



channel mastery

Channel Mastery Podcast, Episode #100: Kristin Carpenter Interviews
Kimo Seymour, SVP of Operations, Athletic Events & Media Division at Life Time

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Kristin: Welcome everybody to the 100th episode of the Channel Mastery podcast. I literally can't believe I just said that, and I have, the best guest in my opinion in the universe to share with you today for this momentous episode. You're about to meet Kimo Seymour, who is the president of events and media at [Life Time Fitness](#). Welcome to the show Kimo.

Kimo Seymour: Thank you very much, Kristin. Honored to be here.

Kristin: It is so great to have you here, and I am just delighted to share you with my amazing audience at [Channel Mastery](#). You have I think the perfect background and position with Life Time in terms of multi-channel emphasis with both media and events in person. And obviously you also are ChronoTrack and Athlinks. You really just bring everything together that we talk about here, so it's great to have you. And I was hoping you could start our conversation today by giving a little bit of your background in terms of what you were doing before you joined Life Time, why you joined Life Time, and now kind of where we are with everything.

Kimo Seymour: No, I'd be glad to. So again, thanks for having me today. My background, I spent the better part of my career in the real estate development business in Arizona and had just the dumb luck to kind of slow things down and kind of sell most of everything that I was involved with about '06 and '07. And I was kind of twiddling my thumbs trying to figure out what to do and started investing in things that were a little bit closer to my passion, so running, cycling, triathlon. Got involved with some specialty running shoe stores in Arizona, acquired a little of that company. Ultimately that led to me selling to Life Time about, gosh, about eight years ago, and sold the event business to Life Time, was originally asked, came on board to lead the Leadville Race Series as a brand manager, brand director for that event series, and work on kind of the growth of the qualification strategy. So expanding Leadville beyond that little town up there at 10,200 feet.

And so the first year I was with Life Time, I got to basically focus on the Leadville Race Series but then quickly, we were in the process of acquiring a lot of different events around the country, and our CEO came to me and asked if I'd be willing to head up that events business for the company as we expanded our reach around the country.

Kristin: So what year was that, that you started to manage the Leadville event?

Kimo Seymour: Started in ... Really, I came on board in fall of 2011. I was focused on Leadville really just for ... Leadville alone just for about a year, and then helped with really what was a series of acquisitions to build the portfolio of events that we have today.

Kristin: And so I have obviously, as a person who's doing her second Leadville 100 in this year, 2019, and it's only just over a week away. And I feel so fortunate that I got to meet you in person at the stage race last weekend, so that's awesome as well. I wanted to just ask, can you give a little bit of a bridge between Life Time Fitness in terms of the core founding of that and what it was, and why you guys are expanding into events? And then I have just a ton of questions to get your take on after that. But I want to set that up for the audience so they can follow along.

Kimo Seymour: Sure. So I'd say over the last eight years, I've seen the strategy around the why for our events. It's certainly evolved, and I think I've played a role in that evolution. It was ... The series or the events that we originally started the business with back in Minneapolis, I think it was largely a branding opportunity and opportunity to get the Life Time brand out beyond the walls of the clubs, as we say. And it worked spectacularly. Some of your listeners may be familiar with what we did with the Life Time Tri Series. Had the largest person triathlon at the time focused on sprint and Olympic distance. But a very large pro series that at one point was even, some of the events were even televised. But the original intent was really just to create great branding for Life Time and great brand exposure.

Over the years, though, around the time I came on-board with a lot of the acquisitions came an expectation that there'd be a return on investment, because we did invest a lot of money in the business. And so for a few years there ... I don't know that I'd ... I'd say we almost lost our way a little bit. We were highly, highly focused on a return on that investment and from some of the acquisitions that we had done. Over the last two or three years, that's really transitioned, and we've started ... We've recognized that, gosh, for Life Time which is a \$2 billion a year revenue company, the events business is really, and media is really quite small, and it can be maybe more impactful in other ways. And that's really what we now get to focus on. I never want to say to our team that fiscal discipline isn't important. It certainly is. But we also, we get measured on some other metrics that really provide benefit to Life Time, more than just the profitability of an events business.

Kristin: That's exactly where I wanted to go with this, so thank you for setting that up. As a person who, I watch ... obviously you guys just acquired the [Dirty Kanza](#) and the [Leadville race series](#), having now done several events there and the camp, and just seeing the community. It's been pretty phenomenal to see as a person who's a marketer, right? I go to my first pre-race meeting last year, and obviously the founders of the event are there with your CEO, and it looks like a very happy trust-based relationship. It really seems like you were able to take this event, scale it, and yet still keep this blue-collar vibe where you guys have each others' backs, and it's all about building the community.

