

Nathan Campbell on All Things iSIGMA
The Shred Coach Podcast Transcript

TOM

Mr. Nathan Campbell, welcome to the Shred Coach Podcast. It's good to have you here. I'm glad to see you.

NATHAN

I'm glad to see you, Tom. Thanks for having me on.

TOM

Yeah. So, I thought it'd be kind of cool to have you on the initial episode of 2023 as the CEO of iSIGMA. And I think it's a really cool start to the year to talk to you today and yeah, I'm really glad you're here and I'm really glad we get to explore what's happening in your world.

NATHAN

That's awesome. Well, and thanks for having me. It's only been about 20 years. I think the last time we did something like this was in 2002, 2003.

TOM

You know, funny you bring that up because back before podcasting was cool, I had that crazy podcast called The RIM Pro Report, and I interviewed you back then, so it's been a long time and it's nice to have you on the show again.

NATHAN

Yeah, I look forward to it. I appreciate the opportunity to talk to the iSIGMA world and your fans.

TOM

So, let's- before we dive into the present and future in terms of where you are, what you're doing, where you're going, I don't know, I always find it intriguing to dive into your past and... because your past tells a little bit of the story of where you came from. And as best I can tell, and I don't remember what we talked about on the previous time, and I know we've talked over the years, but I have this belief that somehow you started your career at Recall, and that's what your LinkedIn page said. So, that's the very first thing you can see on your LinkedIn page is your start at Recall. But tell me the origin story of getting into the information management industry. Where did this all start for you?

NATHAN

All right. Well, you're not going to believe what I'm going to tell you because most people like yourself think of me as a corporate guy, but I'm really not. I'm not a corporate guy. I got my start after leaving IBM. You know, mail, a young kid leaving the mail room and went to work for an

organization that thought the ATM was going to kill the safe deposit boxes and the branch banks. And so, we had a small little company that offered safe deposit storage; it wasn't quite working the way that we thought it was, but a small little company called Hewlett Packard, which was just down the street from us, came to us and asked if they could store their computer tapes in our vault. And so, we ended up taking that on and going, "Hey, what a great idea."

So, we built a data protection business from 1988 and grew it in a couple of markets, San Jose, Sacramento, and then ultimately Los Angeles, and grew that business and sold it to what was Brambles and then became Recall. We were their second acquisition back in 1992 and we were a small little data protection business and that's how Recall got it's start and how I got mine.

TOM

So, when Brambles bought National Safe Depository, you had become the data protector. So, what you're saying is Brambles really saw National Safe Depository as a opportunity to get into the data protection business. Is that kind of the... is that what I'm hearing?

NATHAN

Yep. Exactly. And funny enough, you know, I was reading Morning Brew a couple weeks ago and we now have a shortage of safe deposit boxes. So, there's a new business opportunity for somebody, but we were a little bit ahead of the curve, I guess you would say. It only took about 30 years. But yeah, Brambles actually ended up acquiring, before we even became Recall, they acquired like 16 to 20 companies, and most of those were in data protection before they ever even got into document management. And certainly, before we got into shredding.

TOM

Interesting. That's a really interesting part of the story that I wasn't really aware of. So, you get then purchased, Brambles becomes Recall or through whatever process that happened. Then you get acquired. What- tell me a little bit about your growth and development and the roles you played in the greater Recall environment and then where... you know, give me a little bit of the story of your past now, from that origin through recent.

NATHAN

Yeah, well this is probably a boring story, but we acted like independent organizations in the early days. We were very entrepreneurial and we just basically had that- we were left to our own device and asked to hit our numbers, and that's what we did. And back in those days, you did every job you could think of, right? And I've done every job in the industry at this point now. At a high level, I ended up getting asked to run the data protection business for Recall for all of North America, which included Canada. And it was a small, you know, medium size 50 million business. They were kind enough and you know, I had some success. They were kind enough to put me through Stanford's executive program and from that, you're going to love this: I used to joke to the guy that ran our shredding business. I said, man, you keep running that garbage business. And I used to always needle them in our business meetings, right? Well, I finished the executive program, had been running North America for about five years, get called into the

CEO's office in Atlanta and he says, "Hey Nate, guess what? We're going to have you run the shredding business!" So, be careful what you say. It can always come around to you.

