EPISODE 178:

Operational Alpha in Private Markets: Manager Research, GP Staking & Succession Planning with Chris Brimsek

Robert Morier: Welcome to the Dakota Live podcast. I'm your host, Robert Morier. The goal of this podcast is to help you better know the people behind investment decisions. We introduce you to chief investment officers, manager research professionals, and other industry leaders to help you sell in between the lines and better understand the investment sales ecosystem. If you're not familiar with Dakota and our Dakota Live content, please visit our website at dakota.com. Before we get started, I need to read a brief disclosure. This content is provided for informational purposes and should not be relied upon as recommendations or advice about investing in securities. All investments involve risk and may lose money. Dakota does not guarantee the accuracy of any of the information provided by the speaker who is not affiliated with Dakota. Not a solicitation, testimonial, or endorsement by Dakota or its affiliates. Nothing herein is intended to indicate approval, support, or recommendation of the investment advisor or its supervised persons by Dakota. Today's episode is brought to you by Dakota Marketplace. Are you tired of constantly jumping between multiple databases and channels to find the right investment opportunities? Introducing Dakota Marketplace, the comprehensive institutional and intermediary database built by fundraisers for fundraisers. With Dakota Marketplace, you'll have access to all channels and asset classes in one place, saving you time and streamlining your fundraising process. Say goodbye to the frustration of searching through multiple databases and say hello to a seamless and efficient fundraising experience. Sign up now and see the difference Dakota Marketplace can make for you. Visit dakotamarketplace.com today. Welcome back to another episode of the Dakota Live podcast. We are joined today in our Philadelphia studios by Chris Brimsek, founder and managing partner of CAB Advisory LLC. CAB is a strategic advisory firm that works exclusively with the founders and senior leaders of general partners. Chris advises on firm strategy, product development, team and compensation design, culture and succession across private equity, real estate, infrastructure, energy, venture capital, private credit, and GP solutions. The firm works with emerging managers and with established multibillion-dollar platforms. The common thread is that Chris works on the problems that fall outside what lawyers, accountants, and placement agents handle. The organizational and human questions that determine whether a firm can scale, and last. Chris spent nearly a decade at the Carlyle Group working closely with co-founder David Rubenstein and later as chief operating officer of Carlyle's $15 billion infrastructure and energy platform. Before Carlyle, he worked as an investment professional at a special situations private equity firm and a venture and growth equity firm. He started his career in investment banking. Chris earned his MBA from Harvard Business School and a Bachelor of Science with special attainments in commerce from Washington and Lee University. Chris, thank you so much for being here. Welcome to Philadelphia. Welcome to the Philadelphia Dakota Studios.

Chris Brimsek: Thanks, Rob. We're glad to be here.

Robert Morier: Yeah, we're glad you're here from Denver, Colorado. What was the flight like?

Chris Brimsek: A little bit bumpy as always.

Robert Morier: As always, coming out of that mountain air, especially in the summer. How is it, how have you found Denver evolving over time? I was living in between Denver and Philadelphia about 5 years ago now, and the growth was incredible. Is it still happening?

Chris Brimsek: Yeah, you know, I think we had a bumper period during COVID when a lot of folks from the coast moved out there. Some have moved back, but I think we have a robust business community and certainly a great quality of life that keeps attracting great talent. Out there.

Robert Morier: What's your favorite thing about living in Denver?

Chris Brimsek: The mountains. You know, it's interesting, my close friend is from Colorado and we were both living out east years ago. He said living in a big city causes you to be myopic because your line of sight is only a few blocks. And at the time I thought that was kind of hooey, but having lived in Colorado for a while now, being in a business where I have to do a lot of big thinking, getting out and seeing these kind of expansive vistas, I do think there's something to it in terms of how it changes our ability to see the bigger picture.

Robert Morier: Have you climbed a 14er?

Chris Brimsek: I have.

Robert Morier: What was the last one?

Chris Brimsek: Grays Peak.

Robert Morier: Grays Peak. Nice. Have you ever done Mount Holy Cross?

Chris Brimsek: I haven't.

Robert Morier: That was my one and only, so I'm sorry you haven't, but it's okay. That was the only one I'd ever done.

Chris Brimsek: One of my closest friends is a mountain climber who's moving out, and he's going to push me to go up a few more.

Robert Morier: Okay, well, good luck. All right, well, I'm glad I'm catching you before you start going up mountains as a climber. Well, you began your career in investment banking and then moved into private equity. You were focusing on special situations. When you think about where you were at Washington Lee and coming out of school and then the career trajectory that's taken place since, What have been some of the common threads that you have found have been the most important to what you're doing today with CAB?

Chris Brimsek: Certainly starting in investment banking during the GFC taught me a lot about resilience or the importance of it, and certainly taught me a lot about the importance of the ability to have a sales skill set and to pitch. I think working on a special sits deal team, really high op tempo, working 100 hours a week was a really foundational and formative experience that I've been able to draw on throughout my career as I've continued to work with deal teams.

Robert Morier: The operations side. Actually, two parts. You've had an interesting view. Talk about vistas. So you've got a vista into the operational side of a large successful asset manager, as well as the C-suite and the decisions that are happening, you know, at that, at that same firm. What do those two facets of the organization have the most in common? When you think about the operations and senior leadership, where do you think the connection is on a day-to-day basis?

Chris Brimsek: I think this is one of the biggest opportunities and challenges that our industry has. I think in general, we haven't necessarily turned the mirror on ourselves. In a way that we have on our own portfolio companies. Part of that reason is generally in this industry over the last number of decades, if you've raised some money, kept your team small and done some good deals, the math kind of works out for everybody and your LPs are happy. I think as competition has increased for deals and capital and talent, you have GP staking and succession coming into the picture, people have started to realize maybe we do need to turn that mirror on ourselves. And so you're seeing what was a gap in the past around kind of the underlying deal team and investment strategy of a firm on the one hand, and leadership of the firm on the other. We're seeing that gap narrow now as we hold ourselves to the same standard at the firm level that we expect of our portfolio company management teams.

Robert Morier: Why do you think that gap existed? I'm always fascinated by that. So you have some of the smartest investors in the room who invest in these companies, build these companies, scale these companies, but when it comes to building their own business, there seems like there are a lot of blinders. There's, um, I don't want to say it's just the lack of experience because not all of us have built firms before, um, but when it comes to building up the different facets of the organization to make sure that it can sustain over time. So why do you think that gap was there in the first place?

