

Hartley: [00:03:07] I was there for I think that was 90 days that I was there. And I think, you know, regardless of how much experience you have, I think everybody can sort of tell who the leaders are, who's responsible, who is, you know, really trying to do the right thing. And so I got some of that feedback and that was very encouraging and took some initiative. Did some things that, you know, weren't on my slate to do. So, yeah, I got a I got a whole twenty five cent raise for that.

Nichols: [00:03:33] Very good. Well there's a lesson right there.

Hartley: [00:03:36] Everyone has the opportunity to set themselves apart in whatever role that you have. And that's one of the things I talk to my kids about, which is whatever you're doing now, you should do it to the absolute best of what you can because you never know where that's gonna lead. Never know what the opportunities are. Plus, it feels good to do good work. And to really be focused and dedicated on something.

Nichols: [00:03:57] So gives you dignity, doesn't it?

Hartley: [00:03:59] I mean, I think there's significant power in work.

Nichols: [00:04:01] And getting things done. I agree. So you went to S.I.U. You graduated with a degree in accounting? Yeah.

Hartley: [00:04:09] Yeah, kind of bachelors in accounting. I had a very wise mentor of mine when I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do. I looked at engineering, I looked at aviation, and I had a very wise friend of mine that said just do accounting because it's the language of business and it's a foundation. You don't have to be an accountant, but you need to have that skill set. So I did. I went in, was in the business school, and then I started taking accounting classes and realized that that I did really enjoy it. It was a very good foundation of just knowledge in terms of how businesses works and PNL and balance sheets and what all that stuff is. And I was fortunate enough to get a good enough education that I passed the CPA exam on my first attempt, which was amazing.

Hartley: [00:04:50] Huge. Yeah. To not have to go back and do it.

Hartley: [00:04:52] That was back in the day where you had to take the exam all at once and you could only take it one or two times a year. I also remember the day I got my results that I passed the CPA exam.

Nichols: [00:05:01] So I hope you celebrate. Im sure you did.

Hartley: [00:05:03] I was in a McDonald's parking lot and I remember my excitement really couldn't be contained.

Hartley: [00:05:08] Yeah, I didn't get a double cheeseburger. Yes, I did. I believe I celebrated, maybe upgraded to a quarter pounder. There you go. You got a big day.

Nichols: [00:05:16] Well, you know, you and I share that because I have a bachelors in accounting. We took different routes and I want to talk about that. I got corporate, so I was hired by McDonnell Douglas. But you took another route and you went the public ground. Yeah.

Hartley: [00:05:29] Yeah. So I got an offer to start work at Ernst and Young on the audit side. And so I did that for the first four or five years of my career. I learned so much in that short amount of time. So I came from Carbondale to Saint Louis and being exposed to major companies, how they operate and really seeing it from the inside. Incredibly educational. And the great thing about being in audit at one of those firms is that you see a lot of companies. And so it's not like there may be some that you're on and it's a multi-month engagement. But a lot of times every two or three weeks, you're changing companies, you're changing the people that you're working with, your team changes and a lot of great friendships there. A lot of extremely talented people that I'm still friends with today, almost 30 years later.

Hartley: [00:06:13] I have said that so many times if you are wanting to go the accounting route. I just believe that getting in with E and Y or Deloitte, I just think those are great place to start because to your point, you didn't just see how one company operated, you didn't see just one industry. You learned a lot in a very short period.

Hartley: [00:06:32] This did you and I got exposed to financial services. I was dealing with health care organizations. That was the first time I ever really understood. The health care system worked. I did some work in the gaming industry that was very educational because I learned not to gamble. At that point, because I saw the significant advantage that the house has and the house always wins. And so being trained as a CPA. You see a casino advertising a

ninety ninety seven percent return. Well that's a negative 3 percent return. Why would I invest in something that has a negative return. So I still like, you know, going to casinos. It's just I don't gamble because I don't think that my return is going to make it worth my while, sir.

Nichols: [00:07:10] So how long were you at E and Y.

Hartley: [00:07:11] I did that for nine years.

Hartley: [00:07:14] So loved it there. But one of the things at the time when I looked at what the partners were doing and I looked at what I wanted to do personally, it just didn't align. So a lot of people were surprised and sad when I made the decision to leave the firm. But I think, you know, now in hindsight, it's wonderful to be in a position where I look back over my whole career and every stop in my career, I've learned something that's valuable to me today in this role and even the things that you would never think would be valuable, especially when bad things happen. That now I understand and have a perspective that is very unique and not everybody has.

