**Derrick/Spring: Podcast (2023-03-29 21:30 GMT-5) - Transcript**

# **Attendees**

Derrick Francis, Spring Richardson-Perry

# **Transcript**

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Spring Richardson-Perry: Welcome to the first week of The Spring Forward Podcast. I am your host Spring Richardson-Perry and I am super excited to be here with you guys. Today I have with me Mr. Derrick Francis. As we talk today about remote versus on-site work. So we're talking about flexibility and FaceTime. Do we want

Spring Richardson-Perry: Flexible time or do we want to be in each other's faces as we're working. So I'm super excited to be talking to Derrick today about his experiences with that. And let's get it started. Let's spring forward into excellence. So welcome Derrick. Thank you for being with us today.

D Francis: Thank you so much for having me spring. I really appreciate it.

Spring Richardson-Perry: I am super excited. This is the very first episode, the launch of the spring forward podcast, and I am so excited and honor that we can share this experience together because we have just a little bit of background information on Mr. Francis here. First of all, he and I have been friends since high school and so we were just talking about our 20-year reunions coming up and so that kind of gives you an idea of how long we've actually known each other but he is a husband and father of two, he is a two-time graduate of Old Dominion University and a member of Five Beta Stigma Fraternity.

Spring Richardson-Perry: Derrick started his career over 13 years ago as an unpaid summer, intern at the US Small Business Administration in Washington DC. We don't see much of that anymore. Those unpaid internships right but this Obama era internship that he did on Capitol Hill, really solidified his calling in the area of public service, and it really gave his career a purpose. So, During this through his hard work through consistency, he really rose through the bureaucratic government ranks in both, Texas and Louisiana, and then his education. And his expertise are in the public sector and public policy, and public finance, right?

D Francis: That's correct.

Spring Richardson-Perry: Right. So now he is working at Dallas, Love Field and overseeing a budget of 1.3 billion dollars, which is Ridiculous. And he is.

Spring Richardson-Perry: It incorporates operations, capital grants, commercial paper and long-term debt funds.

Spring Richardson-Perry: So Derrick here he and I have had many, many conversations about remote work versus on-site work. And you know, during the pandemic we really really proved that we can be productive as remote workers but now that the pandemic is officially coming to an end. Because Joe Biden says, I think in May, he's officially calling equits, it's no longer a pandemic. You know, companies are pivoting. They want to bring employees back on site and this has been a real, a real problem. And so I am just honored to have Derrick here talk to me today and kind of give us his experience with this. So Derrick take it away. Tell us a little bit about your experience.

D Francis: Right, right. I'm ready.

D Francis: Absolutely. So first off, thank you so much spring for allowing me to be the first guests on this podcast. I've been waiting for this for a long time and it's finally here. So I'm very honored and thank you so much for, for bringing me on and introduction was was great, right, a spot on. So, I, I do have experience with remote work and also with the, with the traditional style and also a little bit of hybrid, kind of like like teleworking. So in the federal system, you allowed to, like, tell the work, they've been doing that forward decades. So that isn't it?

Spring Richardson-Perry: Right.

D Francis: Anything new in the federal system but you know, some private sector companies and some local municipalities they, you know, they hadn't had remote work, you know, before the pandemic. So this is all pretty much new to them. So, you know, I'd love feel. We actually did move to a remote environment.

Spring Richardson-Perry: Okay.

D Francis: And I can I come down deeper into, you know, how that looked and how it felt. But I can tell you that we were just as productive. So, for example, we had to put together, you know, an operating budget and then redo the operating budget to right, size for covid, all remotely, that's actually doing a budget. That's two full scale budgets, operating capital pfcs, long term debt commercial paper, the whole shebang

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D Francis: Digitally all. And at a time at the time I had a really really small laptop, right? Because everything we will project everything to these monitors. I had like a gang of monitors that in my desk and our project, everything from the laptop to the monitor. So it'd be all big every time I guess. But I didn't think about, you know, I might actually have to look at this small laptop screen for a long period of time. So it just wasn't it wasn't something that was back in. But I tell you this and this is something that was written about in the most recent issue of Center Lines magazine, it's available. Now, Cinemas magazine is the Industry-wide magazine for aviation and…

Spring Richardson-Perry: Okay.

D Francis: so the there's a this is given by ACI Air Force, Council International. So it's an international organizations magazine call center line and they decided to teach me

D Francis: And why they feature me because what I did was before the pandemic hit. I said we need to be ready for our. We need to need to be ready to be more agile. I didn't know that I was, I didn't know that I was giving me a revelation that we probably need to be ready for remote environment, but we needed to be more agile that we were.

