

Interview with Chip Carey

[00:00:00] With 46 years of experience in the ski industry, Chip Carey has held positions at many ski resorts across the country. He worked at Sugarloaf for more than 26 years, in rolls in sales, marketing and public relations. He also took on the position of vice president of marketing and sales for the Canyons Resort in Utah, enabling him to be part of the Salt Lake Olympics in 2002, when the NBC Today Show broadcasted live from the canyons for 14 consecutive days. For four years, he worked as senior V.P. of marketing for the American Ski Company across a network of eight resorts, using his wide range of skills to build brands and revenues from his experience building Sugarloaf as a ski destination. Despite the mountain's remote location to the launching of new brands, Chip Carey has been involved in many aspects of ski resort operation. His experience made him a standout candidate for his most recent position as the chief marketing officer at the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort. Throughout his career, Carey has placed an emphasis on staying up to date with technology and trends to best reach customers and customize experiences and most importantly, for me personally. He hired me in 1984 to work for him at Sugarloaf, and I had the distinct pleasure of learning from him on a daily basis through 1991 when he was instrumental in helping me launch Nancy Marshall Communications and he was my client throughout the 1990s. Chip and I have had a lot of great times, and I think you're going to hear in our conversation today how we still have this chemistry of fun but serious pursuit of excellence in public relations and marketing.

[00:01:52] Welcome to the PR Maven podcast. A podcast all about growing your network and building your brand through traditional and digital networking techniques. I'm Nancy Marshall, the PR Maven and CEO of Marshall Communications. I've been strengthening brands through PR for over 35 years and now I'm celebrating the success of executives, influencers, business owners and entrepreneurs from all around the world, all of whom have cultivated their brands and broadened their networks through traditional and digital networking methods. Each week I interview one of these interesting and influential individuals and provide an opportunity for you, the PR Maven Nation, to gain insights from their strategies and stories, so stay tuned for this week's episode. And thanks for listening.

[00:02:53] So, Chip, to kick things off. Tell us about your career and how you got into it in the first place.

[00:02:59] I went skiing. Got out of college and went skiing. That's my career. And I just happen to be able to make a living doing it. And a lot of various different things. But photography is what got me into marketing and PR and was a love that I like to do. And I was an amateur and I turned into semi pro photography and that opened all the doors for me.

[00:03:22] So you were back at Sugarloaf. This was in the 70s.

[00:03:26] Yeah. 1971, 71. Yeah. And I just came in as a as a waiter and at the Sugarloaf Inn and saw what was going on. I had done some research and knew what Harry Baxter likes. I went up to him to try to figure out how I could ski free. And I knew he'd like to have some PR. He'd like PR a lot. So he didn't have a job for me. So I had hooked up with another friend who knew Harry and he was an Eastern ski writer. And we decided we concocted a story and told Harry that last year when I was in North Conway, I used to send photos down to the Lynn Item Newspaper and of people up there on ski weeks from Lynn. And this Bill Beaten guy told Harry about me and Harry up the door. And when the opportunity came, I ended up in a job.

[00:04:24] Well, I mean, this is going to be such a hard conversation for me because there's so much. Alright. So, first of all, you just touched on hometown stories. And, you know, because I've learned so much about PR from you over the years, I know that, you know, the hometown newspapers always want to know the stories of hometown people. So that was one of the things I learned from you.

[00:04:45] Yeah. Yeah. I mean, back in those days, you looked at, you know, how are you going to get your stuff in front of people? And we knew local people, local papers like to talk about local people.

[00:04:55] And so we used to send every time we had ski races, we do the same thing.

[00:05:00] We'd go out and we knew where the people were from. We'd look in our little media guide, send photos there. And then they loved that. So we a lot of you know, we didn't score The Boston Globe all the time with those type of stories because they didn't

want a little hometown stuff. But the outer, the smaller papers that don't exist anymore. We see a lot of coverage.

[00:05:20] Right. And of course, in those days, there was no Internet. So you were shooting photos with film and then developing them in the darkroom and then putting them in the mail.

[00:05:30] Oh, yeah.

[00:05:30] Put them in the mail or send with runners. Sounds so absurd. Yeah. Oh yeah. Runners. That was another thing is you had a whole network of runners that would deliver. And you were one of them sometimes. Yeah right, I know, I can remember sometimes when you would send me out on the road and I was like “oh, the driving is really bad.” and you were like “We are in the ski business so we drive regardless of conditions.”

[00:05:53] Yeah, it was. Snow always brought us a good opportunity to get something out into the into the papers and on TV. And so we had to go if it was snowing, we had great photos. And that's what skiers love, snow. So you take pictures of snow. And the thing is that skiing was being underrepresented in the state of Maine, at the time, in my opinion, at least from a PR side. And I always looked at skiing, probably because of my back time as a very visual sport. And so, you know, I was still photographer, but when I when I finally got the opportunity to get in, one of the officers at Sugarloaf, I found a 16-millimeter camera and that opened up television for me. And that was really awesome.

[00:06:43] Right. And then, so speaking of being a runner, then you figured out and again, you taught me like how to get photos or video down to the Weather Channel.

[00:06:53] Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. On airplanes and stuff like that. But, you know, if you think about it, I mean, it's all about building relationships. You know, it was. You know, I didn't just start sending stuff, you know, sixteen millimeter film to the TV stations that were going ahead and visit them and warning them that was coming and open up relationships and no matter what you do, our business of marketing and PR is all about communications. And if you're not communicating with the people all the time on a

regular basis, you're not going to you're not going to build a relationship you're going to need when you really want to have something done for you.