Nichols: [00:07:49] You're grateful for those experiences. Aren't you Dave? The good and the bad .

Hartley: [00:07:56] At the time I was not necessarily a fan, but now you know, even when just experiencing bad things and knowing they're possible having a company that's been through financial challenges and ends up in bankruptcy, now I know the risks. You know a lot more. And I'm in tune with what certain things can happen. You know, the demise of Arthur Andersen. I look at that and there are a lot of lessons learned from that. So each of these things throughout my career, I think it's been just absolutely essential to give it your all and do everything you can and just have faith that, you know, even if you're doing something that it's not necessarily your favorite thing to do or whatever. There's something to be learned from every activity.

Nichols: [00:08:34] Such great advice. So did you go from E and Y to Arthur Andersen and then to. Because I might talk about Arch Coal. Yeah.

Hartley: [00:08:41] So I had a couple stops in between, actually did some startup work and that was about the time the market moved against the startup community. And so I did those and that was great. But I learned quite a bit about myself in that in those roles. I was the expert at the time. It was e-business. And so I was an e-business expert, which was great. But what I

found about myself was that I'm not a lone ranger. I really, I didn't recognize how unique a big for environment was where you're with people all the time and you're accomplishing things as teams. And when I moved into more of an individual contributor role, it just wasn't as fulfilling for me. I was good at it. Clients were happy. But I looked at, you know, this really isn't anything I want to do for my career. So I started looking back to find an environment like Ernst and Young and at the time. Arthur Andersen in St. Louis had an opportunity for uh, They needed uh, a leader for their technology risk consulting practice. Some of the things that I'd learned at a EY and got exposure to plus after I left EY.

Hartley: [00:09:40] It was a great opportunity for me. I spent about 18 months at Andersen. I only got there for a while and then the bad things started to happen. And then 18 months later, the firm doesn't exist anymore, which was once again extremely uncomfortable. But you know, there was something to learn from it and something good did come from it, which was there was a group of us from Andersen that stuck together that formed a new firm called Protivity. And so I was with Protivity from 2002 to 2009. And that was a great experience because that was really the first entrepreneurial side when we started Protivity, nobody knew who we were. So there was a lot of things that we had to do to build from the ground up. And so that was a great experience. OK. Well, I know how to do accounting and all these other things, but now I'm growing a business. And how do I create awareness of something that nobody knows anything about? So I felt very fortunate to get that opportunity after Andersen.

Nichols: [00:10:29] Right. Well, it's interesting because Erin Joy is a friend of mine. She's actually been a guest on the podcast. And one of the things that we talked about, Dave, was that even in an organization to kind of have an intrapreneurial mindset is a good thing.

Nichols: [00:10:41] To kind of have an intrapreneurial mindset is a good thing. So you probably took what you did with Protivity and some of the lessons learned there and then took that to your next assignment.

Hartley: [00:10:53] Absolutely. And once you get the bug of really growing a business, it's hard to let that go. It's not enough to just do a job and have things be sort of the way they were. And that, I think, is a leader in terms of understanding that, you know, we're there to really help. The organization is where it is today. Our job is to help define the future and then help people see that vision and then chart the path and then lead people along the way. And I think getting exposed to that was a huge asset early in my career.

Nichols: [00:11:22] So you moved from being a CPA, though and you were the C I O, the chief information officer, not the chief investment officer, but the chief information officer for Arch Co. Yeah. So what was it about your background that really prepared you? For taking on that role.

Hartley: [00:11:40] So first off, it was a great opportunity and I'm extremely thankful for the guys that gave me the opportunity to do that. I think one of the things that worked really well was that I had gotten exposed to technology throughout the first 15 years of my career, but this was really an opportunity to take the technology expertise. But also more importantly was and this is where the background as a CPA became so helpful, which is to really understand, you know, what is the business trying to accomplish? And as I talked with each of the individual leaders in the business and understanding the dollars and cents behind what they were trying to do and what really are the levers that move the business and then translate that to, OK, team of technology people, let's figure out how we're going to move the company forward. So the technical skills were there and I think that's important. But the business side of things, as well as a focus on customer service. There were several things that were sort of needed and valued in that role. And I think sort of everything I had done to that point really prepared me for that stint.

