

Shane Power of Watertree Health: “Why we need a movement to create more accessibility to healthy food”



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As part of my series about “companies and organizations making an important social impact, I had the pleasure of interviewing Shane Power the president of Watertree Health®. Shane joined Watertree Health as VP of Sales in May 2012, and in less than two years, was named President. Shane has built a team of community-based representatives who, like him, are passionate about helping their neighbors get healthy. That passion extends to the nonprofit alliances he has forged. Before Watertree Health, Shane held various executive direct sales positions at which he honed his expertise in building a sales force (recruiting, retention, training), generating new business, and developing leaders. After college, he played professional basketball for two of Italy’s top teams. While at Mississippi State University, Shane was chosen to be on the All-SEC men’s basketball team and named an Academic All-American and SEC Scholar Athlete of the Year. He received a master’s degree in Business Administration from MSU. Shane is also a member of the Make-A-Wish® Arizona Board of Directors.

Thank you so much for doing this with us Shane! Can you tell us a story about what inspired you to pursue this specific career path?

As a basketball player at Mississippi State, there was never a doubt in my mind that I loved what I was doing. I learned that if you are serving a mission you believe in, you can turn that passion into a paycheck. That’s also when I learned the principles of servant leadership — I was serving my coach, my fellow team members and the greater college community. Today, I’m proud to run Watertree Health on the same servant principles, as a company that helps people find purpose in their work and contributes to making communities healthier.

Can you share the most interesting or meaningful thing that has happened to you since you began leading your company?

We have a partnership with Make-A-Wish® — the nonprofit organization that creates life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses — and in celebration of the 350th wish granted through our partnership, I had the opportunity to spend time with 10-year-old wish kid Christian and play the role of his sidekick in his wish to be a superhero, “SuperBlack.” It was an amazing experience because I got to witness first-hand all of the detail-oriented, hard work Make-A-Wish does to make each wish for a child battling a critical illness a reality. They worked with various local partners, including the Chicago police who went above and beyond with a police brigade, special boat adventure and search party to help Christian defeat the “bad guys” and save the city. Seeing the power of a wish transform Christian from a shy little boy into an unstoppable, smiling superhero is a moment I will never forget.

Can you share a mistake you made or lesson you learned when you were first starting your career?

We can all agree that no one likes to lose, but sometimes it happens. Ups and downs are inevitable, whether you're playing a game or running a business. I learned early on to treat every experience — even failures — as a learning opportunity. By reframing, you can move forward quickly and grow, rather than dwell on the past. The real victory is having the willingness to try.

Can you describe how Watertree Health is making a significant social impact?

What I love about Watertree Health is that our social impact is two-fold — our mission is to help improve the health of communities, which we do by making prescriptions more affordable and partnering with nonprofits who share a similar health mission. We do this through our free prescription discount card that not only provides significant savings, but also triggers a donation to Make-A-Wish, the ASPCA®, the National Kidney Foundation® or one of 15 regional Food Banks. These partnerships allow us to contribute to a cause and purpose greater than ourselves. Internally, they have redefined our goals in terms of “wishes granted,” “animals saved” and “meals provided.” This is incredibly important to our representatives and employees and makes everything we do that much more meaningful.

To date, we've helped save cardholders nearly \$600 million, enabled the granting of more than 430 Make-A-Wish wishes, donated over 3 million meals and helped thousands of animals find loving homes.

Can you tell me a story about a particular individual who was impacted by your cause?

Sadly, too many people are forced to choose between food and medicine on a monthly basis. One Thanksgiving, one of our reps witnessed a woman crying in line at the pharmacy. When he asked the pharmacy technician what had happened, the tech said the customer had saved over \$100 on her prescription using our card. She was not only shocked that she could afford the medicine, but because she saved money, she was then able to buy food for her family on Thanksgiving. Stories like this fuel my fire, because no one should have to make these difficult choices — especially in our country.

Are there three things the community/society/politicians can do to help you address the root of the problem you are trying to solve?

