

MAN ON FIRE PRESENTS
**THE COMBUSTION
CHRONICLES**

**EPISODE TWENTY
MISSION MOUSTACHE**

HOST: SHAWN NASON
CO-HOST: MATTHEW NADU
GUEST: RICH LOESING

NOVEMBER 4, 2020

To download Episode 20 notes, [click here](#).

Shawn: Welcome to "The Combustion Chronicles" podcast, where bold leaders combined with big ideas to create game-changing disruption. I'm Shawn Nason, founder of Man on Fire, and your host for "The Combustion Chronicles." Throughout this series, we're bringing together the most unique and influential minds we could find to have honest conversations about not being okay with the status quo, blowing shit up, and working together to influence our shared future. We believe that when bold leaders ignite consumer-centric ideas with passion and grit, the result is an explosion that creates a better world for all of us. I'm here with my co-host Matthew Nadu.

[00:00:44]

Shawn: On today's episode, we're speaking with Rich Loesing, corporate development manager for Movember. Movember is the leading charity changing the face of men's health on a global scale. It's a global movement that has raised over \$900 million, funded 1200 men's health programs in 21 different countries with focus areas for men's health, around prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and mental health. And by 2030, they hope to reduce the number of men dying prematurely by 25%, reduce male suicide by 25%, and reduce testicular cancer deaths by 50%. Rich, welcome to the program.

Rich: Thank you for having me, Shawn.

Shawn: Yeah. So, Rich, you know, fate seems to align how things happen in the world and this movement around Movember and for men. And Matt, who is co-hosting this episode with us, he and I both work for an organization that I started in October around Truth Tellers, dealing with men who are dealing with loneliness. I heard there's some great news coming out that you shared with us that I'd love for the audience to know around some new focus areas in particular because I think it's a really powerful thing that's happening even within the Movember movement.

Rich: Absolutely. And yeah, as you mentioned, kind of the three flagship causes at Movember are prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and mental health and suicide prevention. But unfortunately, the mental health piece has become more of an issue and more of a concern the last few years. And we know that people are taking their own lives at unprecedented rates. And particularly the reason that Movember decided to champion that cause is because three out of four suicides are men. So, again, we wanted to try to get to the root of that and say, you know, how can we give men, but people, generally, the resiliency, the tools they need to really take care of their health but specifically their mental health? Because, again, we don't want to see men or anyone dying too young. So what are the tools that we can really implement to address

these things and make sure that it doesn't get to a point of crisis down the road where people are considering suicide or, you know, tragically taking their own lives?

[00:02:55]

Shawn: That's great to hear. Especially in this time we're facing, right, and living the new norm you do see those numbers rising, so applause to Movember for taking that on.

Matt: Hey, Rich, while we're early in this conversation, just so guys that are listening, aren't like, "Oh, this pertains to me, this doesn't pertain to me," as far as age and what that looks like, is there a barrier as far as age and where you see a lot these mental health issues come up, like, is age a thing, or do you kind of see this across the board no matter if you're young or old?

Rich: This is something that we certainly see across the board, regardless of a man's age, background, social status, whatever it may be. Obviously, things like anxiety and depression can be caused by a variety of issues. So maybe things that generally affect men in their teens and 20s, aren't the same issues that they're looking at in their 30s, 40s, or even later in life, whether you get to your 60s, 70s or 80s. So, it's absolutely something that affects all men, regardless of age, sexual orientation, background, religion, whatever it may be. But again, what Movember does that I think is really great is we go to where men are to have those discussions and to give men the tools to be mentally resilient and to fight these issues no matter what they're dealing with at the time, whether they're family issues, job issues, personal issues, substance abuse issues. Just getting out there to say, you know, "Here are the tools that you can implement into your own lives and to help support others so that the men in your community and in your life are mentally and physically resilient."

Shawn: That's awesome, Rich. It's great to hear you guys going down that path and, you know, what I've realized is there's probably not enough organizations out there dealing in these issues, not just for men, but across the whole spectrum, for women, for children, for teens. So glad to see that focus happening. So, Rich, you come from a financial and legal background.

Rich: Yeah.

[00:04:50]

Shawn: So how do you find yourself working with a men's foundation focusing on these issues?

Rich: You know, that's a great question and one that I often ask myself sometimes. But what it really comes down to is, what my calling is, what my vocation is, and how I got to it today.