[00:07:32] Well, I'm just I'm just smiling because people who have been listening to the PR Maven Podcasts will now know where all of this came from, because the whole premise of this podcast is about building relationships and building your network both in person, which is again, your strength and also online. And that has become your strength also so that you have to do it both ways and also don't just go meet somebody when you need something. And you know what our friend Bill Green talks about the first time that Chip Carey walked into Channel Six.

[00:08:08] Oh, I remember that day so well. Nancy. Yeah, it's quite funny. What happened? Well, well, he was just out of school, right.

[00:08:17] And he was sitting at the desk there all dressed up in a suit and tie. I can remember he was just sitting there. Young guy. I was young also. And I walked in. Those days I had a big bushy beard and I had long hair and he really didn't know what was coming at him. But we ended up striking a pretty good relationship.

[00:08:37] And you still have that relationship today?

[00:08:39] I still have a relationship today. And Bill's been a really solid one. But there's a lot of them that I build by. But the thing was, I always made sure I gave them what they wanted. And you only know that by getting to know the people. And that's part of that communications. Okay. If you if you can't send somebody X when all they're interested in is A, okay. You need to know what they're interested in, what what they write about or what they what they show on television, what they display on the Internet or wherever you know in thier. And once you know that, you know, you're you you know those people, you can build a really solid relationship. And, you know, you've talked about. Yeah. Can I just go to D-base?

[00:09:29] Yeah D-base three plus. The database.

[00:09:32] The database. Yeah. In those days, there was no such thing as Salesforce or any type of program like that. And as we talked earlier, we had to build our own

database back in those days. And one of the things that really helped me and you know, and it was also those days when people thought was a toy. You. That RadioShack machine, you know, and things like that. And people were playing Atari. You know, they were games. That's what they thought we wanted him for. So we'd play games. But in reality, you know, I could go in and, you know, a writer, a newscaster or photographers, because I also do a lot of work with a lot of photographers. And anything I found out about them, I would come back and I'd put it in my database. Oh, I found out that their kid's name was Joe. Or, I found out. Oh, you got to be sure you know the wife's name, you know. And if they had it, they're really into animals. What's the pet name? So in this D-base, we're always adjusting the fields, available fields.

[00:10:35] And so if I was going to call somebody, I could just flick on my little database three and take five minutes for it to come up and look and say, well, I ahead of time.

[00:10:47] Oh, you know, so-and-so. His wife's name's.

[00:10:51] Josephine or something, you know, that they love their dogs or cats. And once you do that, you start building good relationships with people.

[00:10:59] And you also had in there whether they were interested in cross-country skiing or snowshoeing or Nordic or golf, tennis and all the different interests and so.

[00:11:10] I kind of left that out because I assumed that that would be known. But yeah. It was targeted. Yeah, yeah. Very targeted.

[00:11:17] But you know, in life you need to know, you know, they always say that it's always best to know your enemy. Okay. And so when you come to marketing for get off PR just little bit, it's the same thing you need know your customer.

[00:11:31] Right. And the more you know about your customer, the better you can communicate with them, especially in this day and age. You're wasting so much money if you don't if you don't know your customer.

[00:11:41] And if you're not targeting very specifically to their interests. And of course, the Internet has made that really much easier.

[00:11:52] And we'll get probably into the into today a little bit later, probably. Right. You know, the old days, a lot of work. I think today [00:12:00] is actually easier.

[00:12:01] Yeah, it is. Although we are expected to do more because it is easier. So it's yeah, it's assumed that you do things a lot faster. But yeah, when I think about, you know, the mimeograph machine to make copies of the press releases and then envelopes with stamps and the press kits that we would send out 1,600 press kits and the smell of the smell of the fax machine, the fax machine when the thing was spinning around and take 10 minutes to scan one page.

[00:12:35] But that was great because all of a sudden we didn't have to sit on the phone and dictate a story about we had a lot of races that should go off in those days. Well they actually still have a lot now. But we'd call in the results and we'd give them a story. And we used to have to dictate it. And what a pain in the butt that was and time consuming. And then we started you know figure out oh there's a fax machine.

[00:13:00] And in some cases, I actually bought people fax machines so they'd have them on the other end to save me time.

[00:13:05] Oh, wow. And also, I remember you used to hook up into the phone line up on the slopes that I think that was a little bit. Maybe we shouldn't talk about that, but that you started transmitting photos to the Associated Press.

[00:13:20] Yeah, I was fortunate again, because I built some relationships here. I mean, again, you're going to hear this over and over again.

[00:13:29] I built relationships with both AP, UPI, and probably the only PR guy in the whole United States that had an AP and a UPI machine in my office that I could send photos out anytime I wanted to.

[00:13:47] Right, Pat Wellenbach

[00:13:48] Yeah. And Gene Lumin. Yeah. And yeah. Yeah. And the thing is, you know, they end up getting a string of up in the Sugarloaf area. So something happened up

there that called me up and I would go out and shoot it for them. And I wouldn't charge him. I just go out and shoot it as, you know, as a favor. And they always treated us pretty well.

[00:14:10] Right. Well, you had that figured out, too.

[00:14:15] And then the other thing that it makes me think about is how you always said to tell the visual story, make sure to make it visual. And that was the key for television, certainly, but also even in newspapers that get above the fold.

[00:14:27] Yeah, exactly. I mean, again, photography, background. So, you know, skiing and people want to see. I always kept saying even in the early days of the Web, you know?

[00:14:37] And if you read an article in New York Times that we have on the Sugarloaf website that we're quoted as saying, you know, next year. So we're in 1994. So next year we're gonna have video.

[00:14:51] Yeah right.

[00:14:53] No, really, streaming didn't really become fashionable until well into the 2000s. But we were we were always trying to push it.

[00:15:01] Yeah. Well, Sugarloaf had the first Web site in the ski business, didn't it, in the cold country.