D Francis: So, you know, put together the system to take everything from from being static to being on the cloud to allow folks to access things remotely basically built this whole new system. Develop the tool that I build from scratch called, but it's that which you press one button and have all the budgetary information, readily available at a moments notice. But you can access a remotely, All these types of things were right.

Spring Richardson-Perry: That's awesome.

D Francis: So this is before the pandemic, these are the things that I brought to the team and it was, it was, it was newsworthy. It was an important topic for the magazine because we actually had to implemented during the day remotely. So, And it saved us. It saved us a lot because that would have been really really challenging to manage 1.3 billion dollars and nobody has access to the office and nothing is removed. so,

Spring Richardson-Perry: Nobody has access. That would have been a nightmare and then imagine trying to operate these flights. And you don't know what what's going on where and what's happening, that would have been a hot mess.

D Francis: Well that's another yeah that's another thing that you know that I had to really keep an eye on even though I'm in finance you know the inflame is the D playing Mr. Traffic. All those days, all the different metrics fall on my desk. So I'm pretty much, I'm a one-stop shop for a lot of things and…

Spring Richardson-Perry: Right.

D Francis: the remote environment and being prepared for the remote environment is what really made a difference. It was a preparation for that remote environment. And I think that if we embrace the fact that some degree of, you know, remote work is gonna be here for the long haul. You know, when you look at the federal system, you know, they're alone for celebrities. Like I said earlier they've been doing after decades but it's even becoming like you don't need to come into work. One day a week type thing, you know, they are really, really embracing in the federal system. And I know some folks that in the private sector, I was recently, this was a few months ago watching the playoff game, I'm talking to a guy, he says he hasn't been an office and over here.

D Francis: I mean this guy's making good money.

Spring Richardson-Perry: He?

D Francis: You know they make a seriously good buddy and he hadn't been in the office over a year. So, you know, I think it's a part of society and we cannot buck against all of the changes. We have to embrace the new ways of doing things, so, and I think that's the key to, to my personal success, embracing change.

Spring Richardson-Perry: Yeah, and I think it's a generational thing too. Um, you know, we, I think, with our generation, we really started to come of age with the Internet with remember AOL. Instant Messenger,…

D Francis: Yeah.

Spring Richardson-Perry: and like AOL, and how we all were like, so fascinated. But when we, I was, we were probably like in middle school at the time, and that was like the hot new thing. And so we were coming of age with all this new technology. And so we got used to embracing it and learning how to use it and and loving whatever, new technology comes out because that's kind of how we grew up. And so when it was time to pivot to remote work for us for our generation, um, it wasn't really hard and I don't even think because we're Millennials, I don't think the Gen Xers had too much of a hard time doing it either. It was more of those the baby boomers. And the generation. That's right. Above them. I can't think of the name of that generation but

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Spring Richardson-Perry: You know, they had a little bit more of a hard time with the pivot simply because you know, that wasn't necessarily their long-term culture, right? They were introduced to technology for the most part later in their careers and especially technology as we know it today. So, that remote work shift was kind of Kind of stressful for them and kind of hard for them. But when you think about the workplace itself, right? You have to think about everybody that you're working with. And so when you're making these decisions, you have to think about, well, you know, this may not be ideal for me, but in terms of my whole team or if you are the leader of this organization like the CEO or the president or whatever, you know, you have to think about overall.

Spring Richardson-Perry: How, how is this going to affect your employees as a whole your business, as a whole, your company as a whole? Because we've seen a lot of pushback, when it comes to bringing employees back on site, Disney.

Spring Richardson-Perry: I think, at the beginning of the year, decided to call their employees back and they petitioned and, you know, they had a, a lot, a lot of pushback from having to come back to work. Those people that didn't have to necessarily be there, the ones that could work remotely, there was a lot of pushback on that. And so, it got postponed sort of. And now, from what I'm reading, Disney's actually laying off quite a few people. Um, so it, you know, we're in a strange time right now in terms of our economy and what we've been seeing, is mainly, been in the tech sector that we've been seeing layoffs lately but who's you know, who knows what's to come. But beyond that, right? We've seen other companies. Like Ford try to bring their employees back on site. They had a lot of push back where they have to go back and rethink how they were going to do that.

