

Paul: [00:00](#) Angry Americans around the country and around the globe, it is a very important time for all of us. And we've got a very important guest, a guy I've known for a long time that I've been looking for an opportunity to bring onto this show. And there's nobody who I can think of who's more of a man of the moment. Every guest I bring is important, inspiring and iconic. This guy is becoming the latter and is definitely the first two. I am very, very pleased and thankful to have joining us on this episode the great and powerful Jake Wood.

Jake Wood: [01:01](#) Hey, how you doing Paul?

Paul: [01:04](#) You like that man?

Jake Wood: [01:04](#) That was a lot, that was a lot, but I appreciate the kind words.

Paul: [01:09](#) It is worthwhile and it is justified.

Paul: [01:13](#) First off, thank you for taking the time. You are, more than almost anybody I know, deep in the fight right now, on the front lines of what I think is a war against the Corona virus. But you're a guy who's seen many different kinds of war, many different kinds of adversity. But on a very basic level, I want to thank you for doing it. I want to thank you for taking the time away from your troops to be here with us. And just ask you how are you doing man? How are you doing right now being at the tip of the spear and in the middle of all this?

Jake Wood: [01:41](#) I'm holding up well. It's interesting, this is so unprecedented, obviously for everyone. It's unprecedented for the country, for most companies, it's certainly unprecedented for ours. And even though our entire organization is built around responding to disasters and it's what I've been doing for over a decade, this is just different.

Jake Wood: [02:05](#) Trying to manage a disaster ... You mentioned taking some time away from the troops on the front lines. Well I haven't left my house in three weeks. I've never been in a leadership position where I haven't been able to walk up to the folks that are in my organization and put my hands on their shoulder and tell them good job or to see the work firsthand. So it's been interesting. But it's also been, it's been inspiring.

Jake Wood: [02:36](#) We have seen people jump into this in ways that I don't think we ever imagined our organization could pivot in that way. So it's been interesting man, to say the least, it's interesting. But we're doing well and the family is safe. So, for the time being,

we're just grateful that our family hasn't been impacted and our hearts just go out to the people whose have.

Paul: [03:01](#) Well my best to your amazing wife and daughter. And to see you, you lean into everything you do and leaning into fatherhood seems really natural for you. And it's been inspiring to watch and to see you grow as dad and as a leader.

Jake Wood: [03:16](#) You were, you kept telling me for a long time I had to get into the dad business man. I trailed after you by a couple of years but you were right. It changes everything immediately. That's been, she's 18 months old now and everything you told me that would happen has happened, so I should have taken your advice earlier.

Paul: [03:36](#) Well, I got the same advice from others so I was just happy to pass it down. And a lot of us, frankly, who've been overseas in deployment and then deep in the fight, a lot of us had families later, right? We kind of put that on the back burner and had kids later.

Jake Wood: [03:48](#) Yeah.

Paul: [03:48](#) So I'm, I'm just happy that you and your amazing wife are making more people who can join all the good fights that you're a part of. But every dad needs a break. Every mom needs a break. So I got to ask you, what is your adult beverage of choice, Jake Wood?

Jake Wood: [04:05](#) Yeah. It's interesting, you find yourself working from home, you've got a lot of idle hours, even in the midst of a pandemic. So I've been reaching for my beverage of choice more frequently than I probably should be. But I'm a sucker for a good session IPA. I'm a big beer drinker. I'm not a beer snob, but I'm a beer drinker. And then I like a good craft bourbon. Been drinking a lot of Michter's lately, which I've been enjoying.

Jake Wood: [04:35](#) And Costco was even running a special on Johnnie Walker Blue Label. So I don't often drink scotch, but when you see a great price on something like that, you've got to treat yourself, I guess.

Paul: [04:48](#) There you go. There you go. I love it. I love it. Well, I mean you were a, at one point a gigantic offensive lineman. For folks who don't know, you're a pretty big dude. But now you look almost like a movie star. You got some cool facial hair and gray hair. You look very-

Jake Wood: [05:01](#) Oh my wife hates the beard. I grow a weak beard too, and she just hates it. So now it's just a game of who's going to give in first between her and I.

Paul: [05:09](#) It's kind of a Johnny Depp beard you got going on there.

Jake Wood: [05:11](#) Yeah, I know. It's like when you're overseas in Iraq or Afghanistan and you grow your mustache out for the first time. And you see those guys struggling through the first mustache. That's what this beard is to me.

Paul: [05:21](#) But you used to be an offensive lineman. At one point weren't you at or above 300 pounds?

Jake Wood: [05:28](#) Yeah, so I played a line at Wisconsin. And most people are surprised to learn I was actually, if you can believe it, I was undersized for a Wisconsin offensive tackle at 290 pounds. So yes, a mountain of a human being. They wanted me at 315. I spent one week over 300 pounds and I just couldn't sustain it. So I usually played around 290.

Paul: [05:53](#) So that's where all that beer comes in handy, right? The beer helps you pack on the pounds.

Jake Wood: [05:56](#) Yeah. It's a steady diet of beer and mac and cheese when you're up there in Madison.

Paul: [06:01](#) Well you're burning calories like a mofu now, because you guys are on the front line. But I ask this of every guest as well. You were growing up in Wisconsin before you ended up on this trajectory where you play D1 football, you ended up in the Marine Corps. And now you're leading the fight, really not just for the country, for the globe. But I want to go way, way back in the way, way back machine and ask you Jake wood, what was your first car?

Jake Wood: [06:25](#) My first car. My first car was a 1987 two door Chevy Blazer. Two tone. I don't think it was two tone rolling off the factory line. I think it was two tone because the bottom had rusted out at some point prior to me buying it. So yeah, that was how the fab shop repainted it, but I loved that car. I ended up getting into a car crash in it on my way to the high school once, and put my face through the windshield, which is, that's how you get a face like this Paul.

Jake Wood: [06:57](#) And I was an idiot. I'm always religious about wearing my seat belt. This is, honest to God, the one time I can ever recall in my

life I didn't wear my seatbelt. And some idiot tried to pull in front of me and I T-boned him, and put my head through the windshield. And that was the end of that car.