That's a great question. Given a bad diet can lead to health issues, the first thing I would suggest is more accessibility to healthy food — millions of people in America are living in “food deserts” where they are isolated from affordable, nutritious options. Because many people eat their food on-the-go, I would like to see fast food companies offer more healthy items on their menus. The second thing I would say is health care providers need to be given an easy-to-use tool to help them find their patients less expensive medication options. Research has shown that 1 in 4 people don't fill their prescriptions due to cost. Lastly, keep up the conversation about the high costs of medications — discuss on social media, submit op-eds, and write or call your politicians. Especially with the upcoming election, it's important that we continue pressuring the public and private sector to address unaffordable drug prices.



How do you define “Leadership”? Can you explain what you mean or give an example?

My leadership motto is to be a coach. As a college and professional athlete, I've observed numerous coaching styles, but one thing is always the same — a coach must always lead by example. As a team member and now a business leader, I strive to do my best every day and empower others to do the same. Ultimately, it's the effort of the entire team that makes a difference in both a game and in business, and I have to say, I'm incredibly proud of our team.

What are your “5 things I wish someone told me when I first started” and why. Please share a story or example for each.

- **No one can want it more than you do.** Part of being a team leader is staying focused. You have to bring the best version of yourself to work every day. I can't expect any of my employees to want my company to succeed more than I do. Being a leader means being the biggest and loudest cheerleader.

- **Set reachable goals.** Trying to do too much at once can distance you from your goals. It's important to focus on no more than 3 things that can be accomplished in a reasonable amount of time. This approach helps break down larger goals that can seem overwhelming.
- **Stay active!** When all else fails and the stresses of daily life take their toll, I still seek refuge in the gym. Maybe it's because I was an athlete for so long, but I know that I'm a better leader when I can come to the table with a "clean slate." For me, this means daily workouts combining cardio and weights. The less stress I have, the better I lead.
- **Passion and profit are not mutually exclusive.** This is a more recent example, but we initially hired pharmaceutical reps thinking that their experience would be the most relevant to our business. We quickly learned that our most successful, "model rep" is mission-driven and motivated to help others. In our case, passion has led to profit.
- **Never lose sight of your community.** Watertree Health wouldn't be where it is today without the strength of our reps in their communities and our nonprofit partnerships. We love working with Make-A-Wish because they have 60 chapters across the country that allow us to reach communities on a local level and effect change nationally.

If you could inspire a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. :-)

Being a former athlete, I would encourage a movement involving organized youth sports. They socialize children from all different backgrounds, teach them how to be team-players, and positively reinforce that hard work pays off. Athletics teach mental resilience, sportsmanship, and what our bodies are capable of physically. Being a parent in today's world feels like a constant battle of physical activity versus technology (TV, tablets, video games), and we need to do as much as possible to encourage kids to get outside and play in order to stay healthy and avoid serious health problems down the road.

Can you please give us your favorite "Life Lesson Quote"? Can you share how that was relevant to you in your life?

My favorite is, "plan, do, check, adjust." It's not necessarily a "life-lesson" but more of an ongoing mantra to always evaluate what I'm doing as a leader and what our company is doing as a team. If you don't take a step back and evaluate, you'll run the risk of continuing down the wrong path. It's important to have other people weigh in as well so you're constantly getting fresh perspectives and widening your lens.

Is there a person in the world, or in the US whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch with, and why? He or she might just see this, especially if we tag them. :-)

If I could have a private meal with someone, it would have to be the philanthropic entrepreneur, Sir Richard Branson. Aside from his obvious successes as a self-made billionaire, he's known for his rule-breaking approach to leadership, which encourages every employee to become an innovative thinker who can add value in their own way. He believes in putting people first — both employees and customers — and it is said he is an engaged, collaborative leader. The famously positive work cultures he's built have been known to be thriving with passionate people who can fulfill their sense of purpose — he has successfully merged “fun” and “philanthropy” with ethical business practices that also give back to society. I admire that he started his first charity at only 17 and has recently pledged \$3 billion from his travel firms to help fight global warming over the next 10 years. His energy and charisma are nothing short of inspiring, and I know I would learn a lot from him even after only an hour together.

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This was very meaningful, thank you so much!