

**Kirt Jacobs:** Welcome to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This is an archived edition when our program was called Leadership Landscape TV.

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**Kirt Jacobs:** Welcome to a new partnership between Metro T.V. and Y-PAL the Young Professionals Association of Louisville called Leadership Landscape where we go inside the minds of local community leaders and allow them a chance to offer some keen insights into just how they see themselves but most importantly explore just what makes them tick. I'm Kirt Jacobs current Y-PAL board member and host of Leadership Landscape. Today our guest is Jonathan S. Blue, better known as John. He's chairman and managing director of Blue Equity LLC. Blue received a B.A. in economics from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and is proficient in the Spanish language. Prior to forming his successor firm Blue Equity, Blue served as managing director of Cobalt Ventures LLC, a private equity firm with a wide ranging portfolio of businesses. Most of the business enterprises developed and grown during Blue's tenure at Cobalt Ventures are now part of Blue Equities diverse and innovative portfolio of business partnerships.

Prior to his involvement with Cobalt Ventures, Blue served as vice president for Progress Rail Services with a responsibility for the commercial and marketing aspects of its Mexican subsidiary Progress Rail Services to Mexico. During Blue's tenure Progress really expanded its Mexican focus by creating a network of facilities and landing corresponding clients in Mexico that mirror the company's U.S. operations. He is a 2002 graduate of Leadership Louisville and was selected for participation in the 2003 Bingham Fellows. A little footnote of John's, he participates in many triathlons throughout the United States. Blue, a Louisville Kentucky native, currently resides in Louisville with his wife and two children. John welcome to Leadership Landscape today. It's great to have you.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** Thank you know I just appreciate obviously Y-PAL the organization and everything you do for the city.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Appreciate that John it means a lot. Thank you. Our first question that we ask all of our guests is you you're a young guy I mean what drives you to do all of this? you came back to Louisville you left. A lot of guys don't do that.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** What drives me. Interesting thing you know again like to wake up every day and just get into it and love what it's about here I love living here. I love being part of the community. and I love building enterprises here. Building people, growing people, finding opportunities within our framework of our city and trying to make it a better place. I don't dread getting up in the day, in the morning I love to get up. I love to be involved. I love to put people together. Put things together put opportunities where people like to get to know people and find what they're all about. So I think it's easy to do here. I think that's one of the great things about the city and it's easy and it facilitates the ability to go and do that obvious in a scale that couldn't be done in much much bigger cities.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Whom do you credit most influential in your life John? If you could name one person?

**Jonathan S. Blue:** I don't know if I can name one person. Well I've got, I've had the benefit of having you know a lot of mentors in my life. You know had soccer coaches and teachers and professionals I was exposed to from a very early age. I would say my two parents and grandparents, spouse. I just had the benefit of be able to watch people do what they do best and to learn from them and to have both indirect and direct mentorship from them. Some was watching by learning. Others was direct. Teaching from those people and so I'm just very grateful to have the opportunity to watch that and hopefully try to emulate that today. You know they've been from all walks of life. Leaders, teachers, coaches, professionals in their own right. It's been a big big influence on me what I try to do now we have interns during the summer that work for us and trying to give back a little bit to that process like we've had done

for me.

**Kirt Jacobs:** What was the most defining moment of your life John? I mean you're fairly young guy so maybe it hasn't happened yet but if you could name one? What would that be?

**Jonathan S. Blue:** Couple things come to mind but the single biggest obviously would be the birth of your children. Not to be cliché but you then know even though you may be 30-years-old or whatever you are at that point that you're no longer a kid even though my biological terms you may be.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Right

**Jonathan S. Blue:** And so you know that's. That sticks out obviously the biggest. And then we had a family business for a long time that we were able to sell fortunately not part of the plan but that happened in the late 90s and big moment to give me the opportunity to take what I had from that and go and build out Blue Equity now and the opportunities we look at every day, from the private equity standpoint, properties within the city, opportunities within real estate. To take those and do something neat and something new here on the forefront. That leads things into the next obviously batch of opportunities now.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Absolutely and you're making good strides. Let me tell you. If there is one, what is your biggest professional regret? In other words if you could armchair quarterback your life at this point? I'd say 20/20. Something you might have done differently.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** I mean is I mean that's a funny question one thing as far as professional regret sticks out that probably taught me more about it I mean it wasn't a terrible thing but there was an opportunity in a fun, big city like New York. I had an opportunity to buy a condo years ago believe it or not that someone was older and putting for sale that they gave me first shot at very inexpensive price. This person was a wonderful elderly gentleman. He took me up there and I just couldn't pull the trigger. To be honest with you

and that wasn't like today's prices which is a bad problem I wish it would have been I would have a little bit more foresight back then but. What it taught me was Kirt that again you've got to seize the day and the opportunities that are before you. They're not all going to happen but it taught me that I needed to take that opportunity and what might be down the road if it's in front of you go out grab it reach for it get it get it under control and go to the next one and so that was a good lesson that was learned from that.