Chris Brimsek: You know, most leaders of firms in this industry are investors first and foremost, and so we stick to our core skill set and we tend to have to manage the rest of the firm off of the corner of our desk. You know, GPs in general are relatively lean teams. At the leadership level. You struggle to see comparisons in other industries where as many firms have been created that are worth several hundred million dollars or more in enterprise value that haven't taken any outside capital into their management company or their top co, right? Look, in our industry, you can start a business, raise capital, do deals, be successful, build a profitable business, all without having taken outside capital into your company, and you can own 100% of it. For a lot of people, myself included, that would be quite reinforcing to, "Hey, I've kind of got this figured out." And again, that worked for a really long time. But as competition has increased, people have started to look around and realize, "Oh, doing top quartile deals is critical, but it's become table stakes in the backbone of what we do. My peers are also accomplishing great investment returns. And if that's what I'm measuring myself by or holding myself at as a competitor, it's just not going to cut it anymore." Is that the problem that you saw in the market that you were looking to address with CAB? Yeah, you know, when I launched this business a few years ago, there was a confluence of a couple of big factors. The first was I reflected on my own career and saw that I had this relatively unique skillset around designing, building, and managing GPs with kind of a large number of reps there on the one hand. I also, in a lot of conversations with leaders of GPs around the market, found that they lamented a lack of kind of a skillset that they could access around management company topics, especially in a strategic mindset. I think the third piece is I've got a number of great mentors of mine that throughout my career have pushed me and said, Chris, at some point you have to take a bet on yourself. And that's been bouncing around in the back of my mind for a long time. So I was always looking for an opportunity, uh, and when the door opened, I walked through it. And it was one of probably the best decisions I've made in my career to date.

Robert Morier: What were some of those early hurdles that you had to get over when you were launching, hanging your own shingle? It's an entrepreneurial venture, and you had historically been part of some pretty big organizations. I know you were scaling and building them up as part of bigger teams, but now it's, it's just you. So what were some of those hurdles?

Chris Brimsek: People always talk about product-market fit and willingness to pay, and those are kind of critical. I think the unique challenge for me was, you know, I was going out into the market with the tall task of getting in the room with founders or managing partners or GPs and telling them they're not as good as they think they are and that needed to pay me to help them navigate those issues. I think it's safe to say we operated an industry, myself included, where our egos are appropriately healthy. So it's a pretty tall ask to go in there and convince someone to hear you out. Uh, and then once you've rounded that corner, really getting buy-in, uh, and kind of framing out how they can work with you on an ongoing basis. There's a lot of early learnings there, but I think essentially convincing someone that again has been successful, that hasn't had to take outside capital, that their lunch is being eaten by their competitors and they might need to be a little bit more thoughtful and action-oriented around their own business is probably the biggest hurdle.

Robert Morier: Is that response— so when you're telling somebody, I would assume pretty early on in the conversation, that what you, you think you're doing is not necessarily the right decisions, or that you've made some mistakes, or there's some things that you could be fixing to really help improve your business, which is constructive criticism. So when you hear that response for the first time, is that your first kind of process or part or aspect of the underwriting process, meaning you're kind of evaluating that client based on their response to what is effectively criticism?

Chris Brimsek: Yeah, you know, so when I launched this business, I think first and foremost, I'm not doing it for my health and I'm not doing it to build a lifestyle business. I want to change the industry. I want to have impact. So if I want to have impact, I need to make sure I'm working with the right clients. So when evaluating folks, you know, one of the things that I think about is really this aspect of self-awareness. Do they know what they don't know? And are they biased towards taking action when they get good guidance? I think there's a lot of smart people that are happy to navel-gaze, and that's fine. But where I want to spend my time to drive the most impact is with groups who look around and say, this is an extremely competitive industry. I'm in the business of making investors, not investments. If I accept that fact, there's probably more I can be doing based on the history of the industry and my own firm. Those are the types of things that I'm looking for to make sure I'm aligned with the groups that I'm working with.

Robert Morier: What do you want to change about the industry?

Chris Brimsek: We need to start running our firms like businesses. I think the larger GPs out there would say, of course, we're already doing that. I certainly think GP staking has served as a great catalyst for that. But the reality is, at the end of the day, I think there's still this driving undercurrent at a lot of GPs in kind of the couple billion AUM and below size range of, if I do great deals, rising tide lifts all boats. And the reality is, I think that's a bit of a backward mindset. If you don't build a business around making great investors, you're building a business around your own skillset, view of the market, pipeline, capital relationships. And I think you're seeing a lot of people see that rope run out instead of stepping back and saying, I have to build something here like a true entrepreneur and I have to build for scale in the future. So it's, it's something that you're seeing a lot more of these days, but I think more of an honest acceptance that yes, you can build a small business in this industry and do quite well. But there are a lot of pressures that will cause you to continue to need to scale. Your LPs will pull you to scale. Your talent will want you to continue to grow. Your partners will want you to continue to grow. You don't want the dog to catch the car and to reactively have to answer those questions. So to change the industry, I'd like more people to be focusing on that, you know, 10 years ahead of when they're encountering it.

Robert Morier: Can self-awareness be taught?

Chris Brimsek: Self-awareness absolutely can be taught and it can be learned. Some of us increase our self-awareness through some hard lessons. That we've experienced. Some of it comes through feedback we get from mentors or peers, or sometimes even from our own teams. I think it's an openness to acknowledging that there's a lot of things we don't know, even if we're running successful businesses, that puts us in the right mindset to increase our self-awareness. And again, you know, there's a lot of really successful firms out there right now that are successful today. I have the benefit of a unique seat in the industry where I see how their lunch is getting eaten by them, and they have no idea it's happening.

Robert Morier: You've said that the market doesn't question whether a GP can raise a couple hundred million dollars and do good deals. Um, the real question is that they can scale and repeat it. What does it actually take to answer the second question that they can repeat what they've done in the past and not stumble?

Chris Brimsek: People leave firms because of a catalyst to leave. Usually they're unhappy for some reason. They have a line of sight on proprietary deals and they have some capital that'll follow them. That usually can get you into business or get you a couple hundred million under management. To your question and to something I mentioned a minute ago, I think we're in the business of making investors, not investments. Whether you've launched a firm or whether you're running a large GP, if that's your driving thesis, most people who spin out and launch GPs have had limited experience building teams, negotiating with LPs, raising capital, managing the business. They might've been in the room but not on those decisions. So there's a big challenge to go from, I can execute on a pipeline of deals that I can spin out with on the one hand, to on the other end of that success, which means I can turn this into a real business. I think we have a lot of smart, driven people in this industry that are capable of developing those skills. I think the thing that I see that sinks people more so is that they get there and they get to scale and they get to a level of scale, a billion of AUM, and they have a realization, oh shoot, I don't actually like running the business. I don't want to make investors, I want to make investments. There's no wrong answer, but you do have to— there is a wrong alignment between what you do and the business you've created and what you're solving for. And that's where I see the most tension or the most footfalls, if you will, when people spin out, launch a GP, but struggle when they start to get some scale behind them.