Because, again, I kind of grew up the very standard way in the Midwest. You know, you gotta go to these schools, and you gotta get these degrees, and then got to get these jobs, and then you have this sort of family. And I think one thing that's been great in kind of how our culture has evolved is really encouraging people to follow their passions and their vocations, and really be true to who they are. And again, this goes along with Movember's mission and it's, you know, taking care of people's mental health and wellbeing. But when I moved to LA for law school, it was actually my first year in law school when I heard about Movember.

This was fall of 2009 and one of my buddies said, "Hey, man, do you want to do Movember?" And I go, "I don't know what that is. Tell me more." He goes, "Well, basically we grow mustaches, raise money for men's health, and then we have a big costume party at the end of the month." And I said, "That sounds like my kind of charity." And when you're talking about, you know, being a disruptor, I thought, Movember, I'd never heard of anything like this for a couple reasons. One, a men's charity, right? A lot of the charities, especially with the wonderful success that the women's movement has had particularly in the breast cancer space, it was great and they're doing such great work, and then there was kind of this gap. I'm like, "Well, is there anything for men?" Right?

So being a man myself, I thought that appealed to me. But secondly, the way that Movember was kind of reverent and edgy and fun, but still doing great work, you know, funding these causes of prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and mental health, so it kind of just hit that sweet spot for me. Growing up in the Midwest, you know, taking care of your family and the community and generosity are our values that are really important. So I've never been anti-philanthropy, but I've never really just found that cause that really spoke to me in a way that was kind of fun and engaging, but also for a cause that I really cared about. So, I got involved in Movember in the fall of 2009. That was the first year I grew a really crappy mustache and raised some money and just had a really fun time doing it.

And since then, year after year, I would participate in Movember. So in law school, when I was working at a finance company straight out of law school, I always one month a year had that really gross mustache on my face, but used it as an opportunity to talk about men's health, why it's important, how we should be taking care of ourselves. And that wasn't just in the office. That was with clients, that was with my friends and family members. So, it became a very important part of my life, even if it was just one month a year. People started to say, "Rich's doing Movember again, and this is the time to talk about men's health and the men in your lives." So really it became a very special part of my life. And then when the opportunity came a couple of years ago to become an official employee of the foundation, I jumped at the chance.

And again, this is something that's been very fulfilling for me over these last several years, is to turn this interest in my life into my occupation and to more of a vocation of reaching men and getting men and their families to take care of everyone's health and wellbeing together. So yeah, a little bit interesting of a career path, but again, it was more me just following my calling or what I felt to be my calling to luckily getting paid to do this on a daily basis.

Shawn: Well, Rich, don't feel bad. I'm in my fourth career, so, musician turned pastor, turned finance person, turned entrepreneur that's working on purpose and social issues, and running a consulting company too. So, I love it. I love the paths that we're destined to go on.

Matt: I'm on, like, my third to fourth. So, I'm just following Shawn. As he switches, I'll switch.

Shawn: You've still got 10 years to catch up on me though, Matt. So, tell me, what motivated Movember to focus on facial hair for their awareness campaign of men's health? Because let's be real, you talk about your horrible mustache, I still struggle, I wear a goatee, but to go a month without shaving, I'd look like a burly ape, so, right? And I just, I keep mine really cut, but... So, what motivated Movember to pick that, facial hair?

Rich: You know, the story of its founding is actually a pretty funny one. It started actually in Australia. So, it was 2003 and a couple of buddies, they were out skateboarding, and they stopped at a pub to have a couple pints. And they were talking about fashion trends and how things go in and out of fashion and everything comes back and it's cyclical. And they said, "You know what really hasn't come back since the '70s and '80s is the mustache. We should bring back the mustache." So, they said, "Let's turn November, let's grow Mos," which is what, you know, a slang term for a mustache down under. They said, "Let's turn November into Movember, and grow some mustaches." So that first Movember, a group of 30 guys all grew mustaches and threw a big costume party at the end of the month and just had a great time with it.

And then, the following year, they said, "You know what, maybe we should tie a cause to this. Because if we don't do this for something bigger than ourselves just having a good time, you know, our wives will probably leave us, our bosses will fire us because we look weird with these mustaches." So that year they found out that prostate cancer was a very serious issue that affected a lot of men and one that it seemed many people weren't really talking about or addressing. So, they decided to turn their Movember party into a fundraiser. And that was kind of the beginning of the worldwide movement that since then has raised over \$900 million and

we've had 5 million Mo Bros and Mo Sisters around the world participate. That was kind of the beginning of how it all started.