Spring Richardson-Perry: Um and so it just hasn't been a really good response to bring an employee's back fully on site. A lot of companies are now embracing the hybrid mode where they're saying, Okay you come in two to three days a week and then you can be remote the other time the rest of the week. So that's kind of more and more becoming popular. But

Spring Richardson-Perry: I remember I was talking about Allstate and how they have made, the the decision based on serving their employees that they're gonna allow their employees to remain remote and they have offices. And major locations, major metropolitan areas that they're gonna allow their employees to have access to. And so they're saying, You know, if you enjoy coming into the office it's open and you're welcome to use it. But if you like working remotely, you can stay remote. It's been working for them and they're going to continue to allow it. So it just makes you wonder, you know, who's making these decisions? How are they making these decisions and why are they making these decisions to bring their employees back on site if that's not what the employees want? Because every time we see a large company implement, a back to work mandate.

Spring Richardson-Perry: Here comes the pushback. There are so many people that That petition. And they, you know, they fight to at least have a hybrid work schedule, if not fully remote. And then we also have to think about those people who may have disabilities, who would not necessarily have had access to the workplace, prior to the pandemic because they were just, they will because they were able to get up every day and travel into an office. But they get comfortably work from home and be very productive. Probably more productive than just the the average non-disabled worker. And so, you know, what do we do it? What are we doing in those instances? How are we accommodating those employees? What has been in your experience? Derrick how have these decisions been made with your company in terms of remote versus fully on site or hybrid schedule like who's making the decisions and how are they making them?

D Francis: So that comes from that comes from the top. And you know, we do have surveys and you know the surveys are distributed via like Google documents and stuff like that. So we have surveys the employees of surveyed but the decision is ultimately paid at the top. I could tell you for for me, you know, I have been involved in two car accidents, you know, going into the office most recently, my Jaguar was totally hit by 18 Wheeler so I have an hour commute so it would make things a lot easier you know for me if we were to go to remote environment but that's out of my hands. But I tell you I will tell you this if I'm giving the opportunity to give, you know, significant input to work and make a difference. I would say, you know, at least some time with the warranted

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Spring Richardson-Perry: So are there? Surveying employees and they're asking for employees opinions. What is the, What is the majority consensus on this? Do they want to be remote? Do they want to be hybrid? Do they want to be fully on fight? What is the majority saying here?

D Francis: Well, I wouldn't have access to that data, f\*\*\*\*\*\* answer. Yeah.

Spring Richardson-Perry: Okay. Gotcha. I would say my guess is that they want some type of hybrid schedule and and this is just like making an assumption. Because again, we see all of these companies trying to bring their employees back to work mandate and then they come back on site. And it, you know, they have to go back to the drawing board because the employees really, really push back and we are moving into a more employee, centered type environment. Now no longer can, you know employers make these unreasonable demands and people just comply. People are really challenging employers now So really, you know, rethink some of their

Spring Richardson-Perry: Some of their rules, some of their processes just the way that they operate in general since the pandemic. Because we've proven that, we don't need a micromanager. We don't need sort of like a big brother always hovering over us at work. You've hired me to do a job and I've proven to you that I can do it on my own and probably be more productive with the flexibility as opposed to being in the office, having somebody constantly in my face. Distracting me all the time. so,

D Francis: Yeah yeah I can see how that could be beneficial to, you know, having that flexibility could be really really beneficial and remote work. I think studies have shown that you know folks are just as productive if not more productive in a remote environment. So as you know as you know more surveys are taking across the economy, you know maybe folks will see that you know a hybrid environment is okay.

Spring Richardson-Perry: I'm hoping so, and I think that, you know, if this is maybe the norm in the public sector because like you said, they've been doing what they call telework for decades, you know, you've been and really that was kind of where it started because it was like unheard of in the private sector to be able to work from home. You know back in the day you really if you worked from home it was like oh they got a good government job and so Remember that? So,

D Francis: Yeah. Yeah. No, that that blue By the first time I saw that. The first time I saw, I heard about Teleworking was when I was interning at the SBA and they would just like, you know, only be in the office on like, Tuesday and Thursday and the other days they'd be working from home. This was like, oh eight, oh nine right. Way regularly. So Waiting for probably.

Spring Richardson-Perry: way before I was popular to work from home and so,

D Francis: Yeah, yeah. So I will get up every day. I would get up every day and and take the train all the way from Georgetown. I was in the yesterday Georgetown and all the way down to Capitol Hill every single day, Monday through Friday. Because that's what I, that's what I thought working was, but they showed me that, you know, they're, you know, multiple modalities, you can you hire bridge? You can do teleworkers, you know, it's more than just Monday through Friday 8 to 5.