- Paul: [07:16](#) Wow. What color was the two tone? It was rust on the bottom and something else on top?
- Jake Wood: [07:21](#) Red on top, black on bottom.
- Paul: [07:23](#) Wow.
- Jake Wood: [07:24](#) It was great. I loved it, man, I loved it.
- Paul: [07:25](#) That's stylish man. How bad did you get hurt when your face hit the windshield?
- Jake Wood: [07:30](#) It was, I got taken to the ER. I lost consciousness for a little bit, not long. But it happened in a neighborhood where a bunch of my high school friends lived, so they actually heard the crash, ran outside, pulled me out of the car. Which maybe wasn't advisable, I don't know. And then I got carted off in the ambulance. It was a scene.
- Paul: [07:52](#) So maybe that sets you up for the life you're on now, right?
- Jake Wood: [07:55](#) I don't know man.
- Paul: [07:55](#) Where you are at the scene of crisis, you're the helper. We talk a lot in this show about Mr. Rogers and we say, look for the helpers. And ever since I met you, you've been a helper. The first time we met I think was during the snowpocalypse during storm the Hill, I think,
- Jake Wood: [08:10](#) It was.
- Paul: [08:11](#) Was it 2010.
- Jake Wood: [08:12](#) 2010.
- Paul: [08:13](#) It was the week and the year that the Saints won the super bowl.
- Jake Wood: [08:17](#) Yeah.
- Paul: [08:17](#) And our mutual friend, the great Clay Hunt was there for Storm the Hill. And you were a late edition.

Jake Wood: [08:24](#) Yeah.

Paul: [08:25](#) We used to always say that we loved Clay so much that we let him bring Jake.

Jake Wood: [08:29](#) Yeah, exactly. I was his one plus.

Paul: [08:31](#) You were his plus one. And we all bonded in the suck there. It was snowpocalypse. We were advocating for veterans. We had vets from all over the country, many of whom are now involved with Team Rubicon in their communities. But you, in that week or so we were together there were two blizzards. We are trapped in a shitty DC hotel. It kind of felt like The Shining. We were all bonding and you had this idea for Team Rubicon, it was just coming together.

Paul: [08:56](#) You guys had just got back from Haiti. And that was part of it, was that Clay said to me, "We just got back from Haiti. This guy's amazing. You got to get him on the team." And I remember you showing me the sketch of the Team Rubicon logo, I think on a napkin or something. You told me, Mr. Ed made it, I think.

Jake Wood: [09:11](#) Yeah. Yeah.

Paul: [09:12](#) But can you tell, for folks who are new to this, can you tell the origin story of Team Rubicon and how it's led you to be built for this moment?

Jake Wood: [09:23](#) Yeah. Yeah. I mean it's a long story. I'll try to make it brief. You mentioned that I, after Wisconsin I went to the Marine Corps. I served four years, from 2005 to 2009. And in that time I served with a guy named Clay Hunt who I'm sure we'll talk about at some point. We both knew well.

Jake Wood: [09:43](#) Clay and I were really close. So I got out of the Marine Corps a couple of months after Clay, late 2009. And 60 days after my EAS, I'm sitting around waiting for these grad school applications to come back and the Haiti earthquake happens.

Jake Wood: [09:59](#) And I sit there, I don't have a job because I'm hoping to go to grad school in the fall. And I'm going to kind of take some time and bum around for the next couple of months. And as I'm watching the earthquake unfold and just feel the urge to go down, like any 25 year old Marine Corps veteran would. So I called Clay and I said, "Clay, you want to go to Haiti with me?" And I swear to God he said, "Yeah, sure. I've got school, but

yeah, I mean I can take a week. But why Haiti? Let's go to a nice Caribbean Island. Let's go to Jamaica or the Dominican Republic or something."

Jake Wood: [10:38](#) And he hadn't turned on the news and didn't know about the earthquake so I filled him in. He actually could not go because that weekend he had, one of his family members was getting married. So, I ended up getting a group of guys together and we went down to Haiti just a couple of days after the earthquake. And we started doing all this stuff. We crossed the border from the Dominican Republic. It was eight of us originally.

Jake Wood: [11:05](#) And then we were doing mostly medical work. We had a Special Forces doctor with us. We had two emergency room physicians, a couple of firefighter EMTs. I had medical training, I say that with kind of air quotes on it. Just like any Marine infantryman had medical training. And for 20 days Team Rubicon was down there, that's what we called our small team. And it just kept growing and growing and growing. And we realized that all we were doing was repurposing what we'd been taught in the Marine Corps, in the army, and the other branches of service, to help people in those moments.

Jake Wood: [11:42](#) So we came back, right before I met you, cocksure and full of confidence and said that we were going to build the best disaster response organization in world. Had no idea what that meant, but I think we were foolish enough to try. So we set out to do it.

Jake Wood: [12:03](#) And it's been an interesting journey. That was a decade ago. The organization has about 120,000 registered volunteers today. In any given year, about 20 to 25,000 of those will be active in some capacity responding to disasters, training for disasters, running mitigation projects and communities to help stave off the impact of disasters. And it's been really remarkable to see. We've had our bumps and bruises along the way as entrepreneurs, like any startup.

Jake Wood: [12:37](#) But it's been really incredible just to see the idea take shape. This idea that we as taxpayers spend hundreds of billions of dollars a year training our men and women to fight. We give them incredible skill sets, they gain this unbelievable experience overseas. And then when they come back, we don't ask anything of them anymore. And I know you've been on the front lines of that fight. We don't even do simple things like credential the with civilian opportunities when they get out. I mean, it's

just, there's so many absurdities in that process. But we tried to tap into one of them.

Jake Wood: [13:10](#) And so, yeah, I mean you fast forward to the present day. We do all sorts of disasters. We've responded to everything from hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, wildfires. We've even, we have responded to infectious disease outbreaks before, even as recently as last year. But I don't know that we ever thought that we would be facing the situation we do today with COVID 19. It is, from an emergency management perspective, it is so unprecedented. It is, the chaos of 9/11, it's ten fold that just because of its breadth and depth across all systems of government, the economy, the healthcare system.