But one thing we've realized too is because mustaches still really haven't come totally back into fashion, they're unique and sometimes odd, and they're a great way to start a conversation. And again, when it comes to men taking care of themselves, men die on average six years earlier than women. And a large reason for that is because, generally speaking, men don't take care of themselves, whether it's their physical health, their mental health, their emotional health, as well as our female counterparts. So, the mustache is a great and kind of often humorous way to start those conversations and to really just open up, like, "Hey, man, what's going on with that weird mustache on your face?" "Oh, I'm doing it from Movember. It's about men's health and how men should be taking care of themselves." And it's just a great opportunity to open that door, to start those conversations that people, and especially men, might not otherwise have.

[00:11:30]

Shawn: We talked about this whole concept around disruption within MOFI, our consulting side, and now within Truth Tellers, how to really disrupt the men's movement. So, what has made Movember stand out as an innovative and impactful social enterprise and disruption to the market? What do you think has been the secret?

Rich: Well, disruption is absolutely key because you can't really get true innovation without disruption. And as I mentioned in my personal story with Movember, in Movember, when I started participating, I saw a charity unlike any charity that I'd seen before. It was fun, it was cool, it was getting men in their 20s and 30s to actively fundraise and take part in philanthropy. I mean, getting men in their 20s to do anything meaningful can be quite difficult, let alone doing something kind of above and beyond themselves, something for a great cause. I think, 20 years ago, if you would have said, "Do you think there's any meaningful way we can get young men to participate in charitable activities?" People would just be throwing their hands up, like, "I have no idea how that would even be possible." And Movember kind of filled that space. It hit demographics, you know, men, especially men from their 20s to 40s and 50s, and to do it in a fun and unique and innovative way of not taking it too seriously.

I mean, there's so many great charities out there that are doing fantastic work across the board, but a lot of times it can be very cookie-cutter, very standard, you know, "Let's do a 5K. Let's do a phone-a-thon," or a whatever it may be, but nobody's like, "Let's change our facial hair to make it look goofy and fun and weird for an entire month and use that as the foundation for

these philanthropic ventures." So just the way that Movember really said, you know, "Who are we trying to talk to? And who are we getting to try to change their behavior in a positive way? It's men. So how do we reach men? How do we get them to have a good time?" And again, it's going to where men are, what they're interested in, and just having fun while doing good. So, again, and even to this day, you know, Movember has been around nearly 20 years and I still haven't seen a ton of charities that are really embracing this "Let's just have a good time" model and use the cause as a nice icing on the cake to be supported through this engaging, fun atmosphere. So again, I think Movember's unparalleled in that regard.

Shawn: So, let's go there for a second, Rich. In a couple of our previous episodes, we've had the CEO from BCRF, Myra Biblowit, and CEO from SGK Paula Schneider, and these are breast cancer foundations. So, can you tell me what have you learned or any lessons you've learned from these foundations? And do you have any plans at Movember to move into direct financing of research for a cure to prostate and testicular cancers in the same way that these large breast cancer foundations have?

Rich: Absolutely. So, we've actually taken part in tons of research already with partner organizations. So, for example, in terms of partner organizations, the Prostate Cancer Foundation here in Los Angeles, actually, is one of the largest recipients of funds that we raise through the Movember campaign annually. So there are Movember's specifically funded projects within the research space already. And that's just one of several. As you mentioned earlier, we funded over 1200 projects in 21 different countries. So, the money that we raise every year, primarily in Movember, but throughout the year, go to funding all of those projects, right? So some of those are in the biotech and research space. In the mental health specifically, it's a lot of preventative community-based programs.

So, we have both partner organizations that we work with that help us achieve these goals in these three key areas of prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and mental health and suicide prevention. And then we also have internal programs that Movember kind of owns and operates in those spaces as well. So, the short answer is yes, we do as much as we can in all those three areas all the way from the biotech and the research up to the preventative measures and community implementation aspects. One of the actual projects that we're really excited about that we launched very recently is our Movember Conversations tool. And to kind of get back into the mental health and suicide prevention space, it's an online digital tool that offers practical guidance on managing difficult conversations.