Spring Richardson-Perry: Right? Is more to it than than being in an office eight to five, you can function do your same job duties that you'll be doing in the office, you can do it from anywhere. Really, you know, unless you have this customer facing job which, you know, some places too. You know, you may be the receptionist in the office building or for a particular company. And so in that in that instance, right? If you have like a storefront present and of course, you need actual customer service people in there. So that's not a work from home situation. Um, you know, if you're working like in the restaurant or hospitality industry, um, that's not really a work from home, type industry either, but in so many other industries in in finance, in just general business consulting.

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Spring Richardson-Perry: Even in some facets of education, you can you can be fully remote and so it you know, again my rants that I have had over and over again because I'm a I'm an avid proponent for remote work. If it can be done remotely because when people feel comfortable, they are more productive and I've always been more comfortable, either working at home from a space that I, that I'm just comfortable in at home or, you know, being out in nature like being outside and just enjoying the sun in being able to get my work done as well. But it doesn't affect my productivity actually, it makes me what it does affected in a positive way. It makes me be more productive because I'm in an environment that I'm familiar with. And I'm most comfortable with, and that I know that I can thrive in but, you know, when I had to be in an office

Spring Richardson-Perry: It was a little intimidating. So I'm all these other people around me that want to talk or come by and ask questions. And I don't mind helping and like bouncing ideas off of me, but a lot of times it was just personal like you know what, they call it water cooler,…

D Francis: Yeah.

Spring Richardson-Perry: gossip like, okay? And that's taken away from my productivity and so, you know, remote work was really, really like for me a godson when we all got sent home and we had to be at home, working, remotely, and ever since then, I kind of I did, I went back for like a year and then I was like, you know what? I can do this remotely, so I'm going to figure it out and I did. I did. And so, I think a lot of people, a lot of companies are gonna lose employees and we've seen them lose employees because of that because they don't, Necessarily consider people's commute time. Which you mentioned an hour each way, that's insane.

D Francis: Yeah.

Spring Richardson-Perry: Derrick, I can't even imagine.

D Francis: Yeah, I live way up and I have seen that I have seen, you know, folks leave because you know, the company wouldn't, you know, provide a hybrid working environment, I have seen that, you know, we're volunteers. So it does happen.

Spring Richardson-Perry: And I would also like, I would also imagine that if companies that can be remote or requiring employees to be fully on site and are not flexible at all, in terms of allowing them to at least have a hybrid schedule. I would imagine they have problems hiring people in the first place.

D Francis: Oh yeah, absolutely. So I mean just look at the economy you know if you look at you you go up 30,000 feet and just look at the economy. They're more jobs than people to feel the job. So you know, as a natural competition there for the best employees so you kind of want to provide the best paid the best benefits. And if you know folks are calling for, you know, remote opportunities, you may want to consider that to to be most competitive in today's market. So it's just a market-based approach just thinking about how you can best compete in the market.

Spring Richardson-Perry: Absolutely. So, I really enjoyed this. This was really, really It was really informative, like, just learning about how. Your experience with love field. Like I had no idea you sort of forecasted this moment which is really amazing. And then you had you were talking about putting things in place that actually had to get done when the pandemic hit. And so that is super interesting and I'm sure that you are an asset to your company for. Not just that but just knowing the person that you are in your work ethic and the things that you do, I'm pretty sure that they put a lot of faith in you and have a lot of responsibility on you that you I'm sure can manage but I'm sure they would be hate.

Spring Richardson-Perry: to lose it at any point in time if ever something happened and so, You know, I'm super proud of you.

D Francis: Thank you.

Spring Richardson-Perry: Derrick, it's been We've grown.

D Francis: Thank you.

Spring Richardson-Perry: We've grown into into these people that you just You just don't see it when you're in high school and, you know, middle school and what have you? But I'm super proud of the things that you've done and and how far you you've come and just on a personal level Your commitment to, to your community, to your family, and to your job. So,

D Francis: Compared to regular light and likewise you know like I said earlier before we have gotten a call I'm a super super proud of you and everything that you've built and your family as well. So kudos to you on that and with regard to the profession you know, they they really gave it a ball early on and kind of said You know run your play and you know me just you know implementing those things to make us more agile, they paid off. You know, when when the pandemic hit it was it was a national store because we went from being totally. I'm prepared to be a super prepared for something that could have been a major tragedy. So, you know, I'm grateful that I was giving an opportunity to take that shot to be the person with the ball and, you know, I really enjoy where I'm at.

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Spring Richardson-Perry: Thank you so much. Derrick I have had so much fun being on this call with you today, and I'm so excited to get this podcast up and running and it's really special day. You You know agreed to be my first guest and so thank you so much for being here today.

D Francis: Well, thank you for having me. Thank you for having me. And I, whatever you need me back on, I'll be right here.