

# DISRUPT YOURSELF PODCAST

## EPISODE 320: ROBERT PASIN

If you're ready to Disrupt, I have good news for you. Registration is open for the 2023 session of the Disruption Advisors Smart Growth Certification Program. If you're a coach or talent development professional deeply committed to helping others navigate, change and reach their potential, then this certification program is for you. Through this certification, you'll learn how to grow people and their organizations. Visit the [disruptionadvisors.com/get certified](https://disruptionadvisors.com/get-certified) to learn more and register for an upcoming session. You can also find a link in the show notes. Welcome back to the Disrupt Yourself podcast. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson, CEO of Disruption Advisors, where we help you grow your people to grow your organization because organizations don't Disrupt people do. The building block of that growth, it is you. You know that little bright red wagon with the long front handle? They're one of the symbols of American childhood. They're called Radio Flyers. So is the company that makes them. The metal wagons were named after two of the greatest achievements in the 1920s, the first transatlantic radio signal and the first solo nonstop flight across the Atlantic. Over a hundred years later, that same company now makes a Radio Flyer Tesla. S for kids in that same bright red right next to the classic wagon on their website. Still beloved to this day, you can now buy Radio Flyer e-bikes, Radio Flyer, go-carts, even a Radio Flyer trampoline. Behind the company's sustained success is one family the Pasin's three generations have sat behind the wheel of Radio Flyer, starting with Antonio Pasin coming over from Italy in 1914 all the way to Antonio's grandson, Robert. Robert took over when he was just 23. And as you'll hear and find out. Radio Flyer has shaped him as much as he has shaped the company. I'm happy to present my conversation with Robert Pasin, Chief Wagon Officer at Radio Flyer. I hope you'll enjoy.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, Robert, thank you so much for being with us today.

**Robert Pasin:** It's my pleasure, Whitney.

**Whitney Johnson:** I'd like to start our conversation by talking about your time at the University of Notre Dame, specifically your time as the student body president.

**Robert Pasin:** Yes.

**Whitney Johnson:** What was your campaign like?

**Robert Pasin:** Oh, we campaigned really hard. So, my running mate's name was Fred. And Fred was a good friend of mine. He still is a good friend from New Orleans. And Fred was involved with student government, too. I said our plan was to be the most thorough campaigners on campus. So, we literally knocked on every dorm door. At Notre Dame, most people live on campus. So, we were very, very rigorous about going door to door and campaigning. And this was, you know, pre-social media pre-internet. So, we were hanging up posters and going door to door and it was amazing. It was really, really fun.

**Whitney Johnson:** What are your leadership lessons learned from this door-to-door ground game when you were 20 years old? How old were you?

**Robert Pasin:** 20, 21 at this point.

**Whitney Johnson:** Okay. All right. So, what are some lessons learned?

**Robert Pasin:** I mean, I think the real lessons, even the biggest lessons came when I was first running for student government. It was for sophomore class president. And that was when we were all freshmen. It was the end of our freshman year. Nobody really knew each other yet. No one had any experience. There were all these tickets running for office. There were like 12 tickets of four people running for office. We were all kind of the same, you know, there wasn't that much difference between anybody. And really, that's when I learned about being really organized, knocking on every door. If the people weren't home, we'd leave a handwritten note. We'd go back. When we were at the election, we came in second place, our ticket came in second place and the other ticket was quite a bit ahead of us. But we had done a good job of remaining friends with all of the other tickets. So, we were able to get their support and we then won because we were kind of the super obnoxious student government geeks, you know, we were. But our biggest campaign promise that year was that we were going to host a party every week. That was our campaign promise for sophomore class because that was the main thing that the class government did was the social life. That really resonated with the students, and we ended up winning.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, you said there were the leaders that were running. They had a big lead. You were coming in second place, but was there a primary?

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, and a runoff.

**Whitney Johnson:** And so, when there was a runoff because you had been diplomatic.

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah.