Robert Morier: Are those observational challenges that you've seen consistent across asset class within alternatives? You've had an advantage to be able to look at real estate, venture, private equity. So when you look across across those strategies, um, do you find that, you know, the challenges that these managers face, that these GPs face, is consistent? So it doesn't matter what your stripes are, you know, we're all still essentially making the same mistakes, or are there some variations?

Chris Brimsek: I think 90% plus of the challenges that leaders of GPs face are the same or materially similar across all investment strategies. There's some nuances. I think where I focus is there's actually a lot of lessons we can all learn from each other among different investment strategies and asset classes. So I'll just give you an example of how I think about this. So I work with a lot of real estate private equity firms. One of the things that you'll see that's more common among that group than in some of the other investment strategies is their flexibility in changing their whole firm's investment mandate over a 10-year window or less. There's a lot more in my experience, and I think the data would probably support it, Real estate private equity firms today that are investing in asset classes or sectors or geographies that are different than what they were in 10 years ago compared to a buyout fund, for example, or the, or the buyout sector. Real estate private equity firms have adopted into their ethos this kind of strategic mindset where they recognize whether in the past it's been out of pure necessity, the market's traded away from them, or competition or other factors have made it hard to compete in sectors where they've been successful in the past. Or whether it's because of their top-down thesis-driven nature that we all say we have, but in real estate, I tend to find them pretty focused on that, or for other reasons. I think it's a strength of theirs to be aware that I can be top quartile in a sector or strategy today, and that if I want to continue to be top quartile, it might be in that or it might be in a different sector or strategy 10 years from now. That mindset opens them to be more holistic in their strategic thinking about their firm. The other thing that I see with real estate private equity firms that's interesting is we're in the apprenticeship business overall as an industry. I give us a pretty low grade at both acknowledging that we're in the apprenticeship business and actually effectuating that. Real estate has some, let's call it structural advantages. What I mean by that, real estate private equity firms tend to attract talent that is inherently passionate about real estate because you can with your friends or family or by yourself, buy a single rental property or a small multifamily property and get a taste of what it's like to be in the business. So the people who move into those sectors at real estate private equity firms tend to come with kind of an inherent passion. And what that does is they come in clear-eyed of what are the end-state skills that I need to get here so that one day I can go do my own deals and have my own firm. And you might think that's a risk for leaders of real estate private equity firms because who wants to bring talent in that, you know, is going to go leave and potentially compete with you down the road? The reality is, one, those people are higher performing because of their underlying passion and clear view of the end state skills they need to develop while they're with you. But two, in real estate, if and when they leave on good terms, you can still go be an LP or a co-GP in their deals. There's more of an openness structurally to participate with other GPs on the real estate side of things. I think we're still early on the buyout or growth side of it within private equity. Certainly as the independent sponsor space has grown, I'd like to see more of a willingness of private equity firms to maybe let their hair down a little bit and partner up with independent sponsors on deals in kind of a co-GP capacity. I think on the private equity side, we tend not to do that because we're afraid of saying, well, you know, is it the independent sponsor that sourced the deal or are they delivering the value add? That's supposed to be our captive capability to be able to do both of those things. I think real estate, and people will argue against this point, but I think real estate has paved a little bit of a path there that we could be looking at. With the overall point here being when you look between different asset classes or investment strategies at these different GPs, there's some lessons we could all be taking from each other.

Robert Morier: Process discipline tends to be a factor that is very important to the allocators, the LPs who sit where you're usually sitting, which is we understand that there's an opportunistic nature to identifying deals deals and securities and putting a portfolio together as it relates to us evaluating a GP, a money manager, but we don't want to see the drift. But what you're saying is the drift is okay in some sectors, particularly in private real estate. Private real estate can't be 100% of our asset allocation, but how can we— and this is a question for you for those allocators— how can we adopt the ability for some of these managers to go outside of their bend and into something that might be more opportunistic but still stay within the context of what we hired them for. So how do I do that?

Chris Brimsek: It's a great question. I think it happens more often than we think today. I mean, look, the whole multi-fund strategy was busted open in the industry 30 years ago. And so I think LPs are maybe more— as much as they would say they want you to specialize, the reality is more of them are invested in multiple funds at larger GPs or doing SMAs. Than we talk about out loud. So I think there is incentive and an alignment in the industry for GPs to be thinking about adjacent areas. The other thing I think about is, which is also a point to the allocators, the LPs, if you back a specialist today in a certain strategy, it's in a closed-ended fund, that's going to be a 10-year fund life probably with 1 or 2 extensions. So it's like a 10-plus year commitment. If the market trades away from that strategy in the interim period, You still need that firm to be performing well, even if in unrelated areas, so that they can retain and attract and retain talent that's harvesting your portfolio 10 years from now. That's something that I think not a lot of people talk about, right? At the end of the day, it's all about the commitment in this cycle and the performance in this vintage. When you look at the harvesting periods and when a lot of the exits happened in closed-ended funds, a lot of it happens deep into the tail, which is fine, but that means we need businesses to still be competitive down the road to be delivering the value for us. And if the sector trades away and that GP is entirely set up to only deliver value in that sector, are they really going to be able to have the right talent around the table to manage out the portfolio in the long run?

Robert Morier: Dakota's Google Chrome extension lets you access all the high-quality LP, GP, account, and contact information, as well as private company, public company, and more. All of that data that you've grown to know and love within Dakota Marketplace, right from your Google Chrome browser. This way, as you're browsing, researching, prospecting, or looking for the newest deal target, you have all of the high-quality and curated data that you need to do your job right there in the same window. You can learn more today on our website at dakota.com. Why doesn't the industry acknowledge the importance of apprenticeships in what we do here?

Chris Brimsek: I think there's a little bit of a hubris around the fact that we pay people pretty well and there's a lot of upside to being in this industry. And so it's kind of a, you know, to me, I think the worst advice people get in this industry is to keep your head down. You hear it a lot. You hear it in every industry. That's not me going flying in the face of people needing to learn and execute on their career. I think what it does is conditions people at the junior and mid-levels to think, "I'm here to keep my head down, do what I'm told. The people upstream of me are going to take risk. We'll make enough money that I make my base and bonus for this year." What that leads to is people who get to the mid-levels, they look up, they start pushing for promotion. And everybody starts to realize there's a massive gap between what they do and what the end state skills are. And then we're scrambling to try and help them to understand what it means to source a deal, to sit on a board, to be in the room with an LP, to manage people, to design and allocate a bonus pool. You don't want to be scrambling to do that. The apprenticeship starts day one. But I think we as an industry have ingrained this culture of if you keep your head down, things will work out for you. It's kind of passing on the guidance that's been given to us in the past, and I think that only gets you so far.