So, I ran the shredding business and that's where you and I first met while I was running that. Ran into Bob Johnson and that was a, I think, I still- he laughs at this story, if you'll let me digress a little. But I still remember going to my first NAID conference and sitting at a round table for new members where a guy mentioned how he bought himself a shred- um, not... what do they call those things again? Shoot. They bought, he bought himself a tree. A tree stumping device, and got himself in the shredding business basically.

TOM

Yeah.

NATHAN

And that was my first introduction to shredding. And, you know, I ran \$150 million region for all businesses, shredding, document, data protection and a number of other things. My latest venture before I was actively retired was COO of Access. I did that for about five years.

TOM

Right. So, you've had a lot of, obviously a lot of history in this industry. But I think, you know, one part of the story that I think is helpful to remember is back in 2013/2014, you actually served as president of Prism International, as I recall. So, what do you remember happening back then in the industry as that association was trying to figure out where it was going in the world, because back in 2013/2014, acquisitions seemed like, holy cow, we- there's no more people to acquire at this point. It felt like there was already a lot of acquisition done. But I don't know, I'm just maybe asking you to go back in your memory bank and what was happening back then as you recall?

NATHAN

Yeah. Interesting question. I... huh. Well, back then, you know, the roll up was still buzzing. You know, there was still a lot of consolidators. You know, Jim Booth was resigning as the executive director of Prism, and, you know, we were looking at outsourcing to an association management company, which I understand didn't go quite the way we had hoped, but we were looking at doing a lot of things.

I think the real key question at that time was really around sustainability. It was a key part of everything that we were doing. And interestingly enough, you know that we started the early stages of a merger with NAID back then. I think I did my first presentation on the four quadrants of what I thought was needed to happen all the way back in 2010. And then I did it more formally as my last action as president was I produced a couple of concepts for how we could merge with NAID, and then I guess it officially happened after I departed.

TOM

So, fast forward then. So, that's history and there's connection and history in terms of your story to the industry, to the association. But let's fast forward to early 2022. Tell me about the initial reconnection with iSIGMA, because you know, obviously you were with Access for a while, for five years as Chief Operating Officer, and then there was this gap, and in 2022 you reconnected. So, tell me about the reconnection. Tell me a little bit about the opportunity that presented itself. What thrilled you? What scared you about this opportunity that showed up? Tell me a little bit about the reconnection story.

NATHAN

Yeah, it's kind of funny, but... so, I was actively retired. I was doing odds and end type stuff. I was doing some business valuations. I had a little consulting company where I was just doing some confidential type stuff for some organizations, helping people, you know, position their companies, things like that. I was doing some mentoring and coaching similar to what you were doing, just having a pretty easy time. COVID came and, now COVID kind of disrupted everything for everybody, right? And I was no different, but I'll be honest, I don't think I'm made out for, you know, retirement. I'm ADHD and so I was just like bored.

And so I was starting to do some volunteer work and I was named a director for a little non-profit out of San Francisco, and that was act- believe it or not, here's the crazy thing. I never saw the opportunity for iSIGMA through my LinkedIn until after I was on a non-profit board. And it came across my LinkedIn and kind of fell into my lap and just came to me. And I really liked the non-profit space and ultimately that's how this opportunity came to me. One thing led to another and you know, I looked at it. I've been pretty fortunate in my life. The industry's been really good to me. I wanted to do something. It's an opportunity to give back, and ultimately what helped me make the decision was I'm like, I wanted to see if I could make a difference and if I can make a difference, I'll be around for a while. If I get to the point where I'm no longer useful, I won't.

TOM

Yeah. So, it was, I believe, August you stepped into the formal role as CEO of iSIGMA. Tell me about the first six months leading up till today. Like, tell me about sort of reconnecting with the industry, the new consolidated association that you're a part of now. All of, like, I don't know. I'm just interested in sort of... I'm always interested in how somebody goes from being out in the industry outside of it, and then comes back in and just how you've processed this whole thing for the last six months.