**Whitney Johnson:** You had built a consensus or a caucus that everybody now voted for you.

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, we got everyone else's endorsements.

**Robert Pasin:** All right.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, let us now go to Radio Flyer, okay? And I'll pull this thread through in just a minute. What was it like taking over Radio Flyer and how did that differ from running for student body president?

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, I mean, interestingly, there were a lot of similarities. You're really causing me to reflect on drawing out the threads of being really organized, being committed, you know, having a clear message. Those were things that I definitely deployed in the early years of working here. So, when I started working here, I was 23 years old. My dad was the CEO and the company was really in a state of crisis. Our sales were declining. We had accumulated quite a bit of debt. We weren't making money and so I didn't realize all of the risks and challenges. I remember my first week on the job, my dad said, "Hey, Robert, I want you to meet this guy, Jerry. He's here from the bank. He's here to help us." Jerry took me into a room, sat me down and started yelling at

me, saying, “You have no cash. Do you get it? You guys have no cash.” I was like, “Um, well, how much cash are you supposed to have?” I mean, I was totally clueless. I didn't know what went into running a business or anything. But because it was our family business, I got put in all these situations and meetings and discussions I never would have been in at that age somewhere else. It was just this incredible gift because I learned so much and I was able to try and experiment with things because we were in a state of crisis. So, that's kind of the situation I entered.

**Whitney Johnson:** That's interesting. And I think you make a really powerful statement about when things are in crisis. We're a lot more willing to try new things.

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, it's kind of like that old Winston Churchill quote, “Never let a good crisis go to waste.” I didn't know that quote at that time, but that's definitely what we were doing. I mean, a lot of times in a business, if everything's going great and somebody says, “Hey, why are we doing this? Or should we change this.” There's a lot of resistance to it. There still were those institutional resisters. But when the ship is sinking, you can mobilize more and get attention.

**Whitney Johnson:** How did your dad respond when you started doing all of this?

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, I mean, my dad was in his late 60s at the time, and he had been here a long time at the company. He was kind of tired out, frankly. So even though I was clueless and really green, I was super motivated, really committed. I loved Radio Flyer; I loved the brand. I had grown up working in the company so I had just gotten shot out of a cannon; I was ready to go. So, my inexperience and cluelessness was kind of offset by my energy and passion. I very early saw that if I could take problems off my dad's desk and solve them and deal with them effectively and in the way that he would deal with them, he was always a very high value person, always treated people with respect, always was really concerned about the quality of the product. So as long as I was maintaining those values, if I was solving his problems, I could come back and say, “Hey Dad, I took care of this. This is what happened.” And he would just be like, “Oh, thank you.” You know? As I did that more and more over months and years, he just kept giving me more and more responsibility. That's how, you know, eventually I took over.

**Whitney Johnson:** I love how motivated you were at 23 years old. You know.

**Robert Pasin:** I was. I studied history in college, and I've always been a huge fan of history and especially, you know, kind of the hero's journey story. I had this very romanticized notion of we can take this, you know, we can bring this thing back. We can resuscitate it. We've got this great brand. There's all the great DNA here that we just need to really build on to create something great. So, I was really excited. I felt incredibly grateful and lucky to be born into the family that started this thing. I didn't earn that, but I felt like I had to earn it by building it into something great.

**Whitney Johnson:** You're 23 years old. You're very young. You're the son of the CEO. That experience that you had, try this on. You tell me if you agree. The experience that you had of being in college; running for sophomore class president; building consensus and creating friends with people held you in very good stead as you went into this company as a 23-year-old trying to move a lot of things with a lot of people that are probably twice your age. So, the practice that you'd had in the university setting of building consensus and creating these cohorts of people committed to something was very useful to you once you went into the workplace?