Robert Morier: You're also in an interesting seat. You're, you're effectively underwriting your clients. So you're doing a due diligence on the GPs who contact you about, you know, helping with some of these challenges that you've, you've taken us through in the first 10 to 15 minutes here. Um, what does that underwriting process look like for you, particularly in that first meeting? What are you looking to glean from that manager that is going to help you determine whether they are going to be a good partner of a good client for CAB?

Chris Brimsek: The first thing I always focus on is the vision for the firm, which a lot of people push back on because they say, hey Chris, all of us around the table who are decision makers at this GP, we know what we're playing for here. And I flip the question back to them, okay, so what's the vision for the firm? You'll never get an answer. So then I'll narrow it and say, okay, what's the purpose of growth at this firm? Some of the people say they want to grow, some won't. That's a pretty big misalignment. Sometimes all the partners in the room will say they want to grow, and then you ask, how do you want to grow? And you'll see a fracture again in alignment. That's not a bad thing in and of itself. Unearthing that is an important value add. But my point to them is, if we can't address alignment in terms of what we're playing for here, designing the best growth strategy or comp plan or development plan or a whole host of other things we might work on together, succession plan, kind of falls by the wayside. It's pointless if we don't know what we're aligned to solving for.

Robert Morier: Is that lack of vision as a result of a lack of communication? You have to assume that these partners are talking to each other every day. They've done this, they've made this business together, they've taken this risk together. Why do you think that conversation hasn't happened?

Chris Brimsek: These are small partnerships that tend to be relatively collegial. I find that the higher collegial— the firms with the highest levels of collegiality also have the highest levels of avoidance. We like our partners. We don't want to have to confront them over issues where the can, can be kicked down the road. Defining exactly what we're playing for, whether we want to sell the firm in part or in whole, whether we want to move deeper into a promote-oriented strategy versus more of an AUM, asset gathering strategy, a whole list of other questions. We don't feel the need to address those answers, those questions until they're in front of us. In most cases, they don't feel like they're in front of us today. So why blow up a partnership or risk a really uncomfortable conversation if, uh, if we don't have to? But it causes people then to kind of continue to bound along without addressing some of the biggest, most impactful, you know, points of misalignment among that partnership.

Robert Morier: It sounds like you're doing some peer mediation.

Chris Brimsek: I certainly do part of that, and I'm no formal mediator, but I would say getting the truth out on the table is of course a really important and healthy starting point, you Some of the most value-add conversations I've been a part of have been some of the most uncomfortable for those partnerships. But on the back end of them, there's much more clarity that they've been able to bring into conversations around how to grow the firm, how to manage their team, whether to shift their investment strategy or not.

Robert Morier: So just some context for this part of the conversation. The industry has started using operational alpha as shorthand for the edge that comes from how a firm is built, not just what it buys. You've reframed— you have reframed what operational alpha means at the GP level. How do you define that operational edge, that operational alpha that a GP can bring to the relationship?

Chris Brimsek: Ultimately, it comes down to having clarity and a plan around growth strategy and people, to put it overly simply. You know, in the past I've talked about vision, which we just hit on. I think if you can't answer the question of where you're trying to take the firm, you know, other than we're trying to grow, which again, most people can't support that statement by articulating alignment in the room. Like, you can't motivate people with a vision if you can't articulate it amongst the partnership. I think you also have to think about the team management side. And, you know, I've talked in the past about I'm really focused on bringing lessons from the pro sports world into private equity because the bar is so low for how we manage our teams. You know, one of my favorite books is Dollar Sign on the Muscle, and it's about scouting and pro baseball and assigning a value to talent to figure out how to use the fixed currency you have to assemble a team that can win. We don't do that in private equity. How do I know? Because most people, when you look at their bonus pool by level, it's plus or minus 10%. There you go. That's our dollar sign on the muscle in this industry. And to me, I think that's a huge opportunity because our teams are the same size as some pro sports teams. Our franchise values can be the same, yet we're putting almost no work into understanding what the vision of our firm is. Defining the product strategy to help us get there. Asking ourselves what skill sets now and the future we need to have on field. Going out and finding those. Defining what the tools are that you need to have to demonstrate those. Evaluating them, rewarding them, and stepping back and saying, oh, we're making investors, not investments. That's the missing piece here. And I use sports because it's a pretty clean analogy, but also again to highlight We have some pretty high-value franchises in this industry, and our starting point for how we evaluate, scout, manage talent is pretty low when these are the people who are driving the value.

Robert Morier: Do you think it's because LPs will tend to focus on that one key decision maker rather than the investment committee or rather than the team? It, it arguably is a lot more difficult and it takes substantially more time to go through the process that you just laid out rather than just meeting with with one, you know, managing partner, one senior portfolio manager over multiple times. Maybe I'll pepper in a few analysts, I'll pepper in the COO so I hear the consistency, you know, in the answers that I'm asking. But when it comes to evaluating the one single rock star versus the team, it seems like we still do gravitate towards— is that just because it's more difficult or the, the, the fundamentals aren't quite there as they are in sports franchises. Like, I can measure on-base percentage, you know, for a baseball player. He may not be the best slugger, but I know he's going to get on base at least X amount of the time, so that's good for the team. What I guess the question after all of that rambling is, what are the metrics that the LP should utilize in order to understand whether that is a functional team? A good team, well-managed team?

Chris Brimsek: As a starting point in this industry, you have to be able to articulate what the end state skills are. I think if you went around to a lot of private equity firms and asked VPs and principals what the end state skills are that they need to have, you probably would get the logical on-paper answers that sound correct. But if you push on whether they're able to internalize and visualize what that looks like, Right. The, the business that we're in is an art more than a science. The math is the easy part. It's making the hard choice on the deal that I see. It's sitting in the room and recruiting the portfolio company leader or board member into your platform versus your peers. It's convincing the LP to come in when there's some headwinds. That's an art that I think people aren't able to articulate today, which is a starting point. Before we even start stacking what the tools are on top of that. Because, you know, a lot of firms around the industry will go around and you can outline— I need someone who can— to be a deal lead, you have to be able to source deals and sit on a board and be in the room with LPs and manage the deal team and present at IC. And you can kind of make this long list, but we're not translating that to kind of the lived reality of our teams. So I think as a starting point, if I'm an LP, I'm focused on How much of an understanding on this team, on this deal team, is there of the end state skills? What am I seeing from a team culture and operational standpoint that's reinforcing those along the way?