Nichols: [00:12:40] So the I.T. department, the customer is not necessarily always the external customer, right at that point, because I'm thinking about one of the first projects we did with you guys was really for your people in the field and to help them, you know, make their job much more efficient. So you did a lot of that.

Hartley: [00:12:59] And I think, you know, when you when you look at how can we make every employee's life better, how can we make them more productive? How can we help them see the connection and what technology can do for them? And I think that's part of really helping that, simplifying the message, helping people who are not technologists understand what technology can do for them and to not be afraid of it. So I think there's a lot of other things that a technology leader needs to do, because most people aren't technology people. So how do you interact with and get people to understand what the opportunities are? That was a skill set that I learned during my time in A.

Nichols: [00:13:33] Right. Well, we're going to take a quick break and we'll be right back with Dave Hartley.

AD: [00:13:40] As a business leader, you know that keeping a solid first impression with your potential clients, customers and talent is vital to reaching your organization's goals. If you

haven't optimized your Web site or if you don't even have a website, you're missing an opportunity to shape your first impression so that it shows your brand in the best possible light. If you're thinking about revolutionizing your Web site, let's talk. Our team at Technology Partners is ready to help you reshape your online presence. Go to TPI.com/Web sites and start your journey today.

Nichols: [00:14:14] Welcome back. So Dave, from Arch Coal, then you moved into another role, a kind of entrepreneurial role at UHY. Yes. Then you moved into another role, kind of a very entrepreneurial row at U H Y, a major accounting firm. Yeah. I don't know where they sit, you know, in terms of top 20. Top 20. OK. Thank you. Thank you for helping me out with that. But you started kind of something completely new for them. Was this virtual CIO role yet, We see that with our business. Even sometimes it's that middle market, that small to medium sized business. They really need your help because they don't necessarily have that CIO at the top that has the vision. Yeah. So talk to us a little bit about time at UHY and some of the things that you accomplish.

Hartley: [00:14:54] Yeah. So after I left Arch Coal, I had the opportunity to go to UHY. Great firm. A lot of great people there. I'm proud of my contributions and the time that I was there. That was really my introduction in my career to middle-market companies. And before at Arch Coal, I had a certain way that I would solve problems. And up to that point, all of my work had been with public companies. So when it came to UHY, whose client base is mostly middle market. There was a real need to help middle-market companies figure out how do we leverage technology to drive the business forward. So it's the same set of problems that public companies have. But you have to solve them in very different ways. And a lot of times a middle-market companies, they'll be great technical people there who have the capabilities and the time to keep the company running smoothly and move things forward on an incremental basis. Really, a lot of times there's not somebody who understands the possibilities of technology. You know what's really possible and how the company can go from point A to point B in implementing new technologies because change is extremely difficult. Yes. Yeah, that was one of the hats that I wore. I think I learned a lot in terms of, you know, there's a lot of great talent in middle-market companies. But how they operate, how they solve problems is different than a public company.

Nichols: [00:16:08] That takes us to where you are today.

[00:16:08] So you had another opportunity. Great. UHY great opportunity. But then another opportunity came along and you jumped on to that. And so that takes me to where you are today at Anders. Yes. Were you trying to do it? Anders now wanted you to talk a little bit about how you see the future of accounting firms. Because just like every other industry, that is changing. And what is the future accounting firm going to look like?

Hartley: [00:16:32] Yeah, I had known about Anders CPA and Advisors is the name of the firm. And I have I had friends there that over the years I kind of looked at and admired the firm from afar, always on best places to work. Always has a great reputation in town. So it was someplace that was very interesting and attractive. They had a need for somebody to come in. The firm already had an advisory services practice. So there was a technology managed services Microsoft gold partner from a technology perspective, outsourced accounting, health care, litigation support. So our ready a great core of an advisory services practice in addition to very strong audit and tax practices. But what the firm recognized that they really needed somebody to come in and serve as a catalyst for really growing the advisory services practice. So they talked to me about the position. It was very interesting. And I recognized sort of the unique opportunity, because that is one of the changes that we're seeing in traditional CPA firms is moving away from being an audit and a tax provider and being the most trusted advisor to really a shift towards how do we help these companies succeed.