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, definitely. I mean, my parents raised me to be a collaborative person who respects people and respects people's points of view and that I can learn from people. They always taught me that you can learn from anyone. So, I think I'm very grateful to them that I had them as examples for that. So, when I came into the business when I was 23, as I mentioned, I'd worked here for years and years. So, everybody here knew me. The way I showed up when I was 18, 19 and 20 and those summers working jobs in the warehouse and stuff I didn't show up as the spoiled third generation kid, which can happen a lot in a family business. I showed up as I wanted to work hard. I was very respectful of people. I was very aware of the fact that everybody working here had helped pay my way through college with the business. Really, that's because my dad taught me that. So, I had a

lot of credibility coming into the business with people that were already here. I didn't come in and say, "What? You guys are idiots. You're losing money." I was like, "Well, why are we?" It was just this kind of open-minded learner mindset of, well, why is this happening? How did we get here? Well, what can we do? Have we tried this? And it wasn't real judgmental. It was just, hey, I'm here to help.

**Whitney Johnson:** Do you have a favorite childhood memory that has nothing to do with Radio Flyer?

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, I have a lot of great memories. A lot of my memories from my childhood take place at a farm in Wisconsin. We grew up in Chicago and then my dad had a farm in Wisconsin that we were able to do a lot of very dangerous things there that we weren't able to do at home, like ride motorcycles and have bonfires and blow off fireworks and do that kind of stuff. So as a kid, my parents always, always allowed us to kind of engage in what I would call safe danger. They always taught us the right way and the safe way to do things. But I have lots of fun memories of playing up there, bringing my friends up there, playing with my siblings at the farm.

**Whitney Johnson:** All right. So let me give you a little bit of a challenge. Can you describe a Radio Flyer wagon using anything but its appearance? So how does one of those red wagons sound to you and how does it feel?

**Robert Pasin:** The way I would describe it is that it's a vehicle that transports you to a happy place. When you're playing with a Radio Flyer, the wind is in your hair, the sun is in your face. You can imagine that your wagon is anything that can transport you to anywhere you want to go. Usually, you're playing with it with people you love, your friends and family. Those would be some ways I'd describe it.

**Whitney Johnson:** It's funny, I did not have the privilege of having a Radio Flyer wagon as a child, but this morning, prior to our conversation, I was mentioning that I was interviewing you and a woman who is 70 years old started to regale me with this memory of playing with a Radio Flyer wagon as a child in New York. So, I just thought it must be very fun for you to have conversations with people over and over again where they share with you these childhood memories.

**Robert Pasin:** It is. I mean, it's one of the things that's the most delightful part of being a part of this company. And I think it's something that everybody who works here discovers once they start working here and they're out at a party or at a gathering and somebody says, well, what do you do? They say, "I work at Radio Flyer." Then they get those stories; they get those reactions. It's really wonderful and a unique thing to be part of a brand and a company that elicits those kinds of emotional responses. But the thing I was describing to you about the wind in your hair and the sun in your face and using your imagination. During that challenging time, when we were trying to turn things around, if you walked into the building at Radio Flyer and said what do you do here? You wouldn't have gotten those kinds of descriptions right away. You would have said, "Well, we stamp out wagons. We're a manufacturer." Because we were in this crisis, I asked a lot of questions like, well, what does Radio Flyer mean to people? What are we? How can we move forward? It wasn't until we really unlocked those higher-level emotional attributes about the brand that we figured out really how to survive. That's what got us to start describing our mission, which is to bring smiles and create warm memories that last a lifetime. That really came from people reflecting those experiences and stories back to us.

**Whitney Johnson:** All right. So, let's continue on this idea of play so many children in the world – I was going to say United States, but not the United States, the entire world have had a part of their childhood disrupted by the pandemic. Stuck at home. No choice but to be online. Where does the little red wagon fit into the idea of today's play?