Jake Wood: [13:57](#) It's just, nobody, from the administrator of FEMA down through me, down to a local community emergency response team, really could have anticipated what, this has happened. But like I said, we've had a 120,000 volunteers. And early in this crisis, we started tracking it when it was coming through China. We have a planning section at our national operations center in Dallas, and this is what they do. They monitor situations around the globe for crises unfolding. And we spin it action when opportunities arise.

Jake Wood: [14:35](#) So when this thing was in China ... We will never be able to operate in China as a disaster response organization by nature of being former military, U.S. military veterans, right?

Paul: [14:45](#) Is that right?

Jake Wood: [14:45](#) We've tried before. They've had earthquakes. We've tried to work through the embassies to get access. It'll never happen. So we knew we weren't going to respond to Corona virus in Wu Han, but we knew it was going to jump the borders. But we thought it would probably be kind of relegated to a-

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Jake: [15:03](#) ... probably be kind of relegated to Asia, Southeast Asia. It would of course get passed around the globe just because of how global a country China is, but we never anticipated it becoming this pandemic. We were watching it thinking we might deploy our medical teams to Thailand or Vietnam or something like that.

Jake: [15:23](#) Then all of a sudden, as you know, it just spread like a prairie fire. We started positioning Team Rubicon very early to pivot

everything we do into the fight, put all of our medical providers on alert, activated basically all of our volunteer leaders in all of our cities across the country and kind of braced for it. We've been in a fight since nearly day one. I mean, I know you're at ground zero they're in New York. I'm in LA, which we've kind of been bracing for it for the last month and it hasn't really hit here yet. I think we were good at taking some early measures and learning from the mistakes that New York made. But yeah, we're not through it yet.

Paul: [16:10](#) You guys, I'd love for you to go a step deeper because I think I saw you here in the tri-state area after Hurricane Sandy. I've seen you on small tornadoes, floods, everything all across the country. We share a mentor and friend in General Petraeus. I remember as the organization was growing, I said, "Man, are they going to have enough veterans?" Early on he said, "I don't know if we're going to have enough disasters." Now it's flipped, right? There's so many disasters. There's so many things you guys could respond to and you continue to respond over and over again.

Paul: [16:46](#) For folks who don't understand, these are folks often who volunteer with Team Rubicon who have civilian jobs or are students and they go on deployments. It can be for a week or a couple of months. I would love for you to maybe give us an example of one of your volunteers. Then also if you can shape the battlefield as you see it. I know you're in over 70 locations now around the country and you're doing medical testing as I understand for the first time around COVID-19. Give us a personal example of what your people are like because I think that's a tremendous source of inspiration and hope right now.

Paul: [17:21](#) You've said before you're there for people on their worst days. The Team Rubicon, the gray shirts come walking through the door and it's like an angel coming through the door is the way people describe it. Give us an example of one of your frontline leaders. Then if you can, shape what your current response looks like on the battlefield.

Jake: [17:39](#) Yeah, I mean it's hard to even just pinpoint what's the archetype for a Team Rubicon volunteer because it's amazing how diverse the group is. I mean, and particularly from almost a socioeconomic perspective. We've got a guy named Todd in the New Jersey area, Coast Guard veteran who is a senior marketing executive at numerous startups that have been acquired. The guy just crushes it at life, but there's something missing. Over the years, he's donated thousands and thousands of hours just



in an administrative capacity helping us to organize volunteers, organize events, organize training.

Jake: [18:29](#) Then we have volunteers who are struggling with being underemployed. We have volunteers who were medically discharged, medically retired from the military, who maybe haven't found work since leaving the Army or the Marine Corps, but who still are looking for a way to be a value to society. I mean, the military said, "You no longer are a value to us. Here's a monthly paycheck. Good luck with life." That doesn't really sit well with a lot of these folks. It's such a diverse group of people.

Jake: [19:04](#) When they get together it's so crazy because you'll have this liberal New Englander sleeping on a cot next to the deepest crimson red state vet and politics doesn't enter into the equation. They might talk about it, but they don't get mad about it. They agree to disagree. The only thing that matters is that they are there to help people. It's cliché, but it's just like a platoon.

Jake: [19:36](#) We activated them for COVID-19. We didn't really have a playbook for this. We had a medical capability that we deploy internationally. We've really never deployed it in the continental US. We deployed medical teams to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. That was the closest we'd ever been to doing something medically here in the US, but we just launched a 250-bed hospital in Santa Clara, California that's already seen patients. It's a federal medical station.

Jake: [20:03](#) We're on the verge of launching another federal medical station in Navajo Nation in Arizona. One of the most vulnerable populations in the US, our tribal lands are always forgotten, always left behind in circumstances like this. We're running a mobile testing site with the healthcare system in North Carolina, that mission will probably continue to expand. Then we're running operations and logistics in partnership with groups like Feeding America and Meals on Wheels for at last count I think over 60 major food banks and food bank networks all across the US.

Jake: [20:39](#) One of the things we saw early was that food banks, which we've never done anything with food or food security in the past, they rely a lot on volunteers, but their volunteer demographic is the age 65 and over. Because of their risk profile relative to COVID-19, they're coming out. These food bank operations are just shutting down. We've kind of stepped into

that void, built kind of some hasty playbooks for how we do that.

Jake: [21:09](#) Then the other element that we're engaging in is what we've really developed over the last decade is an expertise for bringing order to chaos. We have systems and process. We operate on the Incident Command System. Any firefighter or EMS person that's listening to this show knows exactly what ICS is. As a nonprofit, we've become experts in that.

Paul: [21:34](#) Can you explain that, Jake? Can you explain what the ICS is for people who are less familiar to it and why it's important to you guys?

Jake: [21:40](#) I know you were on the ground after 9/11, on the ground at Ground Zero. If you can imagine that when 9/11 happened, all these agencies responded, the FBI, the military, the New York Police Department, New York Fire Department, the EPA was there because of the environmental concerns and none of them operated on the same emergency kind of command system. They all use different protocols. They had no interoperability. It was just a-

Paul: [22:12](#) Different radios, like different radio-

Jake: [22:14](#) Different radio frequencies, yeah. ICS was one of the first things that the new department of Homeland Security, which was formed after 9/11, they implemented nationwide. They kind of pulled it from the Wildland Firefighting System in California. It had already been in place since I think the 70s. The California Wildland Firefighting System just operates just really, really smooth. They pulled that up and made some tweaks and they implemented it.