And I remember hearing your CEO that he was doing a huge match on any fundraising, on ... It was just an amazing experience. My brother and I both went. And is that kind of part of the secret sauce if you will is really keeping that human touch to Life Time Fitness through these events? I mean obviously there's an experience to be had, but it really feels like you're humanizing the brand.

Kimo Seymour: You hit the nail on the head. I think where we've been the most successful has been where we have done exactly that, with ... I'll tell you about a few of our events where we still have founders involved. So you see, I mean, every time you're up in Leadville, Ken and Merilee, you've probably gotten 20 hugs from them. And that's ... It's genuine. That's what they want to do. They want to be there for every single athlete and they want to be a part of the experience there. Gary Crandall just retired after 36 years leading our [Chequamegon](#) event. Just this last year was his last year. He's going to come back and help park cars this year. I mean, Frankie Ruiz down with the Miami Marathon, founded it I think 18, 17 years ago, still with us. And you talked about the Dirty Kanza acquisition. We've got Kristi, LeLan, Jim, Treva. All I would say are founders and core to the event, all still with us.

To us, that's who the athletes want to connect with. I always joke that they don't want to ... You won't very often see me up on stage and they don't want to see a corporate guy like me getting up there. They want to see the founders. They want to see the people that are the kind of the heart and soul of these events and have been for some period of time, so. I think that's been really important to us, where we have succeeded is where we've been able to pull that off. Where we have in some markets and some events, where we have not done as well, we don't have those founders. We don't have those owners that are up there from the last 30 years facing those athletes.

Kristin: And I have to also say, this is all beneficial for the Channel Mastery audience, because we're talking about narrative brand storytelling delivered in a very authentic way, so obviously talking about the founders and how you've pointed out when we have that, it's more successful. One of the other things that you've done very well and I think you've enabled the founders of Leadville to continue to do this is show us as participants, not only as we're members of a community together, but we're actually part of the success story of Leadville, the town itself. So we fall in love with the backdrop, we love being in the mountains there and challenging ourselves on the course and helping each other along. It's really an incredible experience.

But one of the best parts about it is understanding how this event has actually resuscitated that community. Often times in the active outdoor lifestyle markets that we're in, obviously there's a huge emphasis on public lands and conservation and getting people to use these lands so they fall in love with them and protect them. You guys have taken a very interesting approach to that through these wide reaching events and showing them how these events have actually enabled a town like Leadville to not only survive, but grow after an extraction-based industry collapsed. It's fascinating to me.

Kimo Seymour: Yeah, it's been fun to be a part of that and part of telling that story. I think there is some, with regards to use of public lands, there's certainly criticism from what I would call the vocal minority about the events using public lands. That's not uncommon around the country, I'm sure. But again, I think it's the vocal minority and I think what it does is it ... I like to joke, you go up to Leadville on any weekend where there isn't an event, and you'll see just as many people out running and riding the trails and experiencing what Leadville has to offer as you will on an event weekend when we bring in thousands of athletes.

And I think that's a testament to what Ken and Merilee's vision 36 years ago when that mine shut down up there and Ken said overnight, Leadville went to he highest unemployment rate

in the nation. And he had the thought and the idea to ... Who would've thought 36 years ago about putting on a hundred mile run, but he did. And he thought, "Geez, if I do a hundred miles, I can get people to come and stay overnight."

Kristin: I love that.

Kimo Seymour: And look what it's grown into. And now we have ... The last time we measured about five years ago, I think it was 16 or \$17 million in local economic impact that the event series has on the Leadville community. We're having that updated, but it's really interesting to see the positivity that it brings to the community and so many other ways as well beyond just economic impact. I mean, look at the Cloud City Wheelers and the amount of single-track that they're building up there, college trails and other areas around town. The pump track and the kids tracks that we've helped build at the high school, and they're getting ready to build more on this next year. We've heavily, heavily invested in helping turn that community around for sure.

Kristin: It's really amazing to see. So you just said, and I'm going to say this for Kimo because he's very humble, I'm learning, "Nobody wants to hear me as a corporate guy talk." And honestly, maybe you're right, I don't know. But one thing I'll tell you is, seeing you in action at the stage race, and then reading kind of your palmares, I don't know if that's what they call it in Leadville, but you're really a great athlete as well. And I'm wondering, is that why you've stuck around with Life Time? Because I think when we were rehearsing this before we hit record, you said, "I was not sure if I would be there after a few years," but it's now been over eight years, correct, and you're still there. Is it part of your identity that's also inspired by what you're creating here?