Hartley: [00:17:37] That's great that we can do a tax return or give them an audit. But really, if we're not doing something to impact the company in a positive way, help them grow, increase, but increase the valuation and worth of the company, what what is the owner trying to accomplish? All of those changes are really happening now that move away from traditional CPA services to really being more of a true business solutions provider. And that's what we at anders see the opportunity to do. We have a great client base and they have a lot of needs that right now they're trying to find different providers to meet those needs. And we think there's an opportunity for us in a certain subset of those opportunities to really deliver very high quality, cost effective solutions to middle market companies. So that's really the opportunity that we're looking at, is trying to figure out how can we help our clients succeed? And then if we're able to do that, then that's naturally going to have good things for the firm.

Nichols: [00:18:29] Right. So I'm just thinking about maybe some young people that may be out in the listening audience right now and thinking about possibly an accounting career. And I think that's really good to let them know it's not just going to be about T-accounts, be just about debits and credits anymore. Yeah, it's more of a what I would consider more of a holistic view to help

these companies. So if you're out there, I mean, there's that may be something that would appeal to you. And just how do you map and come along as a trusted advisor to the clients that you're serving in, whatever it is that they're needing? Right.

Hartley: [00:19:06] And I think when I look back, you know, that was almost 30 years ago that I got that advice. Accounting and CPA is really the language of business. It's still true today. And I think, you know, the more that people can really understand that. I think it does make them more, you know, wherever they go, if they decide they want to be a CPA. They want to do public accounting. They want to do consulting. That's all great. If you want to start your own business, if you want to work in a company, I mean, there's so many different directions that you can go and it's got that flexibility. And then also we're seeing that one of the other things that's happening in the CPA profession is that the newer people coming into the firm have skills that maybe people who've been there awhile do not have. Right. And so maybe. So we have tax people that are coming into the firm that in college they got exposed to A.I. tools, RPA tools, other things that they're coming to the firm and saying, hey, why aren't we looking at this? Why are we looking at that? And so it's kind of a power shift in terms of historically reverse mentoring.

Hartley: [00:20:03] Yeah. Historically, CPA firms, the power has been with the partner group at the top. And now you have people coming into the firm who have a different skillset. And part of what we're trying to crack and Anders, but I think all CPA firms are trying to figure out is how do we tap into that expertise and really make sure that we harness all of the power within the firm to make us better at what we do. But then also in terms of how do we help our clients, because we're gonna figure it out and we're going to know how it works for our business. But we have hundreds of clients that are also trying to solve the same challenge. So if we can figure out a way to help them through that journey, just as we're going through that journey, and that's going to take different skill sets than have been prevalent in the CPA industry in the past.

Nichols: [00:20:47] Sure. Great, great advice. So we launched the technology leadership experience in June of 2019. And this is really our program that is taking the best and the brightest I.T. people and teaching them core competencies like how to lead change, how to lead an I.T. team, how to market the value of IT at the rest of the business.

Nichols: [00:21:09] You very graciously have stepped in as a mentor in this program. Yes. So I talk a little bit about mentor mentee and kind of relations. So, if I'm your mentee, what are some of the questions that you would ask me?

Hartley: [00:21:25] Yeah. And I think that's one of the great opportunities mentors can have in terms of I've been in a lot of different roles. I've been exposed to a lot of different things. I've made a lot of mistakes. I've learned along the way. And I do like the program from the standpoint of I'm able to talk to mentees and that's really where to start, which is to help understand their background, their story, because everything's unique. Every person has had a different journey. They've done different things. And I think that's important to really know and understand. There is no one solution for everybody. There's no one goal. That really is probably one of the things that I think is most impactful is to ask those hard questions, because a lot of people in roles, they may be struggling with an issue, but they don't have anybody that they can talk to. They don't have anybody that they can say, I'm not getting along with my boss or I don't like the company anymore. I don't agree to have somebody that is independent that you can have a conversation with and that will ask you those hard questions and then give you some feedback on if you're not thinking about this. You should. So one example. OK. So this person is in a role and basically a new boss came in to work with this person. And so I listened to the story and understood where things were at.

Hartley: [00:22:38] And then the question was. So help me understand, what have you done to make the new leader that came into the organization? How have you helped that person with their integration into the company? And what have you done to help that person succeed? And those are the types of questions that I think asking maybe some difficult questions coming from a perspective that that person doesn't have, you know. And then just the ability to be candid in terms of, you know, there's no right or wrong answer. Whatever the mentee is thinking, you know, it's not necessarily right or wrong. It's more so that maybe I can give some additional commentary or share some of the lessons that I've learned in terms of, hey, I made that mistake. I made that mistake 10 years ago, 15 years ago. You don't have to make it again. Or at least you should be thinking about these things. These are the things that I learned. You know, I was a great individual contributor, but then when I had to shift to try to lead others, these are some of the things that I struggled with. I think having that, whether it's your own personal advisory board or people that you do have a formal mentor mentee relationship. I think there can be huge value in that.