Jake: [22:45](#) Any federal, state or local agency has to be compliant in it. Nonprofits like Team Rubicon don't, but in the military interoperability is the key. NATO works because I can call for fire from a French fighter plane just as easily as a US one. That's how we wanted to design it. What's interesting if you think about it, practice kind of makes perfect in a situation like this. If you're a county-level emergency manager, particularly in a small county, you can go a 20-year career and never see a disaster. You'll use ICS for like the annual Thanksgiving Day parade, but you'll never actually implement it in the chaos of this type of situation.

Jake: [23:33](#) Last year we responded to 100 disasters, last year alone. We have this cadre of emergency managers who have this breadth and depth of experience that is almost unparalleled across the country. One of the biggest requests that we're getting right now is for our top volunteer leaders to deploy into emergency operation centers just to basically advise and assist them in how they're managing the operations of this response.

Paul: [24:05](#) Jake, I want to pull all the way back and look at the national response because you are an evolution of ... I don't know, like the old days before they were real fire departments when people used to come together and pass buckets to put out fires. You guys are the evolution of almost the volunteer firefighter spirit in America. But now, you're more effective in some ways than the Red Cross. You guys are kind of the next generation of something like the Red Cross. Maybe I'm categorizing it wrong, but I really think people look to you to be as a social entrepreneur, you are really pushing the boundaries of what a nonprofit can be, what an American-based nonprofit can be.

Paul: [24:45](#) Now there's Team Rubicon Global, which is an expansion of your idea on a global level. But I want you to pull it down because people think disaster in the US, they think FEMA. I hope that whoever is president come next year that you're at the top of their short list for director of FEMA. I don't know if there's anybody that's better qualified. I've talked to you, but I know you're shaking your head. But anybody who's elected president would be smart to pull you in and listen to you because you know what the hell you're doing.

Paul: [25:13](#) But can you evaluate the current response system? Why does it work? Why does it not work? FEMA in particular, unless you feel like there's a more frontline. Now we know the Department of Defense will be a lead element. The VA will be a lead element. Local hospitals would be a lead element, but can you kind of assess the national response? If you were advising the President, what would you tell him to do?

Jake: [25:34](#) Yeah. I mean, what we're really seeing right now is the limitations of a federalist system. Disasters inherently are state's issues. The concept that FEMA is this silver bullet that can come in and solve these problems. It's the wrong perspective to have. The way the system is designed is that states are responsible for their citizens. They typically engage in mutual aid agreements with neighboring states so they can have cross border support when that makes sense.

Jake: [26:17](#) FEMA really only steps in extreme circumstances within a very narrow scope. They are there to move money and in some cases provide advisory services. FEMA was never designed, nor is it staffed and resourced to be able to provide what is necessary today. Frankly, you can't really design a system to handle what's happening today. I mean, you know how floods they're categorized as like 1,000-year events or 500-year events? You can't really design a system to fully withstand what would be a 1,000-year flood. It's impractical. You can take steps against it, but the flood insurance program that FEMA operates, it only operates against a 100-year flood scenario.

Jake: [27:07](#) This pandemic is a ... I don't know. I guess you can look at the Spanish flu in 1918 and say, "Well, that was 100 years ago." Maybe it's 100-year event, but it's really hard to say. I don't know that you design a system for this. That being said, what's needed, the call to federalize the acquisition process early was a major miss by the federal government to not implement. I mean, the fact that we have states today competing against one another and competing against their own federal government on bids for critical lifesaving equipment is just, I mean it's absurd on its face. There were steps that they could take to immediately put an end to that. The result is not only are we paying more for supplies than we should be, but there are delays in that process and it's creating this element of us versus them when we should all be on one team. We're artificially creating this division and this competition when we shouldn't be.

Jake: [28:09](#) What you're seeing now is this incredible ... I don't know what the right word is, collaboration or thoughtfulness where you're seeing states like Washington who may have already peaked and borne the brunt of it shipping their ventilators to New York State. I mean, imagine being a governor and being responsible for your own constituents there in the state of Washington, you don't know that it's over yet. You think it is and you suspect you have an excess capacity of ventilation equipment and you have the choice, "Do I ship 400 or do I keep them here just in case I need them? If I ship them and I do end up needing them and even one of my citizens dies as a result of that decision, did I do the right thing or did I let my people down?"

Jake: [28:56](#) But what you're seeing is people are rising to this with the mentality of, "No, we're all Americans. It's not Washington versus New York. This is a whole of America response. We have to act that way."

- Paul: [29:06](#) I think that's a good way of framing it. But it's almost like Jake, you and I, I think maybe we're in Iraq at the same time. But it would be like if I was in the Army and you were in the Marine Corps and we were fighting over ammunition.
- Jake: [29:18](#) There was never a competition over ammunition. You guys had it, we didn't.
- Paul: [29:23](#) We also had the brains and you guys didn't.
- Jake: [29:26](#) Yeah, you had everything.
- Paul: [29:28](#) But imagine that. Imagine the 82nd Airborne and the 1st Marine Division are competing for ammunition, for rounds for our M4s and M16s as we're engaging in Fallujah or someplace like that. It's absurd. I think what you're seeing from those governors is that teamwork. That idea that, "You know what? New York needs it now, but I know if the wave shifts back that New York's going to help me later." I give the governors a lot of credit in that regard.
- Paul: [29:56](#) But I've also heard you guys are operating in California right now. Interesting, I'm going to pause because I want folks ...

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- Paul: [30:03](#) ... Paul. Interesting, I'm going to pause because I want folks who are not in a place like New York to understand that sirens are going by, I'm recording in my house, sirens are going by constantly. Just since we've been talking, I think three sirens have gone by my house, just to give people a sense of the pace, and I think it really does feel a bit like a combat environment. Every time you leave your house it's like leaving the wire, people who are frontline workers like Dr. Paul [Hazer 00:30:27] that I spoke to in the last episode and now you, you're a frontline person. But I heard you talk about the restrictions in California and it feels like one of the biggest enemies for you guys is the bureaucracy, right?
- Jake Wood: [30:40](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative)-
- Paul: [30:41](#) Being able to get in the fight. Things like authorization or certification, barriers that maybe made sense at some point, maybe didn't, but now have to be busted open because it's extreme times. But I ask you, maybe to break that down, but more importantly, I want to ask you the same question I ask of all our guests, Jake Wood, what makes you angry?