Kimo Seymour: I think it is. Believe it or not, whether I want to believe it or not, after ... Last year was my 12th year doing the hundred, it does become a part of your identity. And so to have the opportunity to actually, to work on this fantastic series of events with this amazing team that we have. I mean, it really is an honor, but you're right, it is a part of my identity. And when it comes to race day, I love to jump on a bike and go out there and ride for a few hours. And I just think it's ... I mean, I look so forward to it. I just think it's so fun to be out there. And I spend the whole trip down Columbine cheering on everybody else that's going up Columbine.

I just think ... I mean, I'm so inspired and excited by the athletes that come out there and give this thing a go. Ken once told me, "We always wanted to provide an opportunity for anybody that wants to throw their leg on a bike, over a bike, and give it a shot, we want them to have an opportunity to get out there and do Leadville." And it's pretty neat to be able to provide that opportunity.

Kristin: It really is, and we talk a lot on the podcast about today's consumer and how obviously they're trained by entities like Amazon that are maybe a little less loyal, they're looking for the biggest selection and the lowest price, and really at the end of the day, they're looking for a friction-free experience, right? And then you also as we cover the specialty markets here on Channel Mastery, we cover the brands and experiences that literally define the consumers' favorite part of their lives. So their identities, basically, right? And I feel like you guys have really been successful winning the attention spans, the hearts, and the minds of today's connected

consumer. Can you talk about what channels you're leveraging today to make that the most effective for Life Time, as the media and events president?

Kimo Seymour: I don't think it's anything unique from what you're seeing out there maybe with other events or similar industries, primarily social. Social drives I call it a critical part of the community. And when you talk about Amazon and how companies are so influenced by ... Other companies are influenced by Amazon, it's interesting. I think they ... Amazon provides, that they provide a service and they provide maybe more than anything a convenience. And where I think we differ is, I think we build a community. And you said it a couple times earlier, community around an experience is what we're building. And social allows us to do that, right? People, if you've been on some of our social channels, and there's one out there that we don't even control, the engagement is amazing, and it becomes a community.

So certainly social media, other digital and print media both endemic and non-endemic, very important. Back to your reference to Dirty Kanza earlier, I think I saw something a week after the event this year. We had had something like 600 media placements for that event this year, and certainly largely endemic, but lots of non-endemic as well. And so those are really primarily how the channels that we use to drive visibility.

Kristin: And it really does seem also like as you're looking at new events to buy, you've now developed the efficiency where two plus two equals five instead of four, because you're able to kind of graft the specialty brand of a Dirty Kanza, for example, onto your platform, which includes Athlinks, which we'll get into, as well as an audience that's created around these other events. So you already know that there are actually people out there who would be beyond, bonkers excited to ride a gravel bike for 200 miles in a headwind. Not everybody believes that's actually something that there's a demand for, right Kimo? But you guys know that because that's who your people are. And so it feels like you're able to put them onto this platform, expand their reach, and probably create efficiencies. I don't know that I ... I honestly don't know that there's another company that can buy these grassroots, homegrown events and accomplish that. It's pretty amazing.

Kimo Seymour: I do think we've done a fairly decent job with that on some of the events, that we've learned from some mistakes like any company or any person would. But we have been really fortunate. Our strategy was really around, how do we find iconic kind of historic brands, but that have a ... I like to say, "What are they the only of?" Leadville, that one answers itself, right? I mean-

Kristin: Yep.

Kimo Seymour: It's Leadville, and it's the only of that. And it certainly helps when you've got demand exceeding supply and all the kind of normal economic metrics that you would think about. But in the end, it's really about, again, I'm sure we'll talk more about it, but really great at just unbelievable experiences that just drive people to take on a challenge like Dirty Kanza or Leadville.

Kristin: Yep, it's very true. So I heard you say a few things in there that I want to point out to my audience. The limiter, right? You do have incredibly huge demand, and you've turned that into

an opportunity for additional revenue through maybe purchasing a way to get in through a camp. But I also just think that limiter factor is part of what Dirty Kanza has. I think that race sells out in a matter, a less than ... I don't even know what it is now, but it's a ridiculously fast sellout. And that is something that kind of elevates it to more of an aspirational goal and wow, when you get in, you're really part of something.