[00:15:06] Well, it was your first full HTML color Web site done, right?

[00:15:11] Yeah. So. Yeah. So one thing I think that you are and have always been known for is staying on top of technical technology to enable communications and public relations.

[00:15:22] Mm hmm.

[00:15:23] Well, and I think it's true to this day that people better stay on top of it because that's where it's at. And, you know, I mentioned a little bit earlier that I think it's easier today. I think technology has made it the marketing people's job much easier. You don't have to go on the road in a snowstorm.

[00:15:43] You don't have to process 97 rolls of film and, you know, in a hurry.

[00:15:50] Time is, you know, that's news. That was the other thing is that that nobody likes yesterday's news. So if you weren't delivering those things in and sending the photos and stories and you wait a day or two and put it in the mail, not going to run, you know, enough to get it run anyways. But technology is a marketers friend and I'm obviously a PR friend.

[00:16:15] Exactly. And I still, you know, in my agency to this day have always said, we've got to stay on top of this. We've got to. You know, and now with social media, you've got to stay on top of this. You can't just rest on our laurels and do what we did yesterday.

[00:16:31] It's interesting about social media, because in my roles later in life, it is everybody was trying to put social media under PR. And I was never a believer in that.

[00:16:48] Okay, I thought social media belonged under the marketing as a subset and not the PR. PR uses social media. There's absolutely no question. It's a great vehicle for it. But what we could do is social as far as the information that we could get on our customers and our guests and who are the lookalikes. Okay. And you know, we have a set of data points on our people and how you can run those data points to find other people just like the people already have. I mean, to me, that's what makes marketing so much easier today.

[00:17:22] And quite frankly, you know, when I was retiring, you know, from we've actually, you know, a full-time job. If we were. We'd let the computers place everything they had to make a decision. All I do is make sure I had the, knew the profile that we're looking for. And then we'd go find those people very targeted, very specific. Would we change the profiles at time? Absolutely, for certain situations.

[00:17:49] But and we didn't have to make a decision. We didn't say, well, we're going to put it on Pandora. Is it going to go on? You know, they'd even put it on still the some of the more traditional media: television, radio and newspaper.

[00:18:02] But mostly there'd be online, very targeted. And you get results and you can analyze it.

[00:18:09] Oh, yeah. It's like a constant research program, like an ongoing focus group. And I think so many people miss that. They don't pay any attention. They're Google Analytics. They're like, oh, yeah, our web company does that.

[00:18:21] It's like, uh.

[00:18:24] Oh, yeah. It's telling you so much.

[00:18:26] I mean, I mean I would let the agencies dig most of that because I didn't have the time to do it, but I knew what to be looking for. That's for sure. And probably that's because of my technical background when I was in school.

[00:18:40] That's right. Yeah. Well, you've got a curious mind, too. And I don't think your mind ever really rests.

[00:18:50] I know that as long as I was working for you, I didn't rest either.

[00:18:55] I was reminiscing today about when I had my son Craig, who's turning 27,
[00:19:00] and I think I was in labor.

[00:19:04] I was on the phone with you. Oh, we gotta get one more thing done, one more thing before that baby comes. Nancy, you're gonna pay me as a bad guy. A driver. No.

[00:19:16] I went along with it because and I you know, I I learned from you. I'm like that now.

[00:19:21] So, you know, to that point, when I joined Jackson Hole Mountain Resort as a CMO, it was just when people were accepting social media. People hadn't really jumped into it wholeheartedly at the corporate level because they were afraid of it. OK. You know, the leaders, the other executives on the team and stuff were really afraid of it and thought it would hurt us. And they really didn't understand it.

[00:19:50] And in reality, it. And then they say, oh, you're going to save money. Oh, yeah. And then they started getting interest a little bit more and. But the thing was at the end, I said. I need more staff. Because we have to if you're going to do good social programs, you've got to be there all the time and any you know, in a place like Jackson Hole, you know, you're going after you have to produce content and producing content. You know, that programming is very labor intense and you can't just do it sporadically. You know, in our case, you got to do it consistently, constantly and at a high level to be effective. And that means at the end of the year, my first year there, people crawl out. In April, the season was over. Crawl out of my offices. Just totally exhausted because it wasn't in the old days. You know, we'd buy a whole bunch of ads and magazines and couple of ski sections in newspapers, major newspapers. We put our feet up on the desk.

[00:20:58] We, you know, eat crumpets and drink tea. I don't believe that! And wait for the people to come.

[00:21:06] Right, Yeah.

[00:21:07] You know. And that's not the way it is with social. You need to and it's a mistake a lot of companies make that I see. And especially early on in ski industries, people would not staff up that side of their marketing arm. Okay. To allow you to do quality content and quality content will eventually turn into business at some point time. Yeah, absolutely. And, obviously the best way to build your brand.

[00:21:34] Well, yeah. And that's another thing I would like to talk about is the whole Sugarloaf brand. Of course, I know you've worked at several other resorts since then. But in my mind now a brand implies a brand promise and a brand network of raving fans. And I think you are very instrumental in building that Sugarloaf brand. And I feel

like Sugarloafers, they bleed Sugarloaf blue like Sugarloaf is part of their DNA. Yeah. And that was something that you really kind of carved out.

[00:22:09] Well, yeah, it was. I would say I was lucky because a lot of really good work done before I got there. And the thing is they hadn't really pulled it together. There were there and the basis for it and a very loyal following of people. But we had such great people who are our skiers there, you know, from Maine. And we really wanted to be a Maine.

[00:22:35] We wanted Maine to be a big part of what we who we are and what we were and still are. And in reality, Boyne even took it to another level by dropping the USA and saying, you know, we don't even want to confuse the brand with the USA part of it.