- Jake Wood: [31:00](#) Oh boy, a lot of things these days. The first thing that jumps to my mind is apathy, this sense in some parts of the country that you're getting which is, this isn't my problem. Even just when people early on were saying, "Well I'm young, I'm not at risk, so I'm going to go out." Even when they were fully aware that they could become a threat vector carrying the virus, transmitting it to other people who were at risk, but unable to put the needs of the whole above themselves. If you've been in the disaster business long enough like I have, you see apathy frequently, and it's good because you also get to see the opposite, you see amazing empathetic leaders and citizens doing the right thing regardless of personal cost.
- Jake Wood: [31:53](#) I think that the other thing that's making me angry right now is indecision. We've seen it at the federal level, we've seen it in numerous states. We've seen it at a county level, us personally, Team Rubicon. We are running into kind of the indecision, call it bureaucracy in some regards, like we've run into the buzzsaw of bureaucracy in so many situations where people are allowing very simple problems to stand in the way of very critical and large scale solutions, right?
- Paul: [32:31](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative)-
- Jake Wood: [32:33](#) Some examples like, we were establishing a facility, I'm not going to like call out specific officials, or counties, or cities, but we were setting up a location at the request of HHS and we put 33 medical providers against it. And these are people that are in short supply, like New York City could use those 33 medical providers right about now, I know you know that. And for 96 hours, every 12 hours it was something else that as this facility was standing by ready to accept the patients, they were finding reasons not to accept patients. Oh, an argument about who was going to pay for it, the county or the city. Who gives a shit like, we will figure that out on the backend, and I promise you that we're going to come to the right decision on the backside of this. The fire department refused to service fire watch for the facility, for the county.
- Jake Wood: [33:37](#) We were like, "We just had a 12 hour delay for this, we're freaking vets. If there's one thing we know how to do, it's stand fucking fire watch, right? Give me a glow belt and a moonbeam and I got it." And it was seriously, like that single thing, as simple as that, which is important, you want to be safe, you want to be up to code, but clean neat solutions, and rules and bureaucracy, I said it on a news program recently, those are made for peacetime and if we want to use the analogy that this

is a wartime environment, some people get upset about using that analogy, I don't. This is chaos, lives are on the line, you have the fog of war, rules are made for peacetime. You have to use a different playbook in this situation. You have to do what's right regardless of what the rules say. And I think history's going to look back on leaders in this situation, and they're not going to judge kindly the people who played by the rules, because that's going to mean that, that led to lives being lost.

- Paul: [34:43](#) Had to get that cough in there. But thank you for breaking that down. Let me ask you another point here, Jake, I mean you are, I think, the epitome of a social entrepreneur because you're solving problems but you're doing it at scale, and I learned from Bill Drayton at Ashoka, and others that social entrepreneurs are people who build solutions to the world's problems, right?
- Jake Wood: [35:05](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative)-
- Paul: [35:05](#) If you were a tech entrepreneur, you'd be hiding out on your island in Bali right now with a bunch of luxury cars, but you're in the nonprofit space where your reward for success is more work, right?
- Jake Wood: [35:19](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative)-
- Paul: [35:19](#) I mean, you're never going to get your stock options in cash out.
- Jake Wood: [35:22](#) Yeah.
- Paul: [35:23](#) Can you talk about, you have been extremely successful in two areas that I want to ask you to talk about. One, is building an organization which required fundraising, and required operations and execution. And on a parallel track, the technology component. You're almost a technology company in the way network these volunteers, and the way you've built platforms that everything you do online is fantastic. Even your photographs, the engagement, the way you allow people to be a part of your mission, I think is probably under appreciated. It's not that you guys are tough, you're also smart, and that is I think one of the best representations of our generation of veterans. You are improvising, adapting, overcoming, but at scale in a way that, I don't know if a nonprofit's grown as fast as you have over the last couple of years. And I see you doing partnerships with major league baseball, and musicians, and at the same time understanding the genius of marketing, right?
- Jake Wood: [36:19](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Paul: [36:20](#) The Greyshirts, you guys are called the, Greyshirts, that's you guys. Now they know that they see the Greyshirts coming over the hill, that's Team Rubicon. So can you talk about your vision and your lessons learned as an entrepreneur in building, I don't want to call it a business, a social impact machine?

Jake Wood: [36:35](#) Yeah, I mean that's a broad question. I always wanted to be an entrepreneur, I always had that itch. I was doing entrepreneurial things growing up. When I got out of the Marine Corp I wanted to get into that entrepreneurs scene, that we call it the tech scene. But I was a sniper, right? I always joke, it's not like I was going to go walk up to Twitter's front door and be like, "Hey, hire me. I got this amazing skillset." No, I mean, obviously I knew I had something to offer, but it just didn't translate. So the fun thing about TR is that it's been able to scratch that itch, and I think most people have this really antiquated perspective of what a nonprofit is and we call it your grandma's nonprofit. They think of all these other charities that are out there and they're outdated, they don't rely on tech well, they're not innovative, they're not edgy, they're not pushing the envelope, they're just kind of existing. And they're doing good work, but they just kind of exist, they persist, right?

Jake Wood: [37:36](#) And I was never going to be satisfied doing that. If that was going to be the tact that we were going to take with Team Rubicon, then I was just going to kind of ascend onto the board of directors, let somebody else run it, and I was going to go scratch that entrepreneurial itch somewhere else. So it's been fun. It's been a grind though, man. My brother, my fellow social entrepreneur, I know you know the grind. Those nights you lay awake staring at the ceiling wondering if you're going to make payroll, we've been there. It hasn't just been success after success. The number of times that I've had to walk in front of the team and say, "Hey guys, we're delaying bonuses this year. We can't make it work." Or, "Hey guys, we got to go into austerity measures," but we always had a plan, and we always had a vision that we believed in. So yeah, we took an approach where we wanted to be different from the beginning.

