accountable, uh, for taking the life of another human, uh, being. So I think that's critical. So we're moving fast toward that vision and maybe, and we'll be there faster, but we're But in order to do that, both in our ethical framework and our technical framework, we've got to move forward faster.

And the only way that happens is by getting true unmanned systems into the hands [00:36:00] of the warfighters and starting that shift. And I think, I don't think we've really started it yet. We're starting to start it now. And I think we're behind on that. But I don't think we're going to be in a world in five years where humans are not involved in the active elements of combat.

But I do think the drones, especially lethal ones, will be a huge force multiplier and will reduce the risk to those humans in many ways. And I think we have to do that. And I think our military is committed to doing that. Innovation is hard once you built a big bureaucracy. And so it's harder than it used to be when we built nuclear powered submarines or the most advanced fighters in the world, which are still building.

It's harder to, to move things inside an acquisition system that was designed. To protect the taxpayer from, uh, to ensure money was spent properly, but sometimes you got to take more risk and more risk when, when the risk isn't as high. And that's, that's where I think, uh, [00:37:00] more work needs to be done on identifying those risks and appropriately, um, getting these new systems in the hands of warfighters faster.

And, uh, and it does concern me that we're not as fast as we need to be or as innovative as we used to be. But I mean, the challenges are mounting, and I mean, that pressurizes us to actually become more innovative. Well, it does. It creates a sense of urgency. No doubt. Um, so Dave is is we near the end of our time together, I guess a penultimate question or request if you had to, if you had to synthesize down the two or three most important lessons of leadership.

And I think I think I know exactly where you're going to go on this, but I'm gonna ask you to, to synthesize it, what are the two or three most important things that from a leadership perspective, uh, in order to be effective, not just in, you know, managing through a [00:38:00] project, but developing capabilities for the longterm, what do you want to leave our listeners with?

Well, I think the number one thing to do as a leader is to figure out how to give control to your team. How much control can you give up and give to your team? Because they Accepting the fact, and some people won't, that they will come up with a better answer than you, or a different answer that works. So give control.

Figure out how to give control on a daily basis. Um, and you'll have a stronger team. It'll also free you up to really think bigger. And let them handle handle the business that you've trained them to handle or the system has trained them or you've hired. So give control, give that with clarity, ensure the people you hire or the people you bring on your team are competent to do that or help them achieve that competence.

So that's my straightforward message throughout all that, um, at the same time, you know, we talked about Steve Jobs, um, have a determined culture is going [00:39:00] to get to a mission or a purpose purpose driven approach, um, because, you know, um, just, you know, more financial resources or. You know, I think the purpose driven is what makes that whole engine work.

What is the purpose of your organization? What is the purpose? What is your mission? And how is that mission bigger than you or the entire team? So everybody can put onto that and then just be determined about it and

unrelenting, stubborn about not stubborn about the decisions, but stubborn about the culture and the prop.

People like to talk culture, but I've kind of laid out what the culture is. The culture is every person owns their piece. And knows their decision making authority. Once you get there, everything else is, is, is, is more of a, an upswing for you. And then if you want to, we talked a lot about innovation today, you got to put a lot of discipline and innovation and it's counter to.

Your innovators who are very [00:40:00] undisciplined in their thinking, but amazing if you discipline that amazing thinking through this process of ownership, clarity, competence, discipline, thought of discipline in your, in your, in your intentional ism, your vision, your leadership approach and your technical approach for lots of you are doing technology, the discipline of technology is Nothing happens without that.

Um, and that's the lesson of Rickover or Steve Jobs or anyone who ever brought amazing game changing technology. Tesla, I mean, is a very disciplined, uh, company in how they approach that. Or space, SpaceX. Study those. Um, now that's unlimited resources in some ways. So none of it, most of us don't have that opportunity.

So, you know, that's my vision. And for me, it's been a wonderful, and I hope continue, leadership laboratory And it was brought on upon me by. People like David Marquet on Santa Fe, uh, to [00:41:00] realize that you could stretch out and you could think beyond, uh, the hierarchical order driven military framework to really bring people together who, who at the beginning are maybe skeptical, but every time by the end, they're like, man, this has been really great to be a part of a team that actually achieved.

Purpose, you know, so I think, I think that's my, my, that's my message to everyone. And I hope it means something to you guys, but, uh, it's what has been ingrained in me and taught to me by other people and I've seen it work. I've seen it not work, but most of the time it works. And then how do you adjust to make it work?

If it didn't work, if you have that opportunity or you try it again, try to do that, that's right. Sticking to it. All right. Well, Dave, final, uh, final question. It's the same final question that, uh, we give, uh, give all of our listeners and for you, I can't wait to hear the answer [00:42:00] and it's this. If you had the opportunity.

To go back knowing what you know now with the mosaic of experiences you've had with life lessons that you've, you've learned and you could go back and you could coach the 21 year old version of. Dave Adams, what mentoring or coaching or advice would you give that young man?

I think it's, um, I think the advice I would give myself, it probably took me 15 years to even start, is really to understand self esteem, to be able to look in the mirror and, and be able to understand, um, uh, that, that, that here's what I did good today. Here's what I did bad today, but I'm all right. You know, I have a good purpose and that purpose is meaningful and really having good self image and self esteem, uh, took me years to even first time someone told me the word self esteem.

I didn't even know what they were talking about. [00:43:00] Um, so it's having good self esteem and that directly relates to you can't be a leader that gives power without good self esteem, without good understanding of yourself and your your value and, um, and the fact that it's gonna be okay. Uh, if you're if you're not doing things for selfishness and you're doing it for a mission or purpose, you can't go wrong.

So that's what I would. I would talk to the 18 year old Dave Adams about self esteem and, you know, here's the strength. Here's your strengths. You know, don't always focus on the weaknesses. Play to your strengths. Minimize the weaknesses. People say work on your weaknesses. Just minimize them. You're probably not going to get rid of them, but play to your strengths and have good self esteem about it.

You know, that's what I would tell myself. Love it. Captain Dave Adams, United States Navy retired. The entire country owes you a debt of gratitude for a fantastic service that you have, uh, have given to this country. You, uh, [00:44:00] uh, you, you truly do love this country, love the constitution. You love the values and ideals and you have, uh, served it tremendously.

You are a, uh, a fantastic friend. You're great. And, uh, now that, uh, University of Texas is in the ACC, you're a, you're an SEC conference brother too. So, uh, uh, nothing but, uh, nothing but great things there. Thank you for, uh, agreeing to be part of this. This has been fantastic. Well, Phil, this has been my honor and my service has been all my honor.

So, uh, it's been, it's been a passion for me. So I tell people when they say thank you for your service. I say it was all my honor. And that's true. And being with you today was an honor as a friend. And I hope it does add some value to some

folks. And some ideas that they can just think about and I think that's great and really enjoyed this time together.

And Dave, we will, uh, in the show notes, uh, have, uh, informational ways people can reach out to you if, uh, they want to get in touch. [00:45:00] Uh, and in the meantime, thank you for everything that you're doing and can't wait to see what happens with the museum. I'm looking forward to that. I'm looking forward to talking to you more about it.

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