NATHAN

Yeah. All right. Well, you know, the cool thing is, and I have to say that the board did a- it was an amazing process, it was quickly acted and I did the interview. It was the biggest and largest interview I've ever done for a job. I think there's like 15 people in the room, Tom, can you believe that? But they had some faith in me and, you know, we worked things out and I actually flew out to Phoenix in July just to meet the team and give them an opportunity to meet me. And like anytime you take on a new job, you know, you kind of have a hundred day plan. And mine

was built around leadership alignment, on vision, mission, and objectives, doing a team assessment, which by the way, we have a fantastic group of smart, caring, and enthusiastic individuals inside the iSIGMA office. Hopefully we get a chance to talk about them a little bit more because they're really dedicated, dedicated group.

I did a voice of the client where I reached out personally. I dialed for dollars, man. I just started reaching out to members. I've now spoken to well over a hundred members, which would be service providers, corporate partners, even our auditors, even some of our adjacent partners. Like, I've spoken to some of the leaders of a number of other adjacent organizations that we've worked with from the client side. So, I was focusing on, you know, basically two or three questions in those calls, focusing on what we do well and what they appreciate about iSIGMA, what they thought we could improve and where they'd like us to go in the future. And from that we developed a plan. But here's the question for you, Tom. Take a guess what our members thought was the best thing that they liked about iSIGMA.

TOM

Oh, well that's a... yeah, that's a guess because I have no clue what that... I mean, it would be connection. It would be connection to each other. I'm guessing is one of the strong ones. I don't know.

NATHAN

Well, so I'll tell you, the three- there were lots of stuff. And again, when you have that many calls, you get a lot of different answers. But there was some similarities. And the one was basically conference, which is sort of what you said, conference allows for networking and connection. Two was certification and then three, you know, kind of our government relations, advocacy. There were a couple of other that were kind of close to that in terms of overall weighted average. But the two big ones were conference and certification. And take a guess of what they thought we could improve the most on, or they'd like to see more improvement on: conference and certification. So, the things they like the most are also the things they'd like us to improve.

And so, where they'd like us to go in the future, we got a lot of different responses. But from that I developed a plan with our team to help drive some of those improvements and create opportunities based on the assessment. And we've been executing on that where, you know, I'm aligning my team with a common purpose. And here's some, just some updates if you want, on what we've done, right?

TOM

Yeah!

NATHAN

One of the things we found out early is that when we went to a remote workforce, our phone system didn't support it, right? So, calls weren't getting answered., responded to in a timely fashion. Well, guess what? In the first 30 days, because of a fantastic team member that had

already done a lot of the work, I just had to push it over the edge. We implemented a new phone system where now we can answer the questions. It goes through a tree, and you know, from all calls we can see how many even go to voicemail. And over 80% of our calls now get answered with one dial into the organization.

We've implemented some software for our certification program called Time to Reply. Alicia, who runs that group for us, does a fantastic job and she now can tell how long it takes for every single one of her team to respond to a certification request or email. We've installed Calendly so people can make appointments with us and make that a lot easier. We've implemented a digital signage through box.com. And we're now working to help support our auditors better through bill pay and automating those kinds of things. And then the big one, which is conference, that you've probably, you can probably see from some of the emails that we send out, Kelly, who, when you want to talk about high energy, that woman is amazing, she's smart, enthusiastic, and I think you know her well. But she's really fantastic. But her and her team have completely, you know, we're really looking to completely revamp a lot of our conference with a changing agenda, shaking some things up with new elements, adding value for long-term attendees and industry veterans and trying to balance that a little bit. And so, you may have heard that we're going to have an executive leadership luncheon on Wednesday now. We've got a top golf for maximizing networking opportunities. We're going to have a dedicated expo hours for our owners that come out of the executive leadership lunch. And a new one, something that you'll see that we just got past the board that you'll be excited about in... so, this is a- you get an early release of this Tom, but we're going to have something called the Impact Awards for our exhibitors and corporate partners to better highlight industry innovations, entrepreneurial efforts like that.

And so, we're really super excited about some of these changes. I'm really passionate about it and I just have to tell you, Kelly and her team, you know, Sarah who, if I go without hearing from her giving me a hard time and keeping me straight, she's our parliamentarian and she really keeps us on task. And Maggie, who does our IG direct and our journal. Just that entire team is just great. And Joy, who's helping us with automation, this... Kelly's team just does a fantastic job and I think you're going to see it, feel it and appreciate it when you come to conference this year.

We've signed, I don't know if you know, do you know that we've signed our keynote speaker?

TOM

Yeah, I've seen that in some of the stuff that's come out of head office in the last a week or so. So, that's really cool.