Jake Wood: [38:26](#) We wanted to innovate both kind of in our voice and our marketing. Take a bit of an edgier approach and I'll acknowledge that IAVA was a leader in this space. The way you guys were able to position yourself alongside major corporate brands, like early on we looked to the activations you were doing with Harley, the activations you are doing with MillerCoors, like those are cool brands and we thought to ourselves, why are we going to walk around with a tin cup in our



hand asking for \$5 at a time when we can go and do a million dollar partnership with cool, iconic brands that add all this other lift. The reality is you can do both, and so that's what we've done and had some success. The technology stuff has been fun too. We really see ourselves, you kind of hit it on the head when you said we were almost a technology company.

Jake Wood: [39:21](#) We think of ourselves as a platform company, so you're Airbnb, you're Uber, what do those companies do? What they've created is a marketplace that is a frictionless environment where resources that have excess capacity, or like idle resources and assets like a car, or an extra bedroom, can find a consumer that is looking for that resource. Before there was no marketplace for that transaction to happen and they created that frictionless experience. Well we think of our resource, the latent potential of these veterans sitting around in communities who many of them, not all, want to serve their community in some capacity. And we've created a marketplace in our, continuing to create and refine, where we can now connect them to that demand signal. Communities that are experiencing a disaster. And it's more complicated than that, it's a little bit more hands on, but technology's such a huge component of it if you're doing it at scale- [crosstalk 00:40:24]

Paul: [40:24](#) That nails it man, it is complicated, but there's a simplicity to it, right? You're matching a need with a demand-

Jake Wood: [40:31](#) Yeah.

Paul: [40:31](#) ... and that's the brilliance of it. You're able to even recognize that you need people who can operate chainsaws to clear roads-

Jake Wood: [40:39](#) Right.

Paul: [40:39](#) ... so you train people to do that. Then you've got a pool of these people and when there's a tornado, when there's disaster, you can mobilize them quickly. And I think it really, to call it a platform company, I think is right and probably where you all don't get enough credit in how you've changed the game, and how you're pushing the boundaries of innovation not just in the nonprofit sector but private sector and across the board. You're also a company of values and you are an outspoken leader, you're a person of integrity. You and I have talked a lot about the leadership void that often exists in Washington and other places. Can you talk about this moment in time where so many people are concerned about the

president? They don't know if they can count on him. I won't ask you to go too far into it if you can't, but can you evaluate your thoughts on how to respond to this kind of a leader? What we can do in the face of that.

Paul: [41:31](#) And then, I would love for you to comment on you are a Marine, which some folks may know is kind of like the stepchild of the Navy, the Navy's getting ripped apart right now. The acting secretary has fired Captain Crozier. He gave a, I think, inappropriate speech to the crew. He may be fired by the time this episode drops, but can you talk about the national leadership, and the White House in whatever way you're able, and then what's happening in the Navy and your thoughts on that?

Jake Wood: [42:00](#) Yeah, I think, in moments like this one of the most important things that a leader can do is just speak to the brutal facts, and embrace them. I don't think it would be a politically charged thing for me to say that we, our national leadership failed us in the beginning of this situation by not just looking America in the eye and saying, "Listen, this is going to be bad and we're going to need to kind of reach down and just really get through this together, right? And it's going to be painful, the economy's going to be hurt, our healthcare systems are going to be overwhelmed, but if we rise to the occasion like Americans, we will get through this stronger than before." Instead it was this "Well, don't worry it's not going to be an issue." And then it was becoming an issue, "Well, it's not going to be that bad of an issue," and then there was a blame game going around. What we needed was just clear, unbiased, and informed leadership.

Jake Wood: [43:09](#) And there's another thing that leaders can do in a situation like this. If you're not the expert, get the hell away from the podium. So, one of the things that's interesting about what's happening in Team Rubicon right now is we've reconfigured our entire organization to be in this fight. And the point end of that spear, the leader at the tip of that spear, is not me. Because I'm not the right person to serve as the leader for our organization in this moment. So, about a week into this effort after we went, work from home, we appointed a COVID Czar internally and basically the entire organization now rolls under him. And that's because I knew that I wasn't the right person, I'm not the best emergency manager in our organization. So, that meant it put me in a different role. So sometimes, push [Vouchie 00:44:04] up to the microphone and get the hell out of the way, it's kind of what I'm saying. Let the experts speak. And-

Paul: [44:11](#) Yeah, that's powerful. What about the Navy man, I mean-

Jake Wood: [44:13](#) Captain Crozier.

Paul: [44:13](#) .. this is at the point now where it feels like the troops and the politicians are on different sides, and I've been very critical of Modly, I think he should resign or be fired. The crew has now been thrust into this terrible situation where they're basically being asked to choose between the political leadership or their captain. Now maybe hundreds of them have come up COVID positive, but at the very basic level, now you've got an aircraft carrier full of guys and gals who were trying to do their job, and the Navy seems like it's ripped apart in a time of war. I mean, what's your take on that, Jake?

Jake Wood: [44:48](#) So it's complicated. I don't know all the details of Captain Crozier's email. I will say that there are expectations of leaders in the military, and copying 20 people on to that-

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Jake Wood: [45:03](#) And you know, copying 20 people onto that email was probably against protocol, right? Probably against protocol. I think it's probably safe to say that. So I think Captain Crozier probably did that clear-eyed that he was probably going to get fired, right? Because you know, the Navy's built on one thing, and that's accountability. Now, I don't know if his earlier pleas were being ignored, and he thought that this was the only avenue that he had to maintain the health and wellbeing of the sailors, which is his highest priority. I mean, that is his highest moral obligation, is those sailors.

Jake Wood: [45:40](#) So I kind of think that he knew what was going to happen, and so I don't know that firing him was the wrong move, right? Ignoring earlier pleas for assistance, if that had happened, that was the wrong move that led to it, but holding him accountable for that? You know, I think it's extremely unfortunate. I don't know that I would say it's a shameful move.