Again, one of the things that men struggle with generally is having those really serious, profound discussions because a lot of times you'll hit roadblocks, or you may not know how to handle it in the right way. But this is a tool that anybody can use. And by logging on to conversations.movember.com, you can go through some sample conversations about people that have maybe struggled with job loss or social isolation or family pressures and difficulties. So again, that's just one of our digital tools that we provide to the community. But again, we have tools ranging from self-help, to just advice, to community programs, to biotech and research partners. We try to hit it all the way across the board.

[00:16:42]

Matt: I love that you're doing that, Rich, because that's so essential, especially for men and women right now as well. But men tend to shy away from these conversations because they feel like they're alone in whatever's going on. Whether it's depression or losing their job or...men want to control things, not being able to fix them, or just even their health. And like you said, men don't take care of themselves as much, and we don't want to have these conversations because of that shame or that fear or whatever's going on. So, to be able to have this online platform, is essential and realistically will save lives.

Rich: Absolutely. And that's the key, really. It's just opening that door to conversations because again, personal connection, whether it's, you know, in-person physically or via zoom or a phone call, it's so important. And we just encourage, check in on people, especially in difficult times, you know, when people are worried about the pandemic or health issues or financial struggles, just check in, really, just engage. Ask those questions, "Hey, how are you holding up?" You know, "What's going on? Is there anything I can help with?" And then being vulnerable yourself. One thing that I found not only from being involved in Movember and working at Movember, is through some of the men's groups. Matt, you and I are in a men's group together on Wednesday mornings, just leading with vulnerability. Because when you say, you know, "Here's who I am, here's what I'm struggling with, here's where I'm at," it really opens the door and gives men the permission, for lack of a better word, to share their own struggles, their own problems, their own difficulties. And when you could have that, that openness, that vulnerability, it goes a really long way to get people, generally, to take care of themselves.

Shawn: Love that. In Truth Tellers, we have a tagline that says, "living authentically in the land of bullshit," How do we stay in that authentic place with each other? I'm really intrigued and excited when we learned about this, but last year you guys made your first pride campaign aiming to broaden the conversation around men's physical and mental health, which actually

features a drag queen who performs as Jezebel Bardot. Does this mean we should expect to see more ways to broaden the conversation?

Rich: Absolutely. So, again, one thing that we know is that diseases do not discriminate, regardless of your age, your background, your sexual orientation, your interests, these are things that can affect anybody. So again, it's really going to where men are, going to where people are, and saying, "Hey, how can we help you take care of your health?" Whether that's your mental health, your emotional health, your physical health, and "How can we be a resource? How can we help provide tools to make you live authentically, to be who you are and who you were meant to be?" So, absolutely. And that's why one great thing I've seen over time is not only reaching men of all different backgrounds, but also engaging women into the Movember movement as well, because the same way that I encourage our supporters to really be advocates for women's health because, again, women's health affects society, the same way that men's health affects society.

So just getting everybody as part of the conversation. It's important that everybody has voices at this table and that we're all working together to prolong the lives and increase the health and wellbeing of everybody. Right? So, again, that's another thing that I think Movember does incredibly well, is going to the cutting edge, reaching out to people that may not feel welcome in certain ways, may not feel part of a community in certain ways and saying, "Hey, come be part of our community because men's health is a societal issue." And again, whatever we can do to support the men in our world, we want to give those tools and resources to support all of society. Women, men, people that identify as different genders, children, elderly, whatever it may be, because we understand that this goes far beyond just men.

[00:20:34]

Shawn: Yeah. You have this new campaign as well called "Move for Movember," calling on people to run or walk 60 miles over the month. So that's 60 miles for the 60 men who lose to suicide each hour and every hour across the world. Where did that idea come from?

Rich: Yeah. And you hit the nail on the head. It's a sobering and tragic statistic that globally, one man takes his own life every minute. So literally just, you know, in the course of this conversation, dozens of men will have unfortunately taken their own lives as they couldn't see another way out. And the reason that... yeah, that's the reason we chose that 60 number. Try to, you know, walk or run 60 miles throughout the month of November. But it actually goes to a bigger thing of just physical fitness and wellbeing. And we know that everybody's kind of at

different parts of their fitness journey, whether you're just getting started or maybe you're one of those freaks of nature that can run those 100-mile marathons.