[00:22:52] So in it, we were able just to build on the characters of the Maine person and citizen and reality that, you know, hard workers charging like, you know, they don't give up easy. And Sugarloaf is a place where you can't give up easy and can be cold up there in January, you know, and it could be dark and face north. But they charge. They charge and they get, you know, get just to get the march, you know, and the snow feels. So it's a very strong commitment to the sport, no matter what level they're at. And of course, we use a lot of people early on, just as I when I was leaving, you know, taking key high profile people in Maine and putting them on television and then let them tell their Sugarloaf story, which helped build our brand.

[00:23:42] And I just love that I. Well, you know, again, the whole storytelling idea and the human-interest story.

[00:23:51] And it was a different problem with Jackson, Jackson Hole. When I got there because, you know, when you think of Jackson Hole, what do you think of?

[00:23:59] I think of bad ass skiing.

[00:24:03] Yeah, big mountain.

[00:24:05] Yes. And, you know, cowboys, cowboys, but expert skiers. Yeah, I mean, expert skiing and they sold. That's all they sold themselves to, unfortunately. And they

felt that was their brand and that's the only thing they could be. And unfortunately for them, you take a very small sliver of the population already only two and a half percent of the people United States ski.

[00:24:32] So if you think that's a that is a sliver and so targeting, you really mean something when you talk to those people, when you meet in our industry. But when you when you think that you carve two and half percent down to experts, true experts, that late for the train that we have and you're looking to draw from a very small pool of skiers and snowboarders.

[00:24:57] And when I got there, the first thing I tried to do is figure out how to blue them up, blue the mountain.

[00:25:02] And for non-skiers, that's make it more intermediate.

[00:25:06] Yeah. Yeah. And in that and that was my job.

[00:25:09] And I had people at the company at the senior level tell me I was going to ruin the brand of Jackson because I was trying to blue the mountain and everything like that. But the thing is, we were able to shift the brand enough without losing the essence, the essence of being an expert mountain.

[00:25:28] And now to invite a-whole-nother group of people up and say, you know, we just redid this whole area up there with bulldozers and new lifts and all things like that. And we came on the program. Well, we said it was all new, all blue.

[00:25:39] Oh, yeah. It's totally intermediate part of our mountain. What do you think happened? Skier visits jumped about 70000 one year.

[00:25:46] Oh, yeah. Probably those people who would brag at the watercooler when they got back that they had skied there. Yeah. And implied that they were among the experts.

[00:25:56] Yeah. And then people really felt good about themselves. Yeah. Which is very important that your product does. Oh exactly. Does not take them there and beat

them up. I mean we had to invest in more groomers. We had to do all the things like bluing the mountain meant okay for people and skiers. You know, we had to take places that they never groomed before, steeper terrain that was that they didn't feel like they wanted to groom because you had to have very advanced grooming equipment and go out and groom and blue the place. There was plenty of the other stuff, plenty of cliffs, plenty of bumps, plenty of chutes. Right. All right.

[00:26:34] Yeah.

[00:26:35] So was that that was a different problem than Sugarloaf's problem.

[00:26:39] Right. Exactly. You know, the Sugarloaf's just a Maine place.

[00:26:45] Well, I'd love to talk about the Sugarloaf versus Sunday River battle and I'd also like to talk about Paul Schipper and how that was kind of my first experience, personal branding. But first, I think we're going to take a little break and we're going to hear about the Marshall Plan. I don't know if you've heard about the Marshall Plan, of course, but we'll be back with more from Chip Carey in just a moment.

[00:27:17] This podcast is all about growing your network in order to strengthen your brand. In my 30 plus year marketing and PR career, I have seen many organizations waste their precious time and money on marketing because they're trying to obtain success without any strategy to achieve their goals. So many organizations and companies suffer from what I call the shiny object syndrome, trying every new fad that comes down the pike. That's why I created the Marshall Plan 15 years ago. We have done over 100 of these plans for clients helping them to get out of their day to day routine to identify their goals, solidify their brand story, focus in on their ideal customer avatar, analyze their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and create a realistic budget and measurement dashboard. We create the Marshall Plan collaboratively with our clients over the course of three months. We have a 65 step process to create a highly customized, actionable plan. And it's not like we come in and say we are the consultants from away and we know everything. Instead, we come in and say, let's sit down at the table with your leadership team and we'll bring our expertise in what's working in PR and marketing. And our client team brings their knowledge of what's working in their organization. And together we come up with a

really amazing plan. For many, it's been a transformative process. I have watched how teams have come together and their faces light up because they have such a sense of accomplishment and they're so excited about the future of their organization. We help our client figure out the best way to implement the plan. Sometimes using people within their organization and sometimes with our help, we would love to chat with you about how you can expand your network and achieve your marketing goals with a Marshall Plan. Go to www.marshallpr.com/the-marshall-plan to learn more about the process. Or better yet, send me an e-mail at nancy@prmaven.com and we'll set up a time to talk and get started. And now back to our conversation.

[00:29:53] Okay, well, we're back with Chip Carey and for me, this is like very nostalgic because I started working for Chip in 1984, November of 1984, and I had worked in PR for a few years. But it was really like going to school every day to work for Chip.

[00:30:13] And of course, if you know me, I also have a strong personality. So I probably was not the easiest employee. I think at a certain point it was decided that I would be better off like just having my own business and I did in 91.

[00:30:28] But throughout the 80s, I did learn a lot from Chip. And one of the big lessons was when Sugarloaf and Sandy River went to war against each other about because Sandy River was always trying to convince people that Sugarloaf was so far.

[00:30:45] So how did you counteract that Chip? We're going back to the days of marketing wars and, you know, kind of where we've gone with our conversation so far today? It's like to me, course I'm now old, right? And it was, I felt like I came through the golden age of marketing.