Jake Wood: [46:04](#) That being said, Modly going on and giving this ridiculous speech that is unbecoming his office, he needs to be held accountable too, right? Just like Crozier knew what he was getting himself into, he got held accountable for it, because that's what the Navy does. Well, listen, if you're at the top and you're the acting Secretary of the Navy, you're going to be held accountable too by the Secretary of Defense.

Jake Wood: [46:27](#) I would support his removal on those grounds. I think it was inappropriate. It was juvenile for him to take a swipe at Captain Crozier. I think ultimately, going back to what I said about Crozier earlier, they may have had no option but to remove him. That doesn't mean that they can't respect him on the way out for, again, doing what his highest moral obligation was, which was to take care of his sailors.

Jake Wood: [46:52](#) So I think the whole thing is just extremely unfortunate. I also suspect we're probably going to learn more in the coming days and weeks about what actually happened. If there's really any criticism to lob, it's that this was all executed without an investigation. I mean, you had captains of warships that were driving them into other ships that didn't get relieved for 60 days pending an investigation. It was like, well, we know the ships collided, so ... You know?

Paul: [47:19](#) Right. Where sailors died, right?

Jake Wood: [47:20](#) Yeah.

Paul: [47:20](#) There were folks who died, and they were still pending investigations. But the central point there that I think has probably outraged most Americans is that the crew felt like they needed help and they weren't getting it. And Crozier felt like, whether he did it the right way or not, he felt like he was a vessel for the vessel, right? He was going to push forward the calls of what they need.

Paul: [47:42](#) So I want to ask you, Jake. You guys are at the tip of the spear more than any other nonprofit I know of in America, more than most organizations in American. What do you all need right now? From folks who are listening and want to help, what do you need?

Jake Wood: [47:56](#) We need inspired Americans who want to serve their neighbors in this time of need. We've got 120,000 volunteers. We're going to run out of volunteer hours in 30 days, because that's just how big and broad this response is. So for any of you listeners out there feeling a little helpless about what you can do, Team Rubicon is considered an essential service under all of these shelter in place declarations. Volunteering with us can get you out of the home, into the field, working alongside and under the right authorities, helping your neighbors in this moment when they need it. So let's get your listeners involved with Team Rubicon.

- Jake Wood: [48:34](#) Obviously, we need financial support. This is an unprecedented economic fallout that is coupling with the pandemic. To be frank, we don't know how that's going to impact us yet. We are raising some money relative to this COVID response, but we think that our end-of-year revenue pipeline could be significantly impacted by a 30% downturn in the stock market. So there's a lot of uncertainty there.
- Jake Wood: [49:04](#) But I think more than anything, what do we need? We need America to start acting like America. I imagine that the people listening to your podcast, Paul, are proud Americans. How do we just, through our just literal everyday interactions, everyday actions, just inspire the people around us to just be just a little bit better? Because that's what we need more than anything right now.
- Paul: [49:30](#) I love it. I love it. During that answer, two more sirens came by house, just to frame it up for people, right?
- Jake Wood: [49:36](#) It's crazy.
- Paul: [49:36](#) That's how often they're coming through. I think your call to action is an important one, because in one of my big criticisms of the President, he's not issuing a call to action. Team Rubicon needs volunteers. The VA needs a thousand doctors to come out of retirement. New York needs healthcare workers. It's what President Bush didn't do after 9/11. He didn't issue a call to action. I really respect that you continue to do that. For folks listening, we've talked about Team Rubicon before. They are the helpers, and this can get you out of the house. This can get you on the front line and get you involved, and you can be helping others.
- Paul: [50:07](#) But Jake, you're also a guy with tremendous perspective. I've asked this of a lot of other guests on the show. Would you ever run for office? A lot of people have asked you to run for office, either in Wisconsin or somewhere else. Would you ever run for office yourself?
- Jake Wood: [50:23](#) I mean, I would never say never. I will say that it's not anything my wife would ever support. I think I've had the rare opportunity to have inordinate impact for this country with what I'm doing. I think a lot of people think about getting into politics because they want to have more impact, and I just ... Frankly, I think I can impact my community, my country more in the seat that I'm in than being one of 435 congressmen flinging

mud back and forth across the aisle. That just doesn't make sense for me.

Paul: [51:03](#) Right. I appreciate that answer. You also could be one of the 100 senators, or you could be one of the members of the Cabinet. So again, I hope you're on the shortlist for whoever is president at this time next year. You're also a guy who knows how to maintain himself, maintain his people. You focus on your family. Your wife is even more impressive than you are. I mean, for folks that don't know, it was an amazing situation for a long time, where she is a meteorologist, right?

Jake Wood: [51:33](#) Right, right.

Paul: [51:33](#) And she was predicting storms on TV that you would respond to. It was this amazing ... You know, you were this celebrity super-couple.

Jake Wood: [51:40](#) Yeah, it was funny. Yeah.

Paul: [51:41](#) I don't know if there's ... Did they ever come up with ... Like, when they had Bennifer. Did they ever come up with a name for combining you and Indra together?

Jake Wood: [51:48](#) Oh, man, no, and they shouldn't start now.

Paul: [51:51](#) But the two of you are a power couple, and you also are just good people. I ask this of every guest as well. You've been through a lot of adversity, man. You've been through really hard stuff, and you still keep a great spirit and a contagious positivity. Jake, what makes you happy?

Jake Wood: [52:06](#) Oh, man, it's cliché, but it's got to be my daughter. You know, 18 months old, the world is her oyster. She gets joy from the smallest things in life. I look at a world that ... I've experienced the worst of this world, and you have too. I've seen tragedy like most people can never imagine, experienced it myself. There's just got to be a better future for her. So what keeps me motivated, it's building that future, not letting her down.

Paul: [52:37](#) I love that. What else? Give me something else. Is there music or working out or punching a heavy bag or something else weird about Jake Wood that we might not know that keeps you happy, man?

Jake Wood: [52:48](#) Well, going back to your first question, session IPAs and craft bourbon. You know, a lot of my hobbies have fallen by the

wayside as an entrepreneur. I think that's a common story. Man, it's kind of sad and depressing to even sit here and [crosstalk 00:53:07]

Paul: [53:08](#) I mean, I'll give you an out here. You're a social entrepreneur at the highest levels, and you have a little one, right? There's nothing that's more social entrepreneurial than having a kid.