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, during the pandemic we were one of the lucky companies where our product sales increased and that was because families were stuck at home. They couldn't go on vacation. They couldn't go out to a restaurant, and they bought our products to help entertain and keep their kids active. So, we got all these wonderful stories and photos from people saying our kids have cabin fever, they're bouncing off the walls, but we take your tricycle around the block, or we ride your go-cart or we take the wagon to the park and it's a bright spot in our day. That really felt great for our team because we felt like we were a bright spot during this really challenging time for families. So, I think there's always going to be a place for active play. I'm not one of these

people who thinks it's digital versus physical. I think it can all coexist. Kids still need a scooter. Kids still need a tricycle. Parents still need a wagon to transport their kids, thank God. So, what we really focus on is how can we keep evolving our products to make sure that we're still relevant so that that shiny little steel wagon that everybody imagines for Radio Flyer, we still sell those, but the majority of the wagons we sell now are wagons that fold up more like a stroller or wagons that you can push or pull or have some protection for the kids. So that's how we've been able to stay current is by making sure that we're still relevant to what parents want today.

**Whitney Johnson:** All right. Let's stay on that for just a minute. So, without sounding too much like QVC, what else are you making? And we saw on your website a Tesla. I know that I saw on social media you were talking about Radio Flyer vacations. So, talk to us a bit about and I couldn't tell if it was a joke or not, but I hope it was a joke. It was a joke.

**Robert Pasin:** That was our April Fool's joke. Radio Flyer, our new airline. But so many people believed it. It was incredible. Everyone, because we made the red plane and everything and we got this incredible reaction. So, we're like, "Hey, maybe there's something there, you know?"

**Whitney Johnson:** So, I was one of those people. I thought it was real.

**Robert Pasin:** You are not alone.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, all right. Apart from the Radio Flyer Airline, that will be in 2028, let's call it. What else are you doing?

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, well, part of the turnaround is we were trying to figure out what does Radio Flyer mean to people. I was talking to consumers, and we would get these stories about their Radio Flyer wagon and that it was a race car or a spaceship when they played with it. Then we also got this story where people would say, "Well, I had a Radio Flyer tricycle." And I would say, "Oh, really? Well, tell me about it." And they'd say, "Well, it was red and shiny. It had chrome handlebars. It had a big bell; it was a Radio Flyer." And I was like, "Wow, that's incredible because we had never made a tricycle before." But the people had that red tricycle they remember from their childhood. They didn't remember the brand and they had assigned our brand to the tricycle. So, we did something kind of smart. We made the tricycle. We came out with it and we created that classic tricycle that people remember. It was a really beautiful product that we launched over 20 years ago. It's still a top seller for us, and that started to show us that we can be in anything the kids can ride on, anything around outdoor active play. So that's when we started expanding to tricycles. So, we're now the number one tricycle brand in the world. We started expanding into scooters, kids bikes, electric vehicles for kids like we have a line of go karts. You mentioned the Tesla partnership. So, we do electric cars with Tesla and our most recent launches, electric bikes for adults. So, a couple of years ago, we launched electric bikes that are really designed to help families replace car trips with bike rides. So, our bikes are kind of like cargo bikes, but they're specifically designed for kids and cargo. So, you can literally bring two kids to school and drop them off on your electric bike. Then you can use that same cargo space where the kids ride to go pick up groceries or run errands. We're really focused on that family biking segment because what we've always done is help parents transport their kids. So now we're just doing it with electric bikes, and we're really excited about it.

**Whitney Johnson:** So more on the business side. We're going to be serious just for a moment. You became certified as a B Corp. Can you tell us what that is and what the process of getting certified looks like?

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, B Corp is an organization that certifies companies who, I think the simplest way to say is it's kind of the gold standard for companies. Those who are working hard to be good citizens of the world. So good for treating the environment well, treating employees well, treating their communities well, and their customers. Companies like Patagonia are big corporations. I started to learn about B Corp several years ago, and then we started to research it. As we looked at the process and the requirements for becoming a B Corp, we felt like we pretty much were doing a lot of what was already needed to be a B Corp. So, then we went through the formal certification process in 2022. It's a very rigorous, very lengthy process where you are audited by the

organization called B Lab that runs the B Corp certification process to make sure you're doing all the things the way you say you are. Then we were certified toward the end of last year. I mean, we've always tried to do the right thing but for me, getting that certification was important because I feel like in some ways it's kind of the cherry on top of the Radio Flyer sundae. Everybody already feels great about the Radio Flyer brand. They love our products. They have these fond associations with their childhood, and we have a great reputation for quality. Now we have this third-party seal of approval that we're trying to do good for the world.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, here's my next question for you. What do you do to help your team grow the people at Radio Flyer? So, when someone on your team says, my wagon is too small, I need a new, bigger wagon, what do you do?