[00:31:09] Okay. And because it was exciting, everything was changing so much so fast all the time from, you know, from fax machines to driving your car, you know, shooting on 16-millimeter film TV stations were still using 16-millimeter film. OK, not even video, you know. The start of cable television, you know what? There were WSKI and stuff like that.

[00:31:33] Yeah. And you started that.

[00:31:34] Yeah. And then you had this area in Newry, Maine. It was up shot coming up really fast under a good ownership and a very aggressive, it was very competitive which was awesome. But it also you know, at times we kind of had to try to push them, you know, try to put them back in their place, if you will. You know, at least that's the way we looked at it. You know, I mean, they are an awesome place, you know, they got, you know, six different mountain places, you know, up lift areas that they can go to. And it provides a incredible product. But, you know, we were had been always just no one ourselves. And we don't want somebody new coming in and stomping on our territory. But, you know, again, there, the Les it was very aggressive. He's a marketeer himself. Les Otten, right? And so we we we felt like, you know, we need to try to stay on top of him, if you will, our competitors.

[00:32:29] And we would count cars. I mean, I think that's the thing people didn't know.

[00:32:33] Like people we would send somebody from Sugarloaf down to Sandy River to walk through or drive through and count where the license plates were coming from. Yeah. Yeah. And then there was car counts going on simultaneously at Sugarloaf.

[00:32:45] Yeah. And at Killington, too, you know. But and the thing is we didn't just count the cars and how many cars there, we were counting the cars and all of a sudden we saw a, I mean there's a grassroots again I mean knowing your customer. Gorilla marketing. And finding, knowing your enemy.

[00:33:02] Or a good competitor, but where were the people coming from? Okay. All of a sudden you go down there and you see an unusual amount of Connecticut cars in the parking lot. Did we as marketeers missed something? Okay. And that's the only way you could really tell sometimes was it was that way. But we can also follow the growth and things like that. But Sandy River loved to tell us that we were way out in the boonies. And, you know, quite frankly, Sugarloaf is off the beaten path. And that's one of the things that makes it a very special place in Carrabassett Valley. And there's no question that that's part of Sugarloaf's brand in itself. But so we needed to counter somehow that Sunday River was closer to Boston.

[00:33:44] They were making huge strides in the Boston market and eroding some of our business from that region, especially north of Boston.

[00:33:54] And so I decided I've got to figure out just how far away, much farther away we are. And so I hopped to my car and I went down and drove from Sunny River down to Portland. And it always said 75 miles. Right. And I went over and drove from Portland to Sugarloaf. And I got that number in my head and I said, okay, we're only 35 miles further. Okay. Which isn't very much. And, you know, and then we went back and forth and Attorney-General got involved in the state of Maine and they came out and, you know, they're trying to make a stop using the campaign. But we go to the ski show in Boston. You know, we're playing not only 35 miles further and things were in the media and the Boston Globe. Now we're making The Boston Globe right without wars and going out each other.

[00:34:44] They love that idea. All the media love it for sure. I mean, I pulled into Regina's Pizza in the north end to pick up a piece of the drive home at night. Right now I have heavenly Sugarloaf car outside. I kind of double parked it and ran in. I ordered it. There's a bar that sits right there and I went in and it goes. People are going, are you really only 35 miles father, because they had seen the logos on my car. So, you know, the program was working OK, but it was so much fun. Everybody got into it, too. You know, the soccer teams, at CVA, when they go off and play and then they get into the tournament and they had to play, you know, the Gould Academy, you know, and so we had people running across the field with 35 miles and we didn't do it. I mean, we didn't we didn't ask these kids, do we help kids wore shirts out with this stuff. It was fun.

[00:35:34] And in those days, you know, that part of these marking was it wasn't all just about the 35 miles. But we get up every single day and try to think what we could do to be better with our marketing so we could, quote, outdo, if you will. Our competitor down the street. And that really drove me is so much fun to come in every day and figure out what are going to do now. And kind of a funny story. Somebody reminded me of at a, we were at a board of director's meetings of a client that I did some consulting with. And one of the people in the audience said, "Hey Chip." And I was speaking to the group and they said, "Hey Chip. Tell them the story about how you used to figure out how much snow you had at Sugarloaf versus Sunday River." And I said, I can't tell that story. You tell the story and so the story went, that the question, how would I determine how much snow we got on Sugarloaf? I just I'd say I pick up the phone and call Sunny River and add eight inches because it gets, it felt like it was getting unreasonable. So I was

trying to make them stretch to an area that was well out of their range of them to have that much snow at the expense of me being out of the range of us having that much snow so that they had to back down on their aggressiveness on the number of inches of snow they got by me saying I was eight inches more and they couldn't keep adding to their already.

[00:37:10] We're probably all exaggerating of those days, but I actually don't believe that that we were exaggerating. But anyways, in that case, we started to use something else. But the wars not only happened here, but, you know, like Killington, Sunday River and then got in the battles with Killington. We got into small battles with Killington in Vermont, but we were really focus our stuff on our key market, which was Maine and Boston. And that's why it was that 35 miles north, 35 miles further.

[00:37:38] Yeah, that was a PR campaign. I mean, there was hardly any paid advertising.

[00:37:42] Oh, no, no, no paid advertising. It was all PR. It was beautiful. And we rode so much and we've got so much out of it. That was unbelievable.

[00:37:51] Right. And Skip King was the communications director there. And of course, he got totally.

[00:37:58] They hired engineers, you know. Oh, no. They hired engineers that come up. Okay. And so, you know, I said 35 miles further.