Robert Morier: Do you think the LP is getting enough time to be able to understand and ascertain that?

Chris Brimsek: The LP side of our industry is comprised of highly sophisticated groups with really organized diligence processes that spend a lot of time with teams. I think the solid allocators out there, this is definitely a question that's top of mind, but it's kind of like anything that requires judgment. You could spend a lot of hours in the room with a person or a team. It comes down to your own judgment at the end of the day of whether you think they have it or not.

Robert Morier: You suggest that delegation is a fourth pillar of operational alpha. What does delegation mean and how can it be improved?

Chris Brimsek: Yeah, one of the biggest challenges I see with that, that people struggle with in terms of delegation is they, they kind of muddle the difference between being in the room and owning the decision. So here's an example. At the partnership level, a lot of firms, as part of kind of a long lead time succession process, you'll see partners that get brought into firm-level decisions—recruiting, team management, comp, LP side letter negotiations, strategic extensions into new strategies, etc. That room is full of smart partners who are part of those discussions, but sometimes they're not actually tasked with owning how to get to the outcome or making and owning the decision itself. And so then when we go through succession, you see people who again would say, I've been in the room for a long time, but without having owned the decision, there's not the data points that you need to have confidence in that judgment. And so this is something I see a lot when you look on the deal team side of private equity firms. The investment committee has a lot of data points. Around someone's judgment. You bring deals to IC, you defend them. How are your deals performing? We use this to triangulate on your skill set and your judgment. When it comes to non-investing skills, if I don't have those data points, that judgment gap never closes. In the best case scenario, it's delegating a decision to somebody so that they can get reps. The short-form version of that is you create a process by which the people that you want to eventually delegate decisions to, at the very least, are bringing to you the initial position that they think that is— here's what the bonus pool should be, here's what we should do, here's how we should land that portfolio company CEO, here's what we should do on this LP side letter question. And the gap between what they propose and where you land might start to be kind of a— to be a large gap over time as they get reps and that gap closes to zero. This whole process of delegating not the final decision, but them owning the beginning of the conversation transfers to you being in a position to say, okay, this person can own that decision now.

Robert Morier: It never ceases to amaze me how the importance of people and the kind of the human interest of this industry, and despite the, the numbers behind it, as you said before, it's, it's so much art relative to science. And you've talked about shaping culture through the questions that leaders habitually ask. So this idea that when you probe for, for, for, for what you probe tells everyone what you're looking to accomplish as a business. What are the questions that GPs ask that you think will tell or give you a sign that this is going to be a successful organization?

Chris Brimsek: I think the best GP leaders, when they walk the floor in their businesses, ask what and how questions that tie to end-state decisions. So when you have an associate or VP that got a SIM yesterday, and you walk up to them, don't ask them for the analysis. Don't ask them for a project management update. Ask them, what would you pay for this deal? And you might get some stuttering in response, which is fine because they got this in yesterday. But we're in the business of making investment decisions and pricing risk. And what happens is if you expect what you inspect, which really is kind of the driving theme here around using questions to signal what's important to you, if you ask what and how questions around end state decisions, People learn over time as they give subpar answers to those questions that, hey, I'm probably going to get asked this question. I probably need to develop a view. I probably need to articulate that view, which is both important for learning and establishing those, those data judgment points. Right. And so again, it's the types of questions like, what would you pay for the deal? Hey, I've got dinner tonight with this independent board member we're trying to recruit into one of our portfolio companies. Here's the situation. How would you land them? We just got this, you know, LP side letter redline from their attorney that's outrageous. What would your response be to that? And again, the expectation is not that the person, junior, mid-level, or even senior, necessarily has the full answer, but the signaling you're doing is, this is what's important to me, this is what the end state skills are.

Robert Morier: How does a firm build that genuine feedback loop? Because I can hear the analyst on the other side of that conversation potentially giving the answer that that managing partner wants to hear. So how do you promote that type of trust within an organization where the feedback loop is without the, uh, nervousness?

Chris Brimsek: Debriefs are the answer. So I actually wrote a white paper on this with a great thought partner of mine, Hasard Lee. So Hasard's a fighter pilot, he was the F-35 chief of training systems and a Wall Street Journal bestselling author. One of the things that we talked about in his paper, which originated in his book, is in the fighter pilot community, debriefs are central to everything they do. If they do a 1-hour flight, they might debrief for 3 hours or 3 days after that. We debrief almost nothing in this industry. Our version of a debrief is a case study on a deal after we exit. A 1-page highlighting the exit returns and kind of 3 sentences about how great we are in terms of the value-add we delivered, which is part of marketing collateral. We don't debrief internally, and I think it's the missed opportunity because the debrief is a really simple thing to accomplish, and I'll explain it in 30 seconds. You get everyone in the room or virtually in the room, titles fall away, anyone can talk. You're there to talk about the problem, the good or bad outcome, not the people. And there's 3 components. Hasard describes it as an ACE debrief: assess, choose, execute. 3 Questions. Assess: did you see the right picture? Choose: did you make the right choice if you saw the right picture? Execute: if you saw the right picture and made the right choice, did you execute it properly? Whether things went well or they didn't, if you debrief in front of the team, you will get lessons learned. I think the most important part of it though is that the most senior members of the team highlight their own mistakes. We live in an industry where people feel like if I keep my head down and I don't make mistakes, then I'll be successful. What happens there is people don't stick their neck out, they don't develop conviction, they don't develop judgment data points about themselves that people can use later to elevate them. And then when they lift their head up later, they have no idea what the end state skills are. We instead need people to see, oh, senior leaders have made mistakes. They're encouraging us to take risk because they're highlighting their own mistakes. They're signaling what matters to developing end state skills. The debrief is a really powerful tool. And again, with AI, there's a lot of different ways you can do it quite efficiently.

Robert Morier: How can you do it more efficiently?

Chris Brimsek: You know, depending on what your compliance lawyer says, you could pick any number of standing meetings, your Monday morning pipeline call, your IC meetings, your internal strategy conversations, and have AI transcribe 'em and run, you know, ACE debriefs as you talk through, you know, hey, I went to dinner last night, we didn't land that independent board member we were trying to recruit in. Okay, let's have you and I have a conversation about it and we get that transcribed and you have AI run the debrief, the ACE debrief, just to highlight it. And the point there is not in the individual situation that you necessarily drive world-changing conclusions, but when you do this over a pattern of time, you both develop insights from those patterns, but again, you are signaling to the team what matters. These are end-state skills and decisions. Risk-taking matters to us. Sticking your neck out and having conviction are critical. We're willing to make mistakes.