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, we've worked really hard to build a great team and a great culture and we've gotten a lot of recognition on best places to work lists, including, number one best place to work by Fortune magazine for companies under 300 employees. We received that recognition a few years ago and we've been on that list many times. I think it comes down to a few key things that are pretty straightforward but hard to do consistently. The first thing is that we select the kind of people that everybody wants to work with. People who are committed, creative and compassionate, I think are the three key attributes that we're always looking for in every person. They're the people you want on your team. They're the people you want to turn to and say, "Hey, I've got this problem. Do you have any ideas, or can you help me?" So, the selection of the team is huge. Then we have a really robust culture here that we've designed. We've designed every aspect of the culture from how we set goals to how we articulate our values. For example, people cannot be promoted, they can't get pay raises unless they're both achieving goals and living our values. It's equally weighted. So, you can't have the jerk sales guy who goes out and gets big orders, but then everybody can't stand working with them. So, I think those are the foundational things. Then we give people really big challenges, and we don't have a huge team. So, every person here sees how their goals impact the results of the company. We have monthly company meetings where we talk about this. We talk about what's happening with the business. So, everybody really understands and feels like what I'm doing has an impact. Then, we stretch people. I mean, almost 25% of our current team were interns and a significant percentage of our management team were interns. So, we promote and grow from within.

**Whitney Johnson:** Wow. All right. So let me introduce you to something briefly. So, in our work, we have something called the S curve of learning that whenever you start something new, you're on a brand-new S curve and there's the launch point. There's a sweet spot, there's mastery. The notion is that when you get to the top of your S curve, you can use this from a talent development perspective of, okay, where do you feel like you are? Do you feel like you're at the launch point? Do you feel like you're in mastery? And if you're in mastery, then we want to give you something new to do. And what I hear you saying when you're 25% of your employees were at one-point interns, that tells me everything I need to know about your culture, which is when people come to you and say, I need a bigger wagon, if they're living your values and if they're meeting their goals for the organization, they get a new and bigger wagon.

**Robert Pasin:** Absolutely. They don't just get it, though. They help build it. That's the key. Even better.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, three core values, it sounds like, are committed, creative and compassionate. First of all, how big is your team?

**Robert Pasin:** Oh, we've got about 100 people in Chicago.

**Whitney Johnson:** Okay. So those are your core values. Committed, creative, Compassionate. When you're hiring, how do you know? So, these interns are coming straight out of college. What are some questions that you ask? What kinds of experiences do you give individuals to figure out if they are compassionate? If they are creative? If they are committed?

**Robert Pasin:** Well, the easiest way is to try them out. That's why the internship program is so important because by the end of the summer we know the answer to that by how they're showing up. So, it's not so much

what we ask them. It's more just how do they show up? What do they do? How do they respond to feedback? How much do they put into their projects? It becomes very clear at the end of the summer. Typically, out of a class of 25 interns we'll want to hire maybe five of them. I think it's harder when we haven't tried it out and there, we just use the Hu method for interviewing.

**Whitney Johnson:** Okay. What's the Hu Method?

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, that's a book by Jeff Smart and that's just the method we use. The most important thing is it's a very defined, rigorous selection process. So, we're asking questions about their behavior. So, tell us about – it's behavioral interviews. Tell us about when you did this. Give us an example of when you solved this problem or when you resolved the conflict with a coworker or a manager. So, we're always looking for those patterns of behavior that then will translate into the jobs we need done here. But even doing that, I would say it's probably at best 50/50 when we're hiring somebody. We don't know if it turns out to be a match. After we hire somebody for the first six months, we're very involved with checking in, seeing if it's going okay, making sure the manager is setting them up for success. So, we're pretty disciplined about that. Those are some of the ways we try to ensure that we're getting the right people on the team.