NATHAN

Yeah, we're pretty stoked. This guy's a serial, serial entrepreneur. If you follow his story, it's Jesse Cole. He's the yellow tux guy of the Savannah Bananas. But this guy, if you want to learn to stand out from your competition in a market and you're an entrepreneur that gets frustrated competing with the big guys, this is a little guy and a little market that made a big impact. And I'm really excited about what I think he'll bring our conference to address some of the, you know, the struggles that we all have in building market share.

TOM

Yeah. That's so cool. They, well, that's very exciting and I really appreciate you spending some time connecting back to the team. Because I mean, you, you can come in as, in the role of CEO, executive director, but you need a significant team to pull all this stuff off. So, thank you for mentioning them and honoring them in this transition.

So, maybe coming from the other side, because I think that's a lot of really exciting stuff that you're talking about, but what are some of the challenges you're seeing on the horizon for the association?

NATHAN

Challenges, huh? Well, in my mind there's always going to be challenge, right? I think growing the organization is al- you know, growing a business anytime is always tough, right? And looking at those adjacent opportunities to help develop new growth will be something that will be a big focus. Developing consistent service and member improvements. You know, how we automate. I mean, I really am pushing automation in a big way. This year we've got, you know, I don't want to spill the beans because there's a lot of work that has to go into it and it's not quite ready to kick out yet. But we're really looking at automating a number of the touchpoints and the service points that our members have to deal with. And it's going to require some investment and a lot of hard work. But, you know, those are the challenges that I see; growing the business, developing opportunities that support our members more and can drive more value, and automating our business to simplify things on the back end and to make the overall experience for our members easier and more efficient.

TOM

Yeah. Yeah. Maybe one that I'm, you know, I tend to have lots of these kind of conversations with people as a coach in the industry is, you know, acquisitions have... they feel like historically, I mean, we talked earlier about back in 2012, 2014, it felt like there's no more room for acquisitions and it's just continued for years. And I think we're getting to now where there legitimately aren't a lot of records storage vendors around there; that has evolved. But there's not a ton of those left. And now we're starting to see more aggressive acquisitions in the shredding space, rollups in that industry and more and more of that. And that always impacts the association because as you buy out members, the number that comes, you know, that affects membership. So, how do you as the leader, as the CEO of iSIGMA, how do you think about that? How do you process that either internally to yourself as you think about how the association evolves?

NATHAN

Well, I, again, these are just my opinions and thoughts, so I appreciate you asking them. But you know, I see these businesses as having strong local operators are doing quite nicely today. And like I said, I've reached out to a lot of them. There's a lot more independent operators than there are consolidators, and there are fewer consolidators than there used to be. So, I do give a lot of thought to that. And what goes through my mind is, again, I'm a competitor. I love to compete.

NATHAN (cont.)

One of the reasons I got back into doing this is I just missed the game of business. I just love the business. I love the issues. I love the complaints. I just love all of it, right? And I've got a great team that helps me. But I think that how we advocate for that local operator and help them grow and stay relevant is something that I'm hoping that iSIGMA can help and support; helping them build some new service offerings for growth, helping them look at their untapped capacity and find other ways that they can use that available capacity to do something different to grow their businesses so that they're not so reliant on one thing. And so, I don't know, whether it's the IT space, the IT asset disposition space or medical waste. Maybe it's going to be safety consulting. I don't know what it is yet. But I just feel like iSIGMA can be an advocate for that kind of growth.

And if we can't do that, then help me, let me figure out a way. As you know, I've operated some pretty big businesses. If we can help our local providers become more efficient or run better with less risk, then we'll do that. So, anything we can do from an education perspective or help an operator be more, make more money. Let me make it simple. I want to help our local operators make more money. How's that?

TOM

Yeah. Well, and I think it's such an important perspective because the reality is business has always been hard. I think, within this industry, we have the unique connection to security, connection to data, to the kind of stuff that is never off the radar for clients. And so, the opportunity to grow, to develop, to evolve our, you know, local operations is a really valuable thing to think about. And I'm glad you guys are thinking about that.