The other thing I want to say that is super interesting is the user generated content. So obviously when you ... You started this position almost nine years ago. It was an incredibly different scene in terms of media and how people engage with and discover events and brands like this. I'm sure word of mouth sure played a big role. But how have you seen word of mouth and user-generated content kind of create a groundswell to the point where these things sell out? Is there ever a tipping point that you know in your gut when you know, "Okay, I can see what's about to happen here." You know what I mean?

Kimo Seymour: I can't say that I know there's a tipping point. That's happened for events like Leadville and Dirty Kanza prior to us getting involve I think. I've been either a participant or a outside looking in watching when it feels like it happens. I don't know that that's happened, that we've necessarily created that. Dirty Kanza, back to your comment about selling out quickly, it's actually a lottery now like Leadville. And so demand just far, far outpaces the supply, and that meaning the capacity, and. Capacity's interesting because it's ... We look at it, we really, really look at it from a participant point of view and what that experience is like and we could ... The course of Dirty Kanza or the course of Leadville, you could probably double the amount of people on the course, but the experience wouldn't be great. And so we're constantly thinking about from the athletes' perspective of the experience, how to be protective of that.

Kristin: And then, what, if you wouldn't mind going into how you guys are choosing to work with different sponsors and what their value equation is today. Obviously, that can range for a different brand, but maybe talk about how you're acquiring brand partners for these events and what they're looking for in terms of not only accentuating their own brand profile, but potentially audience growth and engagement I would think.

Kimo Seymour: Yeah, that's a great question. So there's ... I joke sometimes, and I've said this in to potential sponsors and partners, I've said, "A sponsorship or partnership is only as valuable as the investment you make in activating it." And for a sponsorship to be successful from my perspective, if I'm putting myself in the shoes of a sponsor, it really is in how the athlete engages with their brand. And if, and I tell people, I say, "If you're just going to write us a check to be a sponsor so that we put your name on the web site and on the t-shirt and on some start and finish banners, just save your money." Because they're not going to be happy. There's no return on that investment. I don't know anybody who looks at the finish line of a race and says, "Oh look at that sponsor up there. That's just great." What they do is they look at the experience that the sponsors bring to the events, and how they improve the experience of the event.

So partners these days are sponsors. You hit the nail on the head. Brand building is one, and I usually start by asking them, "What are you looking for? What are you hoping to accomplish my getting involved with our events or with our in club media? Is it brand building? Is it direct revenue?" Some of them just say, "Hey, I just want to get sales. I want revenue." Some of them say, "I just want really, really deep athlete engagement." Some of them say, "I want to

just build content around that connects my brand with your consumers." I'll give you an example of that one. HOKA is a big partner of ours now, and they came to us with a big investment and really, all they wanted to do was create some really genuine content around athletes with some subtle brand inclusions that just basically helped the narrative that HOKA is helping these people through their healthy way of life journey.

And so, there's no ... I don't know that I've ever done two partnerships that are identical in the eight years I've been at Life Time. They are all unique. They're all very custom. And I think we've been successful because we're really, really sensitive to what our partner is looking for from the beginning, as opposed to just putting in some ... Having a canned deck that we pull off the shelf and, is it a 50,000, 100,000, 200,000? Put a price tag on it and slap it on the table. Every single partnership we do is really highly customized around the priorities and what the partner is looking to get out of it.

Kristin: And it does seem like ... My hope is that the brands that you're choosing to partner with understand that they share an ideal target consumer with you and it just gives them an additional way to serve that consumer I would imagine.

Kimo Seymour: I think so, absolutely. They have to understand that our consumer, and again, our audiences are wildly different. The audience for triathlons versus running events, road running, trail running, mountain bike. There's some pretty decent crossover between mountain bike and gravel right now, and we are seeing a lot of transition from triathlon to our mountain bike and our gravel events. But it's a wildly different value proposition than to, say, our members in our clubs. And so again, it's highly customized based on what the partner is hoping to accomplish.

Kristin: And then one thing I wanted to ask about DK before we, that's Dirty Kanza, before we jump off of that topic. It really does seem like ... Obviously, the first year you did it was 2019. It's interesting to me that that's also the first year that there was representation from EF Education First, which is that global pro men's cycling team, road cycling team. Right at a time when gravel was being maybe scrutinized by, as you, I love how you put it, the vocal minority. That's awesome. But they all have their opinions on race tactics for gravel et cetera. So did you guys kind of usher in that agreement, or is that something that was in play? Because obviously now they're also going to be at Leadville. We don't know who I don't think yet. I'm super excited to learn about that. But can you talk a little bit about the EF Education First at DK and what a fantastic video they produced? Which I'll put the links to in the show notes everybody.