**Whitney Johnson:** Two things that you said that really stuck out for me is, one, this feedback is that if I can give someone feedback, if they can respond and say thank you for the feedback, they're not fragile. They're just like, "Thank you, this was useful." Then they immediately act on it. I think that's a keeper because that's a person who can learn, as you said earlier.

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, I couldn't agree more. It's such an important trait to have because if you are really open to feedback and then can translate that into changed behavior, you're kind of unstoppable. Because you can just keep learning and growing and adapting.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah, I completely agree. The other thing that you said that stuck out for me is this ability to engage in conflict. So, you have to be in conflict with someone but not in contention with them so that you're able to say, I disagree, or you disagree with me. What do we do when we're at loggerheads? How do we resolve that? Because again, if you can have a person who can learn and you have people who can work together, then you're really unstoppable, not only as an individual but as a team.

**Robert Pasin:** Yes, definitely.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, when you think about Radio Flyer, what are some of the biggest challenges that people have? What and what might be holding them back?

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, when we talk about growth, the analogy that I always use is that we need to plant a lot of seeds. You'll hear people say, we need to take a lot of shots. We talk about planting seeds and if you've ever done any gardening or anything, you know that the majority of seeds die. Actually, that's the same thing with coming out with new products. That's the main thing we do. Our fuel for growth is coming up with new products in new categories that fuel our growth, but the majority of new products fail. So, we know that going into it. That when we're developing, we're working on all these products, and we're excited about all of them, and we love all of them and we think they're all going to be amazing. We have to understand that a lot of them are going to fail. So, it's this kind of strange thing that you have to keep in mind. So, I think the thing that holds us back is the fear of failure. We've really tried to eliminate that with thinking about it like planting seeds. So, we know there's going to be a certain amount that fail as long as everyone's working hard, asking the right questions, being disciplined, and not just mailing it in and the product fails. If you've done all that work, that's okay as long as we're learning from it and growing from it. But it's really hard to come out with products that succeed because there's tons of companies, tons of brands, tons of products out there. So, to come out with something that is really unique and does a job better than another product and I always challenge the team. We need to do something that is different and better than the competition. But when we're coming out with bicycles, there's millions of bicycles out there, it's hard. I think those are some of the ways that we talk about growth and the challenges with growth.

**Whitney Johnson:** I mentioned this idea earlier of the S-curve and jumping to new curves, which in its essence is doing something new. What are you doing new right now to challenge yourself, to continue to grow and develop?

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah. Personally, I've been making a transition in my physical fitness life from being a really passionate runner. For many years I've done a lot of long-distance running marathons and I love that. But I'm getting more injuries. It's getting more challenging to do long distance running. So, I've been transitioning to yoga. So it's been really hard because I've been a total beginner and it's really challenging for me because I'm very inflexible from all the running. But fortunately, I have the best yoga teacher in the world. My wife and I go to her class, and it's been really amazing, but it's been a huge challenge to be a beginner. Again, like in yoga, you're not supposed to compare yourself to anybody else. You're just supposed to stay on your mat. But I'm the worst in the class despite that. So, that's been humbling. But I've been doing it for two years, four days a week, and I'm committed to it, and I feel like I'm starting to get the results.

**Whitney Johnson:** Throughout my life, I have had people on a number of occasions suggest that I do yoga, which I think is really their code of saying you need to relax or be more mindful. I think that's what they're saying. I have tried it a few times and I wonder if you're probably more flexible, you're probably more mindful. What are some of the other benefits for you?