So, you mentioned earlier in a lot of your conversations, you know, the certifications and the two certifications under the iSIGMA umbrella, NAID, AAA and Prism Privacy Plus. And you talked to members about them, but how do you see those certifications evolving with the current state of data protection, information security, that is so prevalent in today's world and is so important? How do you, as a CEO sort of taking... becoming the new leader of this environment, how do you think about those certifications and where they go and how they grow and how they evolve based on your conversations, based on what you've learned? What's coming up for you?

NATHAN

You want to know something weird to me? Is when I talk to a lot of local operators and I had some recently, you know, talk to me about how we've raised our rates and inflation has just gotten the best of us here. Right? But when I think of the certification, you want to know the most awesome thing about certification? Think about this, Tom. I mean, you're a real, super smart guy. It's one of the things I love about you and I hope we get to share another glass of wine like the last time I saw you face to face; we get to do that. But when I think of certification, we're just talking here, right? Do you realize that for just a couple grand a year plus a little bit of stuff that you got to do on your end, that a local operator that could be doing a half a million to a million dollars can compete with the three and \$4 billion company and level the playing field? To me, certification levels that playing field, and it's a core competency of iSIGMA.

NATHAN (cont.)

I mean, who's to say that today we have a core competency for shredding and privacy plus and data protection. Who's to say that we don't use that core competency in other ways in the future? Our unique certification program gives clarity, you know, Citibank, bank of America, any of those companies, they love our program because we do the work for them and we do it on a global. And if I'm a local operator and I want to grow my business, right, and I want to go after contracts that are maybe a law firm that's in 6 or 10 different markets, I now have a network of companies that do business that meet a standard just like mine. So, I don't know, I just think that that's important.

So, then the second part of your question is really about the evolution and how we continue to review that spec and remain relevant. And, you know, security needs change over time and our program's not static and that's what keeps us on the cutting edge. And I think we will look to develop into adjacent service opportunities and be seen as security experts protecting personal information. I think that will allow our members to grow their service and offer ways. I mean, no one does it less expensively than we do. We're still your... that best option. So, I think we'll continue to look at how that works internationally, try to add more markets internationally so it remains relevant and we'll continue to advocate, you know, through government relations to make sure ours is seen as the standard.

TOM

Very cool. That's fabulous. So, I-

NATHAN

Did I answer your question? I just want to make sure I answered your question.

TOM

Yeah, no, and I think it's a moving target. I think, you know, the impact of certification. Certification gives us a credentialing structure to work within. But the outside world keeps evolving. I mean, the reality of how complex personal privacy data security has become demands that we're constantly evolving that process. And so, I believe what you said is we've got something really worth sharing with the world to have a AAA NAID certification or a Privacy Plus says something that gives you a level playing field. It's also something that, you know, owned and sense that I can deliver this as a local operator, gives you some street cred, which I think is really important. That street cred has for many years been something really important to operators. So much so that I think all of the nationals and international big 3 billion companies bought in, right, because of the value of it.

NATHAN

It does. You can't compete. I was speaking with a smaller provider just the other day and they were saying, "Gosh, it costs a lot more to do". I go, "But do you realize what you're getting? The value of what you're getting is immense and why you wouldn't want to continue it... You're not going to be able to win any sort of a state, local, or multi-market contract without it." So, it's a

cost of doing business at this point. I don't understand why every single operator in iSIGMA isn't certified. There are still some that aren't, and it just shocks me.

TOM

Yeah, yeah, All right, well let's change track for a bit and let's assume that you and I are having a conversation at the start of 2026. So, project out three years. And we're sitting down having this conversation. What has to have happened in the association for you to feel extremely proud of the results that you've helped lead or create? Like just go out into the future and we've talked about current and present and, you know, sort of getting started, but like, project out a little bit. Like give me a sense of what you know internally and be, you know, go inside here, go into the depth of your soul and tell me what really would make you feel good three years from now? What would make you proud?

NATHAN

You're the best, Tom. You are the best. You're so clever. That's a nice way of asking me about my three-year plan. Huh?

TOM

Maybe subtly, but yeah, but I want it from the perspective of it's done and you feel really good.

NATHAN

Yeah, I know, I know. I got you. I love the question and you know I appreciate it. I just, I think you're clever. I love it. But hey, so look, first thing for the future I hope to see my relationships grow both externally and internally with the iSIGMA team members and that my team continues to grow and develop into fearless, risk taking, action oriented rock stars. You know, some of them will be running new focused initiatives that bring great business growth, excitement, and value to our team members. That's probably, like, my own personal mission statement of making a difference.