Kimo Seymour: Yeah, that video was fantastic, so-

Kristin: I loved it.

Kimo Seymour: I'll give you the chronology on it. So last fall, I had the good fortune of being out in North Carolina, or North, South Carolina. Greenville, I think it's actually in South Carolina. I was with George Hincapie and Christian Vandeveld, and I was talking to Christian on a ride about just the direction of road cycling in the U.S. and the persistent decline in participation, events falling off. I mean, just overall, road cycling for a variety of reasons, and we were

prognosticating about what's going on with road cycling, and everybody has an opinion. But everybody ... I think the one, everybody would agree that the trends aren't good.

And we were talking about just direction of cycling in the U.S., and I said we'd just gotten involved with Dirty Kanza. We're seeing our Leadville race series grow pretty dramatically over the last few years. And I said, "There's ... someone's got to figure out a way to start, to generate some new interest in cycling in the United States," and I think there's a few things out there that are happening. But I ended up though that conversation with Christian, ended up getting connected a little bit later to Jonathan Vaughters with Education First. And he and I had lunch, I don't know, maybe November, December of last year, and kicked around the idea of, they were starting to have this idea that they wanted to maybe do some different types of events outside of just world tour events with their team. And so I pitched them on the idea of doing something like Dirty Kanza, Leadville. They had a variety of events in mind, and that's kind of where it started. And they were already working on this concept of doing things beyond the world tour events.

So I would say it's been a resounding success from our perspective. The idea with that, with EF was that we would do a kind of a three way partnership with their apparel sponsor, Rapha, who is really, really good at developing content. And I just said, "Hey, listen, we're open to having your guys race if we can get Rapha on board to do some really cool content around it." In the end, we just want to tell a story about what we're doing at events like this and make it relatable from the pro level to the guy or gal just coming off the couch, jumping on a gravel bike and attempting something like even a 25 miler at Dirty Kanza.

And I think that film really did ... I think it was, they really touched the nerve of, gosh, even these world tour pro guys, they go through all the highs and lows that every other human does that's doing a race like that. And it made them more relatable, and it really I think connected them to the broader cycling community a lot more, at least a lot more than about any other professional event that you would watch in the U.S. You watch the Tour de France or you watch the Giro, it's great. I'm a big fan. I like watching them. But it's not super relatable, right? But-

Kristin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kimo Seymour: These guys jump on a gravel bike and go out there and suffer like everybody else in the heat and humidity and deal with flats and mechanicals and everything else, and have to deal with it on their own. I mean, it was really compelling and exciting, so.

Kristin: I loved it.

Kimo Seymour: Yeah.

Kristin: I literally watched it probably two or three times, and it is, actually, it's very much worth watching in terms of again looking at that brand narrative. And one of the most compelling things about that is how the people from the EF Education First team were so respectful to the gravel community. They knew that there was raised eyebrows and, oh gosh, here we go. This is going to be the end. And they were very much like, "We don't want to take this over. We

just wanted to participate. We just wanted to be part of it, and we're here just like you are." Exactly what you said. But watch the film everybody, because they really did nail it. And they also really humanized the people on the EF Education First team, in my opinion.

Kimo Seymour: I think they did too. I think the biggest miss in that video, I wish they would've shown the guys having to go to packet pick-up like every other athlete. I thought that was great. They had to-

Kristin: That's a great suggestion actually.

Kimo Seymour: [crosstalk 00:30:55] stand in line, and yeah, it was ... Yeah, it's pretty cool, so.

Kristin: That is. And I just have to say, now that I know you joined after the Race Across the Sky movie, let's talk a little bit about that, because again, it goes a teeny bit hand-in-hand with what we're talking about, but it's also completely different because it ... Yes, it was a piece of content, but it wasn't exactly like what EF Education and Rapha produced with you at DK. But everybody who is a fan of the Leadville race series is aware of the Race Across the Sky movie that happened in 2009 highlighting the Dave Wiens/Lance Armstrong competition. You came on after that. Can you talk a little bit about what you inherited there and if that jump or spike in visibility had anything to do with your decision to chase down and make the opportunity with EF happen?

Kimo Seymour: I really didn't relate back to that. That was one that I thought that ... You think back a bit about that video, and I think they did actually two of them. I think it might have been '08 and '09, or '09 and 10. But I don't know that you could script that. No one could have scripted that. And matter of fact, the one where I think the two of them that they did, the first one is where Dave actually beat Lance. And gosh, I mean, that one was probably more exciting than the year later when Lance came back, he'd come back out of retirement and comes back from the Tour de France and crushes everybody and sets a record, right?