Robert Morier: Something I wanted to talk about is succession planning. So when allocators come on the show and we talk about, you know, evaluating what a succession plan looks like with a GP, whether it's in private markets or public markets, it arguably starts with economics. You know, like, how are you thinking about exiting this business over time? Do you think that's the way that LPs should be approaching the conversation around succession? What questions should they be asking to understand what that process should look like or will look like, or I guess can look like?

Chris Brimsek: Succession, regardless who's talking about it, tends to center structurally on the transfer economics and governance. In my view, it's much more about the transfer of knowledge and vision, right? When you go back to what we talked about earlier, You have senior-level investors where you have a high level of confidence in them because of all the data points at investment committee about their investment judgment. And then we sit down and talk about their ability to run a firm where we have limited or no data points. There's a huge trust gap that starts from the beginning. And if we early and often don't lean into the apprenticeship model, it's kind of where you end up in a lot of situations where you have people that are focused on transferring governance and economics. And what happens is there's miscommunications. And in any scenario where GP succession is happening in earnest, in my view, people tend to be solving for the same thing. We want a respectful transfer of the leadership of this firm with the right structure and economics transfer over time. The reality is you get founders that feel like they're getting pushed out and you feel like next— and next-gen people who feel like they're not being trusted enough. That creates a lot of miscommunication and misunderstandings that cause those processes to go sideways. That if you had started years prior building confidence through delegation on firm-level, non-investment decisions, you're going to be at a better place to have an honest conversation. The thing I always remind people of on GP succession, because it's such a delicate, highly material, high probability of failure exercise in this industry. If you're sitting at the table discussing or negotiating GP succession internally, what a flattering thing that is. The founder or founders have decided the next gen are the people that are in a position to take over a firm they founded. I don't know a bigger compliment in this industry where compliments are few and far between. And for the founder, you've had people come to you, develop under you, cut their teeth under you, say, we want to continue to buy in and own and run this thing. That we've helped build with you. That gets lost in the structuring discussion. Again, governance and economics are critical outputs of succession. And so if I'm a GP or if I'm an LP observing it— and by the way, when you talk to a lot of LPs, I'm hearing them much more focused on this now. It's not just succession through the lens of the key person or required involvement criteria in an LPA. It's what does that bench really look like in the next 3 years When I look at the VP and principal group at a deal, on a deal team, the next 3 years, am I going to see the next partner come out of that group from an investment standpoint? When I look at that group and the partner group, in the next 3 to 5+ years, am I going to see the future managing partners of the firm come out of that group? There's a lot more focus, to my point earlier on, my capital's locked up, it always has been for a long period of time in this industry, with talent mobility being higher than ever. Competition being higher than ever. I need to be confident that you're going to have a competitive and growing business that's going to have the right people around the table to manage out the portfolio in the future.

Robert Morier: When do those conversations— when should they start? You had mentioned years before, and do they start at the inception of the firm?

Chris Brimsek: Yeah, I think succession starts day one. When you think of it about, you know, ultimately succession is predicated on having the right people around the table who've developed the right skill set, where there's the right confidence by the people handing off the firm in their judgment, And to do that, you've probably delegated over time. I mean, these are textbook things that we would all like to have around how we operate in our culture and how we select our teams. But again, we're starting from such a low bar in the industry. We need to splash some cold water on our faces and say, hey, if we didn't start focusing on succession day one and we're 10 or 20 years into the business, that's fine. But today is the next best day to start focusing on it.

Robert Morier: Dakota Recommends is your source for the highest quality coffee shops, restaurants, hotels, and event spaces in every major city where business happens. Dakota Recommends is thoughtfully curated by our team who has been traveling and hosting events in the investment industry for over 25 years. Log in to Dakota Marketplace today to see how Dakota Recommends can help you make your next trip better. Let's talk a little bit about GP seeding and staking. It's gone from a niche corner of the industry to a maturing asset class. Even if you just look at the guests on this show over the last year and a half, uh, we've had increasingly more folks focusing on GP seeding and staking, and not just in private equity, in hedge funds, venture capital. Um, there were 164 private markets GP transactions in 2025. That was up roughly 40% year over year. And another recent survey found that 77% of GPs plan to, uh, plan a stake divestiture in the next 2 years. Uh, most of them selling minority positions under 25%. A lot of activity going on, not just last year, but it looks like in the next 2 years ahead. So from your advisory vantage point, what are the underwriting questions that most staking firms are not asking, but they should be, particularly given how many calls that these GPs are now receiving?

Chris Brimsek: The staking space is highly sophisticated. You know, there's not that many firms in that space. They're all very active and their teams are comprised of very experienced folks. So I think their diligence product, like they're probably asking the right questions where I would probably focus if I were to give them unsolicited advice. I go back to the vision for the firm piece. I talk to a lot of firms who are either considering a stake or in some cases have already sold a stake. The high prevalence of them still not being aligned on what the vision for their firm is, is interesting, especially for those firms that have already sold a stake, right? Because as part of that process, there's— you're bringing in a minority investor, you're aligning on where you're trying to go. You can still deliver against what they're underwriting in that investment in terms of growing the firm, growing your fees, Everyone can be happy, but there's still— I cannot say enough how much misunderstanding there is of the misalignment in this industry on what people are trying to get out of these firms. And that's not a bad thing unless it never comes to light. So that'd be the first, the first thing I'd put even more emphasis on, which again, they probably do, but I'd double down on that. The second point is, again, I'd go back to look at that. You know, if I had an hour to go into a GP aside from talking to the heads of the firm about vision for the firm. I'd walk the floor and I'd talk to especially VPs and principals, and I'd ask them those what and how questions we talked about earlier around end state skills with the sole goal of assessing, again, is the next deal leader partner coming out of that group in the next 3 years? Is the next firm head coming out of that group in 5 to 7 years potentially?— that's where I get a read on whether it's a team operating based on the capital formation, deal finding, deal execution skill set of a few people at the top, or whether it's an actual business that's been predicated on making investors that can scale.

Robert Morier: And how do those answers inform the way that a GP seeding or staking business approaches the terms of the actual deal itself? So arguably one of the most complicated aspects of this whole process is the fact that at some point you're going to have to sit down across the table from these managing partners, not necessarily the underlying team, but the, you know, the people who are running the day-to-day that have the most economic interest, and you're asking them to give up some of those economics. So how do those answers inform the way that you approach that, that term negotiation?