And what they could be working on are bridges to client and service providers. They could be getting us into new opportunities. I'd like to see us either acquire or develop some new core competencies. And something my team hears all the time is how can we add value, but something I'll say to all of the members that are listening to this, if there is anyone out there that has a sphere of common interest with iSIGMA, then we want to listen to it, we want to partner with them, we want to advance it. And so, I'd like to see us advance into a couple of new business opportunities and ventures in three years, or at least see a pathway to that. So, I don't know if that... I'd like to see us automate and simplify processes. I mean, I got a slew of things, but the ones that I think that are most relative of what you're really asking for is A) a team that can get it done and then move us into some new directions for growth and values for our corporate partners and for our member service providers.

TOM

Beautiful. Beautiful. Love it. So, we've heard a little bit about Nate the professional CEO. But for those who don't have a history with you, who don't know you, tell me a little bit about your life unrelated to work. Like are you a dog guy? Are you a cat guy? Are you like, are you a hiker or are you a football guy? I mean, just, just give us a sense, give us a glimpse into Nate, the guy.

NATHAN

The guy, huh? Well, I am a dog lover. As a matter of fact, I have an English bulldog who is the brand. I have a fun little side gig that I do where I age Manhattans and Old Fashioneds, and my brand is called Hankering, because my dog is Hank. I'll have to serve you one, I'll have to bring someone of these days, but I give away 70%. But it's a fun little hobby for me. I'm still-

TOM

So, you, sorry. Whoa, whoa. Wait. I just need to understand that. You age Old Fashioneds?

NATHAN

I barrel age Old Fashioneds. I'll send you a couple pics when we're done here today, but I age them and I got my English bulldog as my mascot. And like I say, it's called the Hankering Bulldog Distillery. And all I do is age Manhattans primarily. I have like seven different recipes and I've got a current Black Walnut Old Fashioned that is that got harvested last week. So, I harvest it out. I give a lot of it away as gifts. You know, friends, neighbors enjoy it. And I've got, like I said, I've got a Manhattan with a vanilla bean in it and just some variety of things. So, I enjoy doing that.

I'm the luckiest guy in the world. I've got, you know, I've been married 33 years. I'm as loyal as a Labrador. I love my family and my life. I've got two kids. They're in graduate school. One is in New York, near you going to SUNY Optometry to be an optometrist after she graduated from Purdue. My son went to NYU and is now at Berkeley for law and is halfway through going towards law school. And I like doing everything, you know, snowboarding, running, golfing, hiking. I like all that stuff.

The thing that's really been driving a lot of my excess time is something that I'm hoping could be a part of the future of iSIGMA, where I hope I can blend these a little more is the volunteer stuff I'm doing. I think you noticed my LinkedIn. I just got elected to be president of our little non-profit that provides job opportunities and housing for individuals with developmental disabilities. And I have to tell you, I will continue to probably do that the rest of my life. It has been such a joy. I mean, there is nothing that makes you feel better than being able to give, because you get back so much more. And so, I have really enjoyed reaching out. I've in the last 12 to 18 months, I've done due diligence or efforts and works with 15 different non-profits in that space that our non-profit helped support by granting them money for infrastructure and everything else.

And I can even tell you, a big shout out to my buddy Michael Fruchter, he actually donated to our- my little non-profit called Helpers Community. It's an old, old non-profit, been around since 1956, but I'm on the board and it's a lot of fun. I enjoy that quite a bit and I hope at some point

that we can have a give back community service type of thing inside of iSIGMA, because we're all successful, and it would be nice if we can find a way to give back to the communities and I find it to be really worth it.

TOM

Well, very delightful. Thank you for sharing that. Thank you for sharing a little bit of your personal story and about the Hankering Bulldog Distillery. That's... Helpers Community is really amazing. Bulldog Distillery is kind of, it is also interesting.

NATHAN

That's fun. You and... I don't know, do you drink a Manhattan or an Old Fashioned?

TOM

No, no, I don't. I mean, I have I...