Kristin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kimo Seymour: That's probably more exciting than the year that Dave won. But that did a lot for the Leadville race series. I was racing back then, and in those events, and boy it really, it amplified the event, kind of a put it on the world stage if you will.

Kristin: It really did.

Kimo Seymour: And really grew the event. With the world tour riders, I mean, bringing them to Dirty Kanza. My thought at the time was, in kind of brainstorming with JV, it was, again, it was around the kind of precipitous decline of cycling as a whole in the U.S. and our belief that the growth is going to come off of pavement really. And so we thought, "Gosh, if we could just maybe touch a nerve there and create a little bit more exposure for this idea that, gosh, how cool is it to go out and ride these dirt roads where you can just go for hours and never see a car or another person." I mean, it's pretty fun, and to again, to take these world tour riders and bring them to that level, out of the Tour de France into the Flint Hills of Kansas, it really was a special opportunity.

So I don't that I would relate it back to that film. The thought wasn't really focused on what happened with Race Across the Sky. Because again, I don't think you can script how that all went down or duplicate it. I just think, again, this is a chance for us to really kind of, again, connect those world tour athletes with all of us everyday athletes.

Kristin: Absolutely. And it really showcases how powerful content is as well, especially visually-driven content, which kind of leads me to my next question here. And actually, it's more of an audio first, but you guys ... Were you involved in the launch of the Leadville podcast that Fatty and Hottie do, or is that something that you would consider user-generated? I mean obviously, you're connected. I know they've interviewed you several times. But is that a user-generated podcast, even initially? Or is it something that you guys are co-producing?

Kimo Seymour: No, 100% user-generated.

Kristin: I love that.

Kimo Seymour: Yep, Fatty and Hottie have done an amazing job with that, and we're fully supportive. And they've just, yeah, they've done an incredible job, and we'll continue to be involved as much as they want us to be involved. But that really is, I mean, it is completely user-generated.

Kristin: And that's amazing. So if there is anybody out there who's interested in the race ... I didn't even know that podcast existed until I went to the camp last year and somebody mentioned it, and I'm like, "Well, what's that?" And they literally did, in the first season last year, a segment by segment overview. They brought in a nutrition expert, they brought in a coach from TrainerRoad, Jonathan from TrainerRoad. They had a number of ... They had Rebecca Rusch on there. Really, just helping you hack the course. It was amazing. And it's very, very addictive. And they came out with a second season this year. I actually did a podcast on that after the race last year because I talked about the importance of joint venture branding, and, because I literally, the second they said that Envy Wheels get fewer flats, guess what I ordered? Right out of the gate.

Kristin: Well, Kimo, before we wrap up today, I think it's really important that we talk about a big, big part of your job, which I'm sure is data acquisition and then being able to deploy that data in a way that creates amazing experiences for your community through these events and through media. So can you tell my audience about Athlinks in ChronoTrack, and how they have really shaped how you are doing your job and leading your team today in terms of providing an unmatched brand experience?

Kimo Seymour: Yeah, that's a great question, Kristin. A little background on ChronoTrack and Athlinks. Both of those businesses we acquired six to eight years ago for each of them, respectively. And ChronoTrack is really what I would consider a B2B platform. We've got, gosh, close to, we think 60-ish percent market share of timed athletes are timed on ChronoTrack timing systems and or with ChronoTrack RFID tags. About half of those are timed using ChronoTrack's scoring software and producing results. The Athlinks, and then also ChronoTrack, is a registration platform that we have. Athlinks is really more the consumer facing side of that business. So Athlinks, if you're aware, started as a results database, if you will, about 12 or 14 years ago. It's now grown to close to 320 million individual results.

It's grown to a couple million members that have joined and created a profile and aggregated their results or claimed their results, as we say. And the thought I think back when those acquisitions were done, it might've been a little bit simpler. It might've been more along the lines of, gosh, we're as we're growing our events business, wouldn't it be great to have our own registration platform instead of using somebody else's? I think that was part of the... one of the original thought processes. But then the opportunity came up to acquire the timing side of ChronoTrack. And I think we started thinking, gosh, that's a lot of athletes out there that we potentially can connect with and in some way, millions of athletes a year.