**Robert Pasin:** Yeah, I think reflective too. Like that's probably part of mindfulness, just being able to pause, to be really present. I think that's helped me with that a lot. It's helped me with strength too, in ways that I didn't anticipate. You know, it's, I mean, for anybody who's ever done yoga, they know it's really hard. I mean, try to stay in plank position for a while. It's physically challenging. So, I think it's helped me be a little bit more contemplative, a little bit more reflective, and to pause, breathe and think. Yes, people have told me to do yoga for the same reasons they told you, Whitney.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, one of the questions that I ask at the end of a coaching session, but also at the end of these interviews is what in this conversation has been useful to you? It may be something that you said. It may be something that I said. It is probably something that you thought or an observation that you made. So what's been useful to you in this conversation?

**Robert Pasin:** Well, it's all been fantastic and just fun talking with you first and foremost. But I think, you know, when you started, it was funny. You started with the student government stuff in college. You're the first person to ever do that in an interview. It gave me a lot of kind of warm feelings and memories about that time because it was a very happy time for me and it was just a fun way to kick it off.

**Whitney Johnson:** All right. Any final thoughts to wrap up our conversation that you'd like to share?

**Robert Pasin:** Just that I'm really grateful to have spent the time with you, Whitney, and thanks for all the great work you do.

**Whitney Johnson:** Well, thank you. And I'm glad that we were. This was delightful. So, thank you. Just like a red wagon. What? What's the theme? You're smiling. Remind me of the theme again.

**Robert Pasin:** We're here to bring smiles and create warm memories that last a lifetime.

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Who would have thought there was so much to say about a little red wagon. But isn't that the magic of Radio Flyer? It's not just a wagon. It's an idea. Not to sound too much like Mad Men, but it's the idea of the wagon. The feeling of a parent carrying their child. Sometimes you can't always pull the wagon for them. For that, there's a trike, or they can take off in one of those TeslaS for kids. But Radio Flyer, at its heart and in Robert's heart, is how a parent moves their child, how they help them move on their own, too. I wanted to touch on a couple of things before we go, starting with that idea of purpose. The why of Radio Flyer. Their products have evolved, no doubt, but that core idea of parents moving their children is in the genetic sequence of everything Radio Flyer has ever put out. That's



how Robert charts the course for his company. Even for the April Fool's joke. It was still parents moving kids. Radio Flyer is an idea, not a wagon. And Robert got that from day one.

Speaking of that moment when Robert walks in and becomes Chief Wagon Officer, wasn't it fascinating to hear how much moral authority he had even at a young age? It'd be the easiest thing to be the stereotypical boss's son, and he said so himself. But to have that presence, to choose humility and to look at the company with brand new eyes, that's the mark of a leader. Robert practiced those skills early when he put together the votes to win student body president. But Radio Flyer is where that leadership style flourished. Last thing about opening the door and then getting out of the way. 25% of his staff are former interns. That's amazing. That's just amazing. So many people intern somewhere and then the first thing they want to do is get out, do something else, anywhere but where they were a dreaded intern. It says a lot about Radio Flyer's ability to give their employees a bigger wagon if they need it. Like Robert said, they usually build that wagon for themselves. The room to roam is there. It isn't being guarded by some corporate bureaucracy. No one's going to keep it from you just because they feel you can't handle it. Just knowing that support is there is a huge boon.

For more on purpose than asking that buzzing little question why, I'd recommend you check out my episode with Simon Sinek: [Episode 143](#) West Carter: [Episode 290](#) is another great person to listen to, just like Robert West was the heir to a family business and all the gifts and stresses that come with that. Lastly, there is Mbali Maseko, head of wellbeing at a global chemical company who can shed some light on growing and encouraging her team. That's [episode 304](#). Thank you again to Robert Pasin and thank you for listening. If you enjoyed this episode, hit subscribe so you don't miss a single episode. Thank you to our producer Alexander Turk, production assistant Stephanie Brummel and production coordinator Nicole Pellegrino.

I'm Whitney Johnson

And this has been Disrupt Yourself.