[00:38:07] Okay. And then and their paperwork, they said they're all of them literature. Everything's 75 miles from Portland. Right? Maybe an engine background in engineering. The distance between two points are the edges. Right. Right. If you had two squares laying on the floor, you wonder how far they were apart and you'd measure from edge to edge. Right. And so I went up to that exit, and I think it was Washington Avenue in Portland. Right. And I started my clock there. Right. And then I went to start off. And when you turned onto the access road, we hit the clock again. Right. And so these engineers to that's how I came up with 35 miles different. I use their 75. I use what I got. And so they hired these engineers. And, you know, everybody you know, everybody always on starts get away from you as this thing gets hot. You get the

attorney general in it and you know, you're going to try to make a cease and desist and all this other stuff. And so I'm sitting in my office knowing this day they were going to measure the distance. Okay. So the guys, the engineers come into my office and I just sit there by myself because nobody would be in 100 feet of me. I was poison at the time. And then a guy goes. One hundred ten point one miles, and all I had to be was one hundred and ten. Oh, gosh.

[00:39:29] And yet I continued the program.

[00:39:37] And of course, Warren, who you were working for at the time, he loved it too, because he's a Marine.

[00:39:43] Yeah, exactly. The military execution. Once we could really defend the position he liked. Yeah, right. They're all away from me now. I was nervous.

[00:39:54] Yeah, by myself. And then, of course, at a certain point Sunday River bought Sugarloaf. Yeah. And. Yeah. There was a sign on the spillway chair that said that about halfway up the mountain. That said if you were at Sun River you'd be at the top. Yeah there was double run not spillway

[00:40:11] Now there's no. Low and narrow gage. Yeah.

[00:40:18] So when Sunday River all of a sudden bought Sugarloaf, Warren Cook presented that sign to Les Otten on his knees.

[00:40:26] Warren goes "Chip, what should we do? I said, well, take down the sign and bring it to him.

[00:40:30] Yeah. I wonder if that sign exists anywhere. I bet it does. Les has it somewhere. I'll have to ask. Should be in the Maine Ski Hall.

[00:40:40] Hall of Fame. Museum. It should.

[00:40:43] And speaking of which. That's a good Segway. Paul Schipper is going to be inducted to the main ski hall of Fame this October. And of course, you know, when I

started working for you in the 80s, Paul had just started his skiing streak. We were calling him the Cal Ripken of skiing because he never missed a day. Well, I think when I started, he had gone about two or three seasons. And you're like, you know, used to call me Briggs cause that's my maiden name. And I think Briggs represents the certain part of me that I'm not sure exactly what part the degree.

[00:41:20] So, yeah.

[00:41:21] So you're like, Briggs, we got to do this PR campaign around this guy, Paul Schipper. Of course, I knew Paul because I had stayed at the Lumber Jack Lodge, which he owned when I first moved up to the mountain. So yeah, but it now as I look back, that was my first experience with what I would call now personal branding, which was telling a person's story in order to communicate the story of a company or a destination.

[00:41:46] Well we had a story to tell, you know, and he had he had no way to tell it. I mean he didn't have the means to tell it. OK. He was real. I don't think he was really interested in telling the stories other than around his buddies, his immediate circle of friends, very close in. Okay. And again, you know, I always look at things as opportunities. You know, in marketing, we need ways to get into the news and to to produce something that people were interested in because we had Cal Ripken, who was running, baseball, whatever his streak was, you know, and he had Paul had been and he was skiing more than just Sugarloaf in those days. Right. He would hop on a plane and go to, you know. Out west. And I can't remember if he went. I don't think you with the mammoth, but I think you went to someplace in Washington and he would ski there. So he would get his days up for I think one year he skied every single day of the year. But Paul had a story that needed to be told. And being an opportunist and seeing good content. And we blew it up. I mean, if that had been during the days of social media. Okay. Because we're talking back in the mid 90s. Right. Well, it would have really gone viral.

[00:43:05] Yeah. So his story was he had been an airline pilot for, I think American Airlines. And he had a crash and the strut went into his heart, collapsed his heart, and the airline forced him to retire. But he really didn't feel he had to retire. He didn't want to retire, but they forced him to. So he moved to Sugarloaf, bought the Lumber Jack

Lodge. And he was going to show them that, you know, he could ski every day. So inferring that he also could fly, but he wasn't flying. So, yeah. And it built and built momentum to the point where kind of like the 35 miles more story anywhere, Paul, that he was a celebrity and people were asking for him for his autograph and a picture taken with him and. Yeah. But I mean, we started. I mean, I always think of concentric circles. We started the PR very local with the irregular the local paper and King Field, Maine, and then the Waterville Sentinel and then the Portland Press Herald and then The Boston Globe. And then eventually we were able to get it into People magazine twice. And Good Morning America sent a crew up. And again, your visual line, you know, we brought in the high school marching band from Mt. Abram High School.

[00:44:20] Oh.

[00:44:22] And I think we you know, we had balloons that, you know, we would have a parade again to make it very visual to escort Paul down on every 100 days. We had a ceremony of some kind. So, I mean, being part of that for me just became, you know, such an important part of my career and my life.

[00:44:42] Well, you think skiers it's almost like the surfing movie Endless Summer. Right. This this, you know, skiers. Well, they all want to ski every single day, you know. And Paul epitomized that, right? Right. And he was doing it. And people were living their dreams through Paul at the time.

[00:45:04] And very smart editors picked up on the fact that this is a story that a lot of people would love to be experiencing themselves.

[00:45:14] You know, and he had to make a lot of sacrifices, like when his son graduated from the Culinary Institute of America, which is all the way down in Poughkeepsie, New York. He skied under the headlights of a grooving machine at midnight. Yeah. And then he got in.

[00:45:29] His vehicle drove down to Poughkeepsie to go to the ceremony. Then he drove right back so he wouldn't miss a day of skiing.