And so that was really the impetus for the ChronoTrack acquisition. Athlinks a couple of years later, the thought was, gosh, can you imagine marrying that consumer facing platform that ultimately the vision was to make it almost a social platform where you got on and you started to see not only your results, but your friend's results. And then the next thing that is coming out of it is not only results, but we call it that commitment point where you actually commit to an event. So you register and it shows up, and you see now what you or your friends are planning to do. And so for us, it's been a long process of marrying those two platforms and really improving the experience. But the longterm vision is that we have the ability to really see trends that are going on in the industry, primarily by numbers of finishers.

And I talked a little bit earlier about some of the trends in cycling that we've seen similar in running. Pavement versus off pavement, if you will. We're able to study some of those things through the data that we have on Athlinks. We also have that ability socially to connect athletes, and then I think the third thing that's been really interesting is understanding athletes' journeys. We see and we can watch and rack trends of what athletes are doing and how they migrate from... they might start with a 5K, and then they do a certain number of running events, and then eventually we see them start to do some cycling events. Then next thing you know they're doing triathlons.

And then as I've mentioned earlier, something that we're seeing a lot of triathletes, and especially the longer distance triathletes, now transitioning away from triathlon into things like ultra running events like Dirty Kanza, ultra distance gravel events and mountain bike events like Leadville. So it's been interesting to look at the different ways that we can utilize that data to understand the trends and what our customers are looking for.

Kristin: That's awesome. And I do have to say, having interviewed Ben Johns with REI before, they have a co-op membership, they have a lot of data on... it's not similar, but there are some similarities in what you guys both describe. But we know what he said, that what really caps it off for them in terms of understanding that data is bringing his team to do in-store visits. And I think it's super interesting that you show up not only just to race, but you're there working the different parts of the event after the event. Because you finish a lot earlier than a lot of us. Okay, let's just be honest, Kimo. But point being is you're there on the ground in the dirt, literally, with your team watching how everybody's responding, reacting. Watching what they're doing, where they're going, in addition to having this dashboard of data. I think that those two things together are probably like super powerful.

Kimo Seymour: I think they can be. For me, I get a lot more data just by standing around a finish line or a start line and having conversations with people. I enjoy the data and I think it's valuable, but I also think it's exponentially more valuable for guys like me and our team to just spend time talking

to our athletes. You know? And I think that we get just as much useful information out of hearing from athletes, how they're... I like to say, "Tell me how you felt though. I don't want to know what you think. Tell me how you felt." And then, "How did this event make you feel?" And that to me is just as or more valuable than data we can get from something like Athlinks or ChronoTrack, while there is certainly value there.

Kristin: For sure. And what about retail? Before we wrap up here. Obviously, you have a storefront on main street, or I think it's Harrison actually, in Leadville, and that seems to grow and you have some really nice swag in there by the way. But that's also where some of the event is centered, some of them are centered there. But can you talk about how retail, actual brick and mortar retail, or even what you're selling online or through newsletters, how is that evolving?

Kimo Seymour: It's interesting. I have to give credit for most of everything you see in that store our team pulls together, and that includes my wife Julie, who helps do design and do the procurement for all of that, our retail apparel and-

Kristin: Well, it's beautiful. I have to say.

Kimo Seymour: Thank you. I'll let her know you think so. It's an important part of, I think, the business itself. People are proud to wear and to show off their accomplishments. But I think what we've seen over the last few years is we've turned it into... it's a borderline fashion. It's become a fashion component, as well. It's not just your... the athlete tee's are the event tee's. They're not just at a tee that's... it's got logo soup all over the back of it, and nobody really wants to wear it. I think what we put out there retail-wise is... people are proud to wear it. They're excited to wear it. I think our product has evolved. The business itself, while it certainly generates revenue for us, it may be more about, again, brand building and getting our brands out there, and doing it in a way that's, again, a little bit fashionable, a little bit functional but, but helps us extend the brand.

Kristin: That's awesome. So, okay, this is a question I've been dying to ask you, and I think it's a great one for us to wrap up with. Can you name a couple of events outside of Life Time Fitness core focal events that you really think are crushing it out there? And why do you think they're crushing it?

Kimo Seymour: Oh gosh, good question. On the running side of things, one of the things I see happening, again, trends in data, but then just anecdotally, I joke a lot lately that the only things that are really crushing it are happening on dirt. And I'll say that, but then I'll contradict that a little bit. So a big one, as an example, UTMB. An amazing event in Europe. I'm headed over there here in a couple of weeks to experience it and see exactly what they've created for the... what is the draw to that event? But a UTMB is certainly a big one to contradict what I said about everything going to to dirt or gravel. The Abbott World Marathon Majors I think are doing a great job of defining the trends, but they've brought together, what is it, six or seven events now that are, again, really, really iconic road running events, in Boston, in New York and then Chicago and Tokyo and London, Birdland. Events like that.