Jake Wood: [53:19](#) Yeah, that's true.

Paul: [53:20](#) And nothing that's more of an ass-kicker. For a long time, I've said that there's only two things in life you only know if you experienced them, combat and parenthood. Once you've done it, then you know it, and if you haven't done it, you really don't know. Now I put pandemics in there too, right? If you haven't experienced a pandemic, you don't totally understand what it's like.

Paul: [53:40](#) But man, it's a good ending, because I have a giving of the gifts. You've been an incredible leader for this country. I'm honored to know you. I'm honored to call you a friend. I've been so inspired and proud to see your rise from those early days, man. America's been rooting for you. But I also got to give you a giving of the gifts. I can't do it in person, so I'm going to do it virtually. I got some gear coming for you from our friends at Oscar Mike.

Jake Wood: [54:02](#) Okay.

Paul: [54:03](#) I know you like tight t-shirts, so I figured size small would be good, right?

Jake Wood: [54:06](#) Yeah, okay. All right, we got jokes. Okay. Jokes.

Paul: [54:09](#) Yeah, so you got a t-shirt coming from Oscar Mike. I went easy on you, man. I went easy on you.

Jake Wood: [54:12](#) Yeah, okay.

Paul: [54:13](#) We've also got ... Bravo Sierra is a sponsor of this show, so I think these will come in particularly handy for you.

Jake Wood: [54:19](#) Okay. All right.

Paul: [54:21](#) [crosstalk 00:54:21] antibacterial body wipes. We'll get-

Jake Wood: [54:22](#) Keep those at the desk so I don't have to shower as often, yeah.

Paul: [54:25](#) Yeah, man. Since you haven't showered in a while, we can get you those. And they got shaving foam and deodorant and all kinds of other stuff that you probably don't use, but I know you'll use the antibacterial body wipes. I don't have them, because I've run out of my stash, but if you had to pick between yellow, blue, or pink Peeps, and this will drop right before Easter, so this'll be the Easter episode, if you had to pick yellow, blue, or pink Peeps, Jake Wood, what would you pick, and why?

Jake Wood: [54:54](#) I'm trying to channel my wife, who's got the sweet tooth. I think it's yellow, man. I think that's the classic, iconic Peep, so I got to go yellow.

Paul: [55:04](#) It's a good choice. You're channeling your wife well. Sarah Jessica Parker called them the OG of Peeps.

Jake Wood: [55:09](#) Okay. Yeah, exactly.

Paul: [55:10](#) They are. You're a branding master, dude.

Jake Wood: [55:12](#) There you go.

Paul: [55:13](#) I have so much respect for the genius of the brand of Team Rubicon. Can you explain one thing quickly, Jake? For folks who don't know, where does the Rubicon part come from?

Jake Wood: [55:23](#) When we were crossing into Haiti from the Dominican Republic on that first mission, that border, we didn't know if we could actually get across the border. So thinking back to the Rubicon River and Julius Caesar taking his army across the Rubicon and that being his point of no return, we kind of thought that phrase in our head, like, "This is our Rubicon," as we approached the border. We were only a small team of eight people all the time, so it was just Team Rubicon, and it just stuck and never changed it.

Paul: [55:53](#) Brilliant, brilliant name, and you're a brilliant guy. I felt like you needed the big stuff, so I got ... For folks who are listening, this is the gigantic bottle of Eagle Rare. We only gave it to one other guest, and it was to Rachel Maddow, because she was such a...

Jake Wood: [56:08](#) Nice.

Paul: [56:09](#) But this felt like Jake Wood. It's gigantic, and you're-

Jake Wood: [56:12](#) Yeah. A one-week supply. That's awesome.



Paul: [56:16](#) Yeah. How tall are you? Are you 6'7"? How tall are you?

Jake Wood: [56:17](#) 6'6".

Paul: [56:18](#) You're 6'6". You were at one point 300 pounds. It has an eagle on it, right?

Jake Wood: [56:22](#) There you go, man.

Paul: [56:23](#) You know, because of America. I feel like I'm going to figure out a way to get this to you and your crew.

Jake Wood: [56:28](#) Love it, man. Or you keep it and we do it on your balcony when all this dies down.

Paul: [56:33](#) That's going to happen, man. We got the 50-pound bottle of champagne that we're also going to pop at the car club when this motherfucker's over, when we get to what I'm now calling VC day, our victory over coronavirus day.

Jake Wood: [56:43](#) There you go.

Paul: [56:45](#) But Jake Wood, you are an amazing, inspiring, and important American, the man of the moment. You're a hero. I've told people before, but I want you to hear it as well. Leadership is not just about getting your mug on the camera. It's a lot about sacrifice, and you have sacrificed so much for this country, for the veterans community, for so many people around the world. At a time when American leadership has been in question, I think, for over a decade now, you have represented all of us in a truly spectacular way, and you've inspired me and you've inspired millions. You've created a movement. Chris Fussell said this a couple episodes ago. Your tombstone is stamped, man. You can rest easy every night knowing that the impact you've made has created a brush fire that will last long after the coronavirus and COVID-19 are gone, man. So as a friend and just as an American, I just want to thank you for all you've done and all you're going to do, and all the seeds you've planted all across this country and around the world.

Jake Wood: [57:41](#) You are far too kind. I appreciate it, man. You were an early mentor to me all the way back during the snowpocalypse. I'm glad we've been able to grow up in this space together.

Paul: [57:53](#) It's been an honor. It wouldn't be fitting, except that another siren is going by right now. Every time I hear that and every time folks hear it, I want them to know that there are folks out

there on the front lines who are the heroes, who are the helpers, and that includes heroes like Jake Wood. So my friend, thank you.

Jake Wood: [58:08](#) Thank you.

Paul: [58:09](#) All the best to you and your crew out there every day. We're going to send all the reinforcements we can. Until then, my friend, stay frosty.

Jake Wood: [58:15](#) Awesome, man. Take care. Stay safe.

Paul: [58:18](#) Thank you, sir. All right, I'm going to end that there, Jake. Thank-

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