[00:45:35] Yeah. And when he used to go other places and ski and not miss a day, he'd do the same things that he did that several times. And with the cat lights going down.

[00:45:43] Yeah. And he ski. He had pneumonia. I mean, once I think he had double pneumonia, I think he would still drag himself up there.

[00:45:51] You know, he'd drive up, which eventually then his vision wasn't so good and he was driving up in his ski boots and people would clear off the access road. They knew what it was.

[00:46:02] Well, we came to a time when we really needed to tell Paul they could let it go.

[00:46:06] Right. So, again, we you and I made a PR opportunity out of that. I think that was when you had moved on. I was out west. You had gone to the canyons.

[00:46:18] And there was a young man, Gregory Warner, who was a stringer for NPR.

[00:46:23] And we actually, so typical.

[00:46:27] I learned from you. We made it into a PR opportunity where we had a conversation on the phone between you and Paul. But we made it into a radio story. And basically, Paul needed you to kind of give him permission to stop the streak. Paul felt an obligation at that point to keep the streak going because it was so good for PR for Sugarloaf. And he enjoyed. I think the notoriety. But it also did help get the word out about Sugarloaf. So, yeah, I I hope we can find an audio clip somewhere of that conversation. Could be awesome. I remember it quite, you know, and it was very emotional. I mean, I think you we were OK. Kind of on the cusp of crying. You know, like Paul, you can stop. You've done your duty.

[00:47:18] And I remember telling him the story of my swimming that I swam every single day for 14 years between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend on Hancock Pond.

[00:47:29] And yeah. And finally, I moved out west because I moved to a high desert and it was getting much more difficult.

[00:47:38] And I finally had to say to my I mean, I was driving myself crazy, trying to find a place to swim. And finally, I just said, you know, got to let it go. And I mean, I had to tell that story to Paul to help him understand that, you know, probably nobody is going to beat you, Mark, at least nobody from Maine will and likely maybe some place in the world, but that it's easy to let it go. Yes. Run his course and your Cal Ripken of skiing.

[00:48:06] You know, I think God bless him. When Paul passed, I think I wrote his obituary for The New York Times. And it did. It did run. It was like a full half page in their New York Times. And I looked up at the sky when that came out that, oh, Paul, you know, you would have loved seeing this because, I mean, it did take such great effort for him to do what he did and then to see the story reported. And again, he knew it was benefiting Sugarloaf. So it wasn't really about him, right? It wasn't egotistical at all. It was really for the greater good. Yeah, I agree. Yeah. So anyway, I enjoy now working with individuals, doing what I call personal branding now. I actually have a certification in it. But really, I hadn't thought about this until a year ago or so that that that whole Paul Schipper experience which ran, you know, probably a good 10 or more years.

[00:49:06] I mean, I'm not sure how many years he actually was longer than that. Oh, yeah. I was involved with it for 10 years and I was just a great run in. And I'm very happy now that Paul will be inducted into the Ski Hall of Fame. And I'm just sad that he's not going to be there. Yeah, I agree. But his son Jeff and Jeff's wife Laurie will be there. And I think Kibby, his daughter, is going for that also. So that will be a great celebration. And a lot of us, you know, who worked at Sugarloaf at the time. We're going to get together. You should come for that. That's in October.

[00:49:44] I'll be high on the mound in Bulgaria.

[00:49:48] Oh, wow. Go hiking. Hut to hut in October

[00:49:52] Good for you. So that's another thing that I have always admired about you, Chip, is I remember if you went on a business trip, you would even just stop along the

road somewhere and put on your running clothes and go for a run. So you've always made time for that exercise and it's important.

[00:50:08] Yeah. A mental health, physical health helps you do your job better. Yeah. You know, you have the energy to do it and gives health and happiness and happiness. Right. Comes with it for sure.

[00:50:19] And we've always we've always been good at that. We've always had a lot of good laughs. You and I. Oh, you throw big parties, too, right? Oh, yeah. Oh, my gosh.

[00:50:30] I remember when we we went out on New York Harbor and we were able to you let me be the hostess. And we had a yacht. We invited all the ski writers, had cocktails.

[00:50:42] It was very fancy. I loved it. Then I think I slept on the couch in the hotel room. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I know. We did usually save money on logic.

[00:50:59] I always had to find somebody I could stay with who I knew. I also remember at two Park Avenue, which was where ski and skiing were located. One time we went there. We didn't have any appointment or anything. So you told me just to Briggs, go in the ladies room and just wash your hands and see if you can run into any reporters or editors.

[00:51:18] So I was like washing my hands for like a long time. And then a reporter came in.

[00:51:23] Hi, I'm Nancy from Sugarloaf. You've been to Sugarloaf. And that's what I call gorilla PR. [00:51:30] This at least grassroots, that's for sure.

[00:51:35] And then the other thing I just wanted. Before we wrap up, I wanted to talk about special events. You know, special events are a great way to bring people together under your brand umbrella. And there's a lot of events at Sugarloaf that you started. Yeah, I mean, Reggae Weekend being one of the most notorious.

[00:51:54] Yeah. That's been going on now for over 30 years.

[00:51:56] And you started as a way to extend the ski season.

[00:52:00] That's correct. Well, you know, again, you have events and you can build something around events. You get the you get the PR, you get the stories in the papers, things like that. And you get in the case of reggae, the you are your clients. You're your guest gets to enjoy something that's pretty special. But and you never know where it's going to come from. Right. I mean, I had an event in April that was a big event. And we had had some issues with snow for a couple years. My sponsors have been at me saying, well, I want to go into winter when we can. Sure. Good condition. Winters. I says, no, it's normally so great. The first week in April, you're going to stay with me. And then we had the flood of 87 and April Fool's Day. Okay. And my sponsors for that event, which was it was for the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. And we raised a couple million dollars for cancer research stateside. We're going move it in the winter or we're going to stop sponsoring this thing. So we moved them into January. Oh, my God.