Nichols: [00:23:41] I totally agree. I mean, no one gets where they want to go by themselves. Yeah.

Hartley: [00:23:48] As you go more further in your career, you realize it's less about you and it's more about the people around you. And what can you do to help them accomplish their goals?

Nichols: [00:23:57] So this is something extra. Dave, what do you believe? It doesn't have to be one. It can be something extras that every leader needs.

Hartley: [00:24:06] You know, I was thinking about this in advance. I had a chance to listen some of the prior episodes. You know, it is when you think about the environments that I've been in. You know, I came out of a traditional CPA training ground, went through big four. I shifted. You know, a lot of the organizations that I've been in, it's been sort of my responsibility to help change the organization and move it forward. So I think, okay, well, we can talk about change, but at the end of the day, if you haven't established the vision of where you're going and people don't understand the why of what we're doing and where we're going and seeing the destination, you can change for you can move cheese all around. But at the end of the day, if people don't understand, this is where we're going. And that's one of the things I really like about Anders, is that we have a very clearly defined vision, mission and core values. And as I look at what I've come in, the firm already had that as a North Star that we were moving towards. My role is to help be a catalyst for the firm to achieve those things. There's a combination of change and optimism, but it really is a strategic vision. If you don't have that and you haven't spent the time to really understand that, and that's one of the things from a consulting perspective that I'll go into an organization and a look at what's happening. And when I ask why? Why are we doing this? And I don't get a clear answer while this is why we're doing this is because it leads, you know, from here to here. Without that linkage and without that knowledge. And that's what higher level leaders need to do, is to help people understand wherever they are in the organization, whatever their roles are, that this is where we're going as an organization. And this is your role and your part in how we're able to get there.

Nichols: [00:25:46] So good. I feel like we could just keep talking and talking to you talking. And maybe we'll have to do a part two. But to wrap this up. Tell me, is there something that's coming up, Dave, that you're excited about that possibly, you know, our listeners could get involved in? And if so, how can they get involved?

Hartley: [00:26:04] Yeah. So probably when I think about my passions outside of work, you know, one of the things that I've been actively involved in is an organization, the St. Louis based nonprofit called Memory Care Home Solutions. And what the organization does is help families that are dealing with dementia or Alzheimer's. The plight of a caregiver in a family where someone is affected by dementia or Alzheimer's is horribly difficult. And so the thing that I'm trying to do is to raise awareness. It's amazing when you talk to people and find out how many

people are dealing with a family member that has dementia or Alzheimer's. And to let them know that there is help that's available, because a lot of times it's like I don't even know where to turn memory care home solutions is the organization that when you get that diagnosis and a lot of our referrals come from doctors and programs that have given that diagnosis and they know the family needs help. So there are a lot of things that families can do. We work with the caregiver as well as help with the person's actually suffering from the disease. But there are a ton of resources that are available. So the thing that I kept hearing, I've been involved with his organization for about five years and I've got a personal connection to it. I hear of people who are telling me about, oh, yeah, we just went through that and how difficult it was. And it pains me to know that people are doing this alone and they don't realize that there are resources out there that can help them.

Nichols: [00:27:26] How can they get more information?

Hartley: [00:27:27] So if you look up memory care, home solutions, there's a Web site with resources, how to contact us. We have intake specialists that when you call, basically, we will connect you to understand where you're at in the journey and figure out how we can help you and what resources we can connect with. If we come into the home and teach you or train you on these certain things based on where you're at and the progression of the disease, these are the things that will help you. These are the tough decisions that you need to make that we can give you some insights into. And it's really the plight of the caregiver, I think is not well enough. Understood until you go through it. And then once you've been through it, I think then it just opens up a whole world of what people are dealing with and how difficult these situations can be.

Nichols: [00:28:09] What a great service.

Hartley: [00:28:10] It's a great organization and I'm Proud to be involved.

Nichols: [00:28:14] Right. Well, Dave. This has been just a true delight for me, just to have you on the show. I'm excited for our listeners to hear this episode. So thank you for making the time today. Absolutely. Thank you.