So, but on a more grassroots scale, something that I'm just really impressed with is what [NICA 00:10:38] is doing. If you're familiar with what NICA has done to bring back mountain bike cycling, number one, but high school participation in mountain biking. It's amazing. I've had the opportunity to spend some time with the folks from NICA here recently, and it is incredible. I think they're up to 40,000 student athletes around the country that are riding mountain bikes now and competing in their events and launching... it sounds like three to four new state leagues every year around the country. So there's this groundswell of bringing new athletes into the sport, in this case, mountain biking. But it's really incredible to see what NICA is doing. So- [crosstalk 00:11:21]

Kristin: It's so great that you bring that up because I just interviewed Steve Matous. I know him from the outdoor world from his work with Outward Bound. He literally was, in the order of people listening, he's the show right before yours. So this is perfect.

Kimo Seymour: Interesting. I know he's new to the job. I had lunch with him a couple of weeks ago, but I think he's got a pretty neat vision for how he wants to continue to grow NICA, and I think, again, they've done an amazing job.

Kristin: They have, and I just want to say for the benefit of possibly our bicycle retailer and industry news audience because this will be presented to them through their e-newsletter and in their publication, this particular episode, but one of the things that I think is so great about what you said about NICA is that the way that they are grooming these cyclists and mountain bikers is to really... it's not so much about competitive or the pain face, it's about camping with your family. It's about one and a half to two people is what he said, coaching staff and support per athlete. It's about every athlete waiting at the finish line for that last athlete to finish because it's not about who finishes first. All of that ties into the amazing inclusive experience that you provide and that you said Ken provided with Leadville. It all really matches up and I love that they're training a whole fresh group of people to come out and look for that same experience in their lives.

Kimo Seymour: All right. We need that.

Kristin: Yes we do.

Kimo Seymour: Yeah, the cycling population is aging out, and it needs a new, a fresh start, groundswell of new athletes, and that's where NICA is just... that's where they're crushing it, I think.

Kristin: Absolutely. Well I have to say Kimo, it has been an absolute pleasure having you on the show here, and I want to point out that you epitomize a great leader for our audience because you came in with a... it's not like you had a software background or you were... I think you were always a brand guy. I can just tell. As I've said before, I can spot brand people a mile away. Like you definitely know brand and you know experience, you know authenticity, but you really have just chase down instinct or chase down what you think is going to feed the group of events that you have here. Whether its data through Athlinks, whether it's what ChronoTrack provides.

And I just feel like it's very inspirational for us because so many people in the audience feel like, well, that's great for Life Time Fitness because they have all these experts, but they have you, and you basically follow your instinct and dig in and you're disciplined and consistent and you're... those are athletic traits. Right? But at the same time you've kind of shown us that you can make this happen and make this multichannel experience and community work around a Midwest fitness entity foundation. It's been really fantastic to dig into that with you today, and I just wanted to say thanks.

Kimo Seymour: Oh, thank you. Again, I'm honored that you had me, and thank you for your kind words. I don't know that they're all deserving, but yeah, I'm pretty fortunate. I'm very fortunate. I have just an incredible team. Obviously, an incredible portfolio of events. An amazing company that... at Life Time, we like to say that really our goal, it really is to help people live happy, healthy lives. And in the end, if we get to do that... well, we do get to do that every day. So I'm really very, very fortunate for the opportunities that I have, and love being involved in this space. I'm passionate about helping people figure out how to live happier, healthier lives. And I think that's why I'm still here with Life Time, and associated with the events. And I think we've got some exciting things to come. I hope to have the opportunity to speak with you again in the future because we're going to continue to hopefully continue to be part of the evolution of this industry, and getting people out there just, as I say, living happy, healthy lives.

Kristin: Awesome. Well thank you so much, and I can't wait to have you back to share more news with our community here at Channel Mastery. So thank you so much. And I have a feeling you might be competing at the UTMB, and if you are, good luck. If not, I look forward to learning what you learned from that. So maybe we'll see some content on that, or we can address it on a future show.

Kimo Seymour: Sounds great, Kristin, and hey, good luck next weekend. I'll look for you up there.

Kristin: Thank you. And my crazy family. It's going to be awesome.

Kimo Seymour: Get your salt dialed in.

Kristin: Will do. Thanks so much.