**Kirt Jacobs:** On the flip side of that, what is your biggest professional triumph to date? If you could name one or two maybe? I have a feeling you have more than one.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** I mean maybe not one single like you said but professional triumph like you talked about triathlons and things like that it's always great to finish a race.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Oh yeah. Triathlon.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** You know they're fun and. It's always great to obviously get to that last mile that you're running after swimming and biking and being able to say look I'm going to finish. I'm going to have a good time. Hopefully going to build from there and the same thing goes professionally I mean there's nothing like closing a deal after seeing the opportunity just forming there may be many months or years before taking it all with you the process getting the people involved getting everything in place finish in the due diligence and then from there concluding the opportunity in the closing. To me they're both natural highs that go down parallel tracks.

**Kirt Jacobs:** What do you find exciting? I mean you've got your hands a lot of different pies and it seems to be working. What do you find exciting about all that?

**Jonathan S. Blue:** I mean until this year I would have answered Louisville basketball. Because my favorite thing in the morning and I was even more exciting I guess this year with the ups and downs but .... You know development of people is important to me and I

just think that you know taking something from nothing and seeing an idea and changing the path or that idea recreating something just from an idea you get turning it into a business, or a company, an opportunity. Something could be in the not-for-profit sector you know or a board that I sit on taking that and say well we look at something this way. So just basically taking something and reinventing it looking at something a different way turning over different stones and trying to look at things from a different angle and changing the scope.

**Kirt Jacobs:** What is your favorite word in the English language? If you could pick one do you have one that kind of stands out for you.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** That's a great question. favorite word. I mean the one I can think of is passion. Passion comes to mind and I try to have passion about everything I do. Try to have our people have passion about everything they do. I think that with passion comes success I think passion leads to a lot of things. If you have passion for something the rest kind of fills in and that's what we try to use that organization as a keyword and a key, a key instrument to get into something we have to have the passion to do before we do it.

**Kirt Jacobs:** And this whole basis for this show is leadership. So this next question we like to ask our guests is can you define leadership in one word? You are allowed to have more than one word.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** There might be one word that comes to mind for leadership. Something like the word maybe a visionary or vision.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Jonathan S. Blue:** I think that leaders have to have vision and with vision the rest comes in, rest falls into place. With vision the path is set. The team gets on board and hopefully you know what my job is on a daily basis to try to get all of our teams and companies on the things in place and follow the vision that hopefully is set ahead of time. Hopefully it's a good one. And we do try to use people, setting that vision also, but visions a key thing to success and a key

thing to leadership so when you say that the word that comes to my mind is vision.

**Kirt Jacobs:** If you could change one thing, what would that be? This is a general question. Life. General

**Jonathan S. Blue:** Yes

**Kirt Jacobs:** One thing you could change.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** What would I change.. I mean again I love to have more opportunity more time I guess my regret is I'd like to be able to do things always learning and want to investigate more doing more due diligence. You know turning over most more stones. Talking to more people about things and having more time to do things. Both professionally and personally. We all. That's the thing we always hear but I truly mean and I mean I try to fit as much as possible into one day and

**Kirt Jacobs:** You do.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** and be also is a good parent and good husband at the same time but again more time more more ability to do things and fit everything in.

**Kirt Jacobs:** This is a question we ask our guests. And I think it's a little bit of a unique one for the our younger guests. When the great day comes John, simply how do you want to be remembered? And I mean it all ended today.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** Very eerie question...

**Kirt Jacobs:** It is. It is.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** ...I appreciate the question. To be remembered I guess want to be remembered by obviously giving back making this community is as well as I could've made the effort to make it a good community. Whatever my little piece can be to make it a better place to live for everybody here and for hopefully what will

be my kids and grandkids down the road who want to try to do that. That's number one. I guess when I graduate high school I had a little quote that said. It was from Jackie Robinson and the quote was in my year book: Life isn't important except for the impact it has on other lives. I try to live by that quote and hopefully I'm making an impact every day. So what I like is similar to that quote. You know he made an impact. He made an impact for us and for other people. So I don't have that as my mantra, obviously on my desk every day.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Right, right. Still a lot a lot more chapters to be written.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** We hope. We hope so that's what comes to mind.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Great John. It's been great having you on Leadership Landscape. We really want to thank you.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** I appreciate it.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Thank you John.

**Jonathan S. Blue:** Thank you for your time today.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I'm Kirk Jacobs until next time, this is a Leadership Landscape.

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**Kirt Jacobs:** Thank you for listening to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This episode was archival audio from when we were known as Leadership Landscape TV. If you have any feedback, general comments, or a recommendation for a suitable guest feel free to email me at [kirt@moxietalk.com](mailto:kirt@moxietalk.com) or catch us on Facebook under MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs, or on Twitter under [@kirtjacobs](https://twitter.com/kirtjacobs) or our extensive website at [www.moxietalk.com](http://www.moxietalk.com)