Chris Brimsek: I'm not a banker or broker-dealer, so I don't sit in the middle of those transactions. I think what I would say through my observations is that there's a lot of different flavors in the GP staking space. Some are meant to be perpetual hold and some are meant to be sold back to the management team or to a strategic in 3 to 5 years. Determining what the vision of your firm is, is pretty important to evaluating what flavor of staking partnership you're looking for because probably the biggest driver for staking is— one of the biggest drivers is an aspect of liquidity. Who doesn't build a firm and want to get liquidity at some point? So that might bring you to the table on staking. But again, asking yourself where you're trying to take the firm or where your partners are trying to take the firm really matters in identifying the style, terms, duration of the type of minority investment that you might bring into the business.

Robert Morier: It felt like initially it was very much about cashing out the founders. Now, increasingly, it's about bringing in capital to increase the productivity of distribution. You know, so you're, you're, you're hiring or working alongside or taking on an investor from a GP staking or seeding perspective who's also going to bring you hopefully some, some distribution momentum. So when you think about distribution and the challenges that the industry has very well documented, experienced, both in private markets and public markets. How do you see the evolution of distribution now that we're kind of in the second, going into the second half of, of 2026? Where does the importance of or the challenges around distribution sit currently? And what do you think your outlook is?

Chris Brimsek: I want to make another point on staking that I feel really strongly about. You hear some LPs talk about alignment because we were talking about motivations for staking, right? Sometimes it's liquidity. Sometimes it's growth capital, sometimes it's value add, including on the distribution side, which we'll come back to. I struggle a little bit when I hear people get concerned about alignment about founder— with regard to founders of GPs getting liquidity. Because when you look at any other industry, Series C, Series D founders, these are younger firms that are probably cash flow negative. We have no problem giving founders of those firms liquidity. Private equity, you build a GP over 20 years that's consistently profitable. You want to sell a minority percentage of the business. Some of that is secondary to get you liquidity. Some of that's primary to be used as growth capital for the firm or for other purposes like the GP commit. And people want to throw their arms up and ask about and say, "I'm concerned about alignment." I'm not sure I buy that so much. I think we're holding ourselves maybe to too high of a standard there, especially when you consider we have this third leg of currency. We have cash, we have equity, but we have carry., which is arguably and probably most widely accepted to be the driving aligning factor in our industry.

So I just wanted to make that point because, you know, that's not a universal point to say staking deals are always right or wrong, but when people push back on alignment issues with them, I, I don't buy it.

Robert Morier: What are your concerns around the proliferation of GP stakes and seeding? It seems like a lot of businesses who weren't in the business before are getting into it. Specifically, um, it— again, from the outside looking in, I'm very much an outsider looking in, um, but it seems that there's been this, um, evolution of fund of funds moving out of fund of funds, traditional fund of funds, into more GP staking and seeding models. Arguably very different businesses. So when you think about the proliferation of these, uh, organizations coming online, you know, where do see the concerns that an LP should be paying attention to?

Chris Brimsek: If you want to take the negative view, there's two things I think about on the GP seeding side. Like we talked about earlier, do we risk incentivizing people who want to make investments to step into an arena where they're supposed to be making investors and they're building firms when they might be better off being independent sponsors? There, there could be kind of a misalignment there from a GP seeding standpoint. I'm not saying I'm not saying that's my view on GP seeding. I'm saying that's a negative view one could have there. I think on the staking side, the negative view one could have, which I don't subscribe to, but I think you could articulate is if you and I went and launched a firm today and were somewhat successful and we raised a Fund 1 and we upsized to Fund 2, there's a world in which we sell a stake in our firm before we see a dollar of carry out of those funds. And I'm sure the staking world would say that's not common or never happens. This is just articulating the negative view. And so someone having that perspective might say, does this incentivize people to kind of run for an AUM grab so that you can cash out a piece of the business and keep moving? I don't hold that as my view, but that's for the sake of argument. I think it's important to realize there are people out there who think that way.

Robert Morier: One of the things that for whatever set of reasons tends to get lost in all of this is that the underlying GPs are looking to raise money. They're raising capital. They want to launch a new fund. You know, they want to build up and, you know, buy a new trade order management system, whatever they're looking to do. But the GP seeder and staker also has to raise money. You know, they also have to raise money from outside investors in order to deploy into these underlying seeding and staking businesses. How do we approach fundraising in an environment that over the last, you know, 24 months or so has become incredibly difficult?

Chris Brimsek: One of the pain points that I'm seeing right now among, you know, growing firms are those that have anchored either deeply in institutional capital in the past or those that have anchored in, you know, the retail family office space in the past, trying to kind of cross the bridge to the other side and experiencing some pain points in recognizing the differences in selling into those different LP markets. You know, larger firms are able to do this quite consistently because of their scale and their ability to build teams and capabilities around this. But if you're a smaller GP, even a couple billion under management, you know, the fundraising apparatus you've built, the skill sets and personalities you've built, the reporting cadence you've built, importantly, the product strategy and product structures you've built, for example, might align well to large institutional investors that allocate on the cycles that you're used When I have folks that sit in that end of the spectrum that move into retail, you know, there's a lot of learning that has to happen. How do you show up in the room with the country club or wherever you're making the pitch? Maybe more importantly, it's at the end of the day, a lot of RIAs are in the business of like all of us growing their business. So they need new content as they recruit clients into their platforms, both within alts but also other products that they're offering. And so the fear that I see from some folks who are historically institutionally heavy in their capital raising, as they move into retail, they get onto some great platforms and go, "Shoot, if we're not back every year with something interesting, a co-invest, an SMA, another fund, we might start to be deprioritized on this retail platform." That materially affects your whole business. Are you going to change your product strategy and structure or not? Are you going to change your fundraising team or not, or supplement them? Do you need— if you're going to change your product strategy, how does it affect your team and your incentives? So there's, I'm sure there's some people out there that would say, Chris, we happily raise capital from all LP markets without issue. I would say from my seat, I'm seeing others who are maybe struggling to translate it.

Robert Morier: That helps. Thank you so much. You've mentioned sports a few times now, and I wanted to ask you a little bit about sports investing. Uh, it seems like it's a theme that most of the LPs that we're talking to have been at least exploring to a certain extent. Some, uh, think it's a little expensive, uh, others think it might be a little early, but where do you see, uh, sports investing right now? Now, but specifically in private markets, um, as it relates to kind of what inning are we in? We'll use a sports analogy. What inning are we in, and where do you think this could potentially go?