[00:53:02] And now I had a vacant spot. And so I looked around. And this goes to show you don't have to really know a lot about what you're talking about. But I happened to notice in the summer that there were, around New England, there had been a bunch of reggae fest going on in the summertime. And I said, well, we could do that in wintertime, the spring, because we're trying to say how warm and sunny awesome springs, fabulous spring skiing, you know, and whatever, you know, warm, sunny. So I was a little reggae and I started an event called reggae and I didn't even know what dreadlocks were.

[00:53:43] Okay. I mean, literally.

[00:53:44] So you don't have to know all the Ts yet. And you just. But you started an event. Do you see that has a little momentum in the marketplace already and still going on? You know, that was an 88 was the first one.

[00:53:54] And now is that the biggest weekend of the whole year? And a lot of non-skiers go just for the music.

[00:54:00] Oh, yeah. You know, fills up all the lodging and it's a good time. You know, it's fun. Good spring event, which, you know, Sugarloaf is, I think, more famous for spring skiing than its midwinter skiing.

[00:54:12] King of spring. King in spring. Snow fields.

[00:54:17] And so I'm you know, that's one of the ones I'm proud of starting because it's the legacy. It's still going. It's kind of like the Sugarloaf Marathon is still going. Right. Right. You know, I started that in 1984, 83. Excuse me. And still going on today.

[00:54:33] Both of those events bring in a whole audience that doesn't even ski, you know? I mean, I know a lot of people from the Augusta area, from the YMCA, where I do my spinning classes and they are they all go up to Sugarloaf. They look forward to staying in the condo for the weekend. So that's a great thing.

[00:54:53] And then, of course, the heavyweight ski championships we should go. I should tell our listeners, pooka pooka is like our code for food. Eating too much. Right.

[00:55:11] Oh, yeah, that's my word. That's always been the reason to exercise, I think. Chip, does it more than I do with exercise but exercise so that you could eat more. Yeah, that's true.

[00:55:24] So while this has been a great conversation, Chip, I think we could go all day and we maybe we'll have to have another episode to cover all the other. I frequently, you know, tell my employees now, like, oh, this is another Chip Carey lesson. And I think some of them roll their eyes like, oh, boy, here we go. But no, I mean, things like staying on top of technology and building relationships and making it visual and telling the story. I mean, there's so many PR 101 or maybe it's actually 404 because it's like advanced PR. That's 101.

[00:56:00] Yeah, but it's the basics. But using having new tools use that do the basics.

[00:56:05] Right. And also. But staying on top of those tools and not being afraid. I mean for me even just like this podcast has been such a great way to open up a whole new avenue for me and I'm having so much fun with it.

[00:56:19] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I always say you have to be a student of the game. You know, if you if you're not studying the same thing on top of it, you don't have to be the first one necessarily, but you have to see what's going on and start, you know, you hear the you sound bites about certain things and you start researching and looking into it and let you know it's OK to let some other people make some mistakes early on.

[00:56:42] That's the first or last cup of coffee theory, right?

[00:56:46] Yeah, exactly. Chip would always say nobody wants the first cup of coffee or the last cup of coffee in the pot.

[00:56:53] Yeah. So but anyways, you know, it's important, you know, be a student of the game.

[00:56:57] And one of the things I think right now is, you know, at my age is where I'm starting to let go. Being the student of the game, you know, I have other things that I'm trying to accomplish now. So I'm I don't think that right now I'm staying on top of the as much as I was when I was younger.

[00:57:15] But you're the best grandpa in the world. I'm sure that's a lot of fun. And you have Camp Carey with where the adventure never ends.

[00:57:23] Yeah.

[00:57:25] Every day an adventure. Every day an adventure. Even have a tag line. And you have how many grandchildren now?

[00:57:30] We have seven right now. An eighth one coming in November.

[00:57:35] Well, I'd say those are pretty lucky kids.

[00:57:39] Well, you know, if you think about a career, you know, myself, I you know, I got out of college and went skiing.

[00:57:45] I literally went skiing the day I got out of college and. My whole family now three is kids, myself and my wife and we they're all in the ski industry one way or another. OK. Bryn owns a very successful company called Ski Butlers. Forrest is a U.S. ski team coach, and Rebecca is raising ski races at Jackson Hole with her husband. And she is able to stay home, luckily, and get her kids into the race so that all the grandkids are racing every grandkid. By the time they're two is skiing. And so, you know, what I did for work is it has been penetrated down into my kids. And they I just love skiing. And far as I'm concerned, one of the greatest sports family sports there is, because you can do it. Way well into your old age, you know, and like Paul Schipper did.

[00:58:38] Yeah, I agree. Absolutely. And as the mother now of two ski coaches myself, I feel the same way. And I think that you are always a role model for me. So I appreciate that.

[00:58:48] Thank you. Cause I remember helping take care of Forrest and Bryn. That was part of my responsibility when I worked there as to helping to take care of the kids, especially the time that Bryn put the hairbrush down the toilet. We had to have the toilet taken apart by a plumber. But now he is a very successful entrepreneur. I know he is.

[00:59:11] And he is a dad himself, which is really, really awesome. Well, Chip, thank you. And I know that our listeners and PR Maven Nation are going to enjoy hearing about our stories, but hopefully learning about, you know, some of these PR, you know, no matter where you are in history, that it's all boils down to relationships. Really? Yeah, it does. Yeah, I agree. Thank you, Nancy. Well, it's been my pleasure.

[00:59:41] Thank you. PR Maven Nation. And we'll see you on the flip side.

[00:59:47] That's it for this week's episode. I'd like to thank you for listening.

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