NATHAN

I won't make one for you, but I will say that, like I said, I have seven different recipes and if anybody is interested, have them reach out to me. And it doesn't always have to... I want to have fun, Tom. I'm doing this job because I want to make a difference. I want to work with people that I enjoy. And you know, the industry's really great. There's a lot of great, big, giant personalities in this industry. I love it all. It's really fun. You know, my goal is to help build confidence in the iSIGMA team, make sure that we're focused and dedicated on helping our members any way that we can. We are not infallible, let me assure you of that. But we want to own it. We want to be client focused. We have a desire. The team that I have is so smart. They're so much smarter than me. And they care so much, that's one thing I've learned. Like Alicia manages the certification team and her small team of three or four people, they've got... Victoria's our most recent hire, but Karen's been there for a long time and you should see the amount that she cares about every single one being successful in their audits, their unannounced audits, helping them through when their paperwork's not right. I mean, this team really cares. And so, it's kind of fun to see that happen and I just hope that we can continue to build on our mission statement.

TOM

Well, Nate, if I can call you that, thank you for...

NATHAN

Yeah.

TOM

Thank you for sharing with us. Thank you for taking the time to give us a sense of where you are, where you've come from, your vision for the future, and how you're doing all that. And on behalf of the industry who are listening, I want to wish you great success in the days months and years ahead. So, thank you for joining us on the podcast today.

NATHAN

Well, hey, I appreciate it. Can I say one more thing that might be important that I think this is something that our members will want to hear?

TOM

Yeah.

NATHAN

Okay. So, you know we're trying to change things up for conference, and I should say that if they want to be a part... we changed it up, right? Our golf event used to average right around 60. The best year that I could find was about 82, and our worst year was like 26. And this announcement's important because we don't have a lot of time to make a decision. Believe it... get this, Tom. We already, for our top golf event, which will be Wednesday from 3 to 6 or Wednesday, 3 to 6:30, somewhere around that timeframe, we already have over 80% of that sold out. We have over a hundred people already signed up for the top golf event. We have a limited amount of capacity at the moment, and if I want to extend it, I have a decision I have to make in the early part of February.

So, for anybody out there who's listening to this who has not signed up and wants to be a part of a very fun event, whether you golf or not, doesn't matter, because the way top golf works is you don't have to golf. You can just sit there and eat appetizers and have a drink and just network with our friends. It's going to be a really fun event that's something new and different that we are trying. But due to... this isn't me, there's a cap on what I can do based on the space that we allocated on last year. So, if people want to go to that, they need to sign up for it soon or they're going to be left out because of fire laws and capacity issues. I do have an opportunity to expand it, but we only have about 20% left. And so that's very real.

TOM

Got it. Okay. And I know how much people love their top golf. So, if you like golf and you are into something really interesting, if you've never done top golf, it's definitely worth the trip. But to you, what you're saying is if you're interested, get yourself connected quickly, get yourself registered and signed up for top golf so that you can make a final decision whether you expand or not.

NATHAN

Yeah, and that's... and it's really not even about golf. If you've been to top golf, you know, but we've allocated a really killer space. The top golf in Vegas is the number one top golf probably I think in the world. And we've allocated a really killer space, so you don't even have to golf. This is a networking, fun event. It almost acts like a kickoff. And VECO plan has been gracious enough to be the sponsor of it, and it's going to be a really great, fun event. I mean, like I said, we're already 50% better than our average year for a normal golf event. And our numbers for conference this year, if you care Tom, is we are 40% better. 40% better on our numbers this year than we were last year. So, conference is shaping up really nicely. I think we already have almost

300 people signed up for conference this year. So, I'm looking for some fun. We're going to have a good time. We're going to try to learn a little bit. If you can get two or three new ideas, network with some people so that you can see the organizations that you work with and can work with in the future. And hopefully we can bring some value, but we're really trying differently this year to do something and so, I just want to let people know it's moving quickly this year, and it's not like years passed where you could just kind of have a laissez faire attitude about signing up for some of these things. They could get sold out. So, there is a little bit of a, an action for people if they're listening to this.

TOM

Well, very exciting. Well, thank you for sharing all that and to everyone listening who is considering the conference, you have just gotten a little bit of an offer there. So, make it happen.

Nate, man, it's been great talking to you. Great to have you on the show. Thank you for doing this and much success in 2023.

NATHAN

Hey Tom. Thank you. I hope we get an opportunity to share a glass. I hope we get a chance to sit down in person in March, and I look forward to working with you as much as possible in the future. You're a great guy. Thanks for having me.