Chris Brimsek: The driving bigger picture theme is AI is supposed to create more leisure time for people. More leisure time means more demand for content consumption. Sports is a critical backbone of content. You add to that the fixed inventory and leagues that exist or are created, the big terminal value outcomes we've seen for team sales and other property sales in the last number of years in that space. There's probably a lot of other layers to that thesis, but that's kind of what underpins it. I think there are going to be winners and losers just like everything else. You know, not to be too funny about it, but I was in a pizza shop recently and ESPN 8 de Ocho was on and there was a professional pillow fight happening. And not to upset There's probably a private equity firm behind that. Personally, that's not a sentence I ever thought I would've said in my life, that I was watching a professional pillow fight on ESPN 8 de Ocho. I don't know where it ends. I think there's probably some great sports investing theses out there that are delivering. And at some point, like in any new investment strategy, you're going to find the threshold where there's diminishing returns or you've kind of outrun the demand for the content you're creating. I don't know where that is, but I think it's something that everyone is starting to keep an eye on. And then, you know, for me, I focus more on— there's private equity dollars going into sports, not to beat a dead horse, but I care about sports knowledge coming into our industry on how we build and run our teams.

Robert Morier: Chris, thank you so much. Really interesting, you know, particularly when it comes to new industries and new areas of the market that are growing and developing. We're in, you know, I'm not going to date this episode too much, but we're in the middle of the summer or getting early in the middle of the summer. What do you think the next 5 years look like in terms of the alternative investment landscape? And based on what you consult on, what are going to be the most important factors that firms need to focus on that you think are really going to drive their success?

Chris Brimsek: First and foremost, which wouldn't surprise you, the firms that I think are going to be successful 10+ years from now are the ones that again are focused on making investors, not investments. It's just a philosophical difference in how you build and run your business. I think maybe from a more strategic product standpoint, a lot of people are thinking through different product roadmaps. Again, to the flexibility piece, I might be top quartile in widget buyouts today. If that market trades away, what new opportunities am I looking to capture? What flexibility am I looking to build in? So people spend a lot of time or spending more time thinking about new product. I've got a whole set of criteria I've developed over many, many product launches throughout my career, and I always get asked kind of like, what are the top 3 reasons product launches fail? Which ties into how people are thinking about surviving and thriving in the next 5 to 10 years. The 3 that stand out to me are— I call them the 3 misses. Misalignment of partners, which you wouldn't be surprised for me to say, that ties into vision of firm. Miscalculation and distraction costs. Does it really cost you that much less or more to manage a $5 million or a $50 million or a $500 million or a $5 billion vehicle, plus the distraction cost of the senior team's time, plus the investment committee when you launch a new product that might want you to run at a bunch of deals to get comfort with the space before making a decision? So there's the miscalculation, distraction costs, and then there's the misreading of anchor traps, which is LPs leading people into new strategies. Which is not good or bad in and of itself. There's a lot of success cases there. I think the short point there is when an existing LP calls you to our conversation earlier and says, hey, maybe I want you to extend in some other things that are both interesting for me and that I think probably help bolster your business in the long run. Sometimes you see GPs lower their standards strategically in terms of should I be getting into this product or not? So they'll rush into it. They'll get the first 10 or 20% of the fund from this anchor, and then they realize they've signed up for a fundraise in a strategy that they hadn't fully decided to go all in on or was the best use of their time and resources. And so again, firms that focus on making investors, not investments, you want to avoid the 3 misses. Uh, and it's— as someone who lives out west, I would say water infrastructure is— not to be prescriptive about an interesting investment opportunity, but from a thematic standpoint, something where I think we need more smart minds, both on the public side and the private side, paying attention to that space to figure out some solutions because we're on a shorter timeline than we think there.

Robert Morier: Thank you for sharing that, and thank you for all of today's observations. They're very helpful. We wish you nothing but continued success with your business. Thank you for being here, sharing your thoughts. We have a couple more questions for you though before we let you go. You mentioned going out west. So in Denver, if we were going to come out and visit you in Denver, uh, we'd like to recommend restaurants and things to do, particularly, uh, for GPs that are looking to drum up some business from LPs in the greater Denver area. So what are some of the places we should be going to or visiting when we're in Denver, whether it's a restaurant or just a spot to see?

Chris Brimsek: Yeah, you'll find me at Elway Steakhouse.

Robert Morier: Is that, uh, because of John, or is the food that good?

Chris Brimsek: Food's really good. Any place else? Shanahan's is another steakhouse if you come out west. And you're not a vegan or vegetarian, I highly think— highly recommend you should be eating steak or bison.

Robert Morier: You played both lacrosse and rugby when you were an undergraduate. So if you were recommending that sport to someone who's coming up, what would you recommend? I like rugby.

Chris Brimsek: I think there's nothing more humbling than being on a field where you can be of average size or smaller and have a 6-foot-8, 250-pound person help you realize you're maybe not as strong or good as you think you are. I think it helps knock down some barriers a little bit and, and be honest about where you fit within a team.

Robert Morier: And how about some advice for students? We have a couple who are in our studio audience today. So students listening, which has become an increasingly growing part of the audience, what's some advice you'd give them, particularly those thinking about jobs in financial services? It's been increasingly more difficult for them to secure internship and to secure that entry-level job. So any advice would be great.

Chris Brimsek: Try as many things as you can, which is advice that I've gotten, especially in your 20s. Try as many things as you can, which feeds into the second point, because I think you should be developing what you think is a lifelong skill set. Going back to my whole end state skills thing, if you determine what you're passionate about and what you want to become an expert in, everyone needs to become an expert in one or more things, and most of us aren't, don't realize it. It. But if you do that proactively and you look at your career in decades, it allows you to look at job opportunities, investment opportunities, entrepreneurial opportunities through the lens of how they're servicing your lifelong goal of enhancing that skill set and making it easier every year that goes on to decide how you want to employ it. Instead of saying, I'm going to go get a job at some firm, see what skills and opportunities it creates for me, and then reactively follow a path that's laid out for me. I go back to the best advice I was ever given: you gotta— you have to take a bet on yourself at some point.

Robert Morier: Chris, thank you again for being here. Again, congratulations on all your success. Thank you for flying to Philadelphia. Thank you for being in our studio, and thank you for taking time.

Chris Brimsek: Thanks for having me, Robert.

Robert Morier: If you would like to learn more about Chris and CAB Advisory, please visit their website at cabadvisoryllc.com. You can find this episode and past episodes on Spotify, Apple, or your favorite podcast platform. We are also on YouTube if you prefer to watch while you listen, and you can always visit us at dakota.com for more content. Chris, thank you again for being here. And to our audience, thank you for investing your time with Dakota. Don't say goodbye.