But we know, and the science has been in for a long time. The healthier we are physically, not only does it lower the chances of suffering from physical diseases, but it's also so good for your mental health, your emotional health. So, again, we've been integrating kind of different fitness campaigns into Movember over the last several years. And the last couple of years, we've really been focusing on how can we get people to stay active throughout the month and really work on their health while also tying it in to an important cause that is that 60 number of the 60 men that tragically take their own lives every hour?

[00:22:08]

Matt: I feel like tying that stat in, for me, you were talking about doing like 5Ks, you know, charities do this, but when I'm thinking about... and I haven't participated in a move, but I love this and I want to be involved in this. But it's like every mile I'm running, it's like honoring somebody who takes their life. So, I love that aspect of it. It's brilliant.

Shawn: Wow. So, Rich we're coming to the close of the episode. If there's anything that we haven't covered, we haven't said here, is there anything that you just...a message you want to get out to the listeners to help, support, or just hear around Movember?

[00:22:48]

Rich: Yes. And once again, I just wanted to thank you for having me on, Shawn. And the biggest thing, the one takeaway that I think anyone listening should really get is it's okay to not feel awesome all the time, right? Even to feel bad. And even if you feel bad frequently, it's something that's normal. It's something that we all deal with in different ways and at different times. But just know that people are here for you, Movember is here for you, your friends are here for you, and reach out. Because one thing that we found is, particularly when it comes to people that may be feeling despair or depression or anxiety, is that, that communication, just someone reaching out and saying, "Hey, I'm here for you. Is there anything I can do for you? How can I help? What's going on?" That goes such a long way.

And if you have friends that you think might be struggling, whatever it may be, reach out. If someone just had a kid, new fatherhood is one of those times in life where it's actually very difficult for a lot of men. So, if you know a buddy that had a kid recently or maybe lost their job, reach out, just check in, let them know that you're there for them. And again, that goes a really, really, really long way. And Movember's here for you as well. So, we have such a great

community. Here in the United States, we have tens and tens of thousands of men and women that participate annually, just here, let alone the tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands all over the world. So, we have a great community. So use Movember, go to movember.com, check out the resources that we have, sign up and participate, grow a mustache, have some fun, but just know that we care, that people care, and it's okay to not feel great all the time.

Rich: So invite your friends, get those Mo Sisters involved because, again, women and the support of our wonderful women in our community, we couldn't do it without because again, you know, a lot of times it takes those strong women to really engage those conversations, to make sure that men are really taking care of themselves. So, yeah, spread the word, get those mustaches out, get involved in whatever way that you'd like, or you're interested in or you can, and just thank you to everybody who is already supporting and will be supporting for helping us change the face of men's health.

Matt: Who's your dream mustache by the way?

Rich: Ooh, that's a phenomenal question. So, do you mean my favorite mustache or who do I wish we could get a mustache on?

Matt: If you could have anybody's mustache, who would that be?

[00:25:14]

Rich: Oh, man. I think I'd be remiss not to say Tom Selleck. I mean, that is just the glorious, the pinnacle of all mustaches. I will say my dream mustache in terms of who I would love to get a mustache on. If we could get a mustache on Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, I think he would look stunning and be one of the best advocates we've ever had for the mental health piece in particular. But he would be the world-class Mo Bro. He's already a world-class guy, but he would be the number one Mo Bro of all time, in my opinion.

Shawn: We may have to try to figure out how to reach out and see if we make that happen, Rich, so...

Shawn: Well, we've come to this point in this episode where we have this segment called the combustion questions and we use this algorithm to come up with these amazing questions and they just get spit out at us. So, there's three questions that have come across the table to me, Rich. So, we're gonna jump into them and have some fun with them. Just say what's first of mind on your head. So here is combustion question number one.

Rich: All right. Let's rock and roll.

Shawn: If you could only watch one movie the rest of your life and could watch that movie an unlimited number of times, what movie would that be?

Rich: Great question. I have so many movies I love. I would probably say "Dumb and Dumber." Classic comedy, rewatchability value is 1000, so "Dumb and Dumber," probably.

Shawn: Awesome. Love it. All right. Combustion question number two. Swimming pool, beach, or lake?

Rich: I'm a Midwesterner at heart so I got to go lakes. I think you can avoid the sand, stay clean, stay fun, do the tubing, the skiing, got to go lakes.

Shawn: Gotta be lakes. All right. Now this one's the one you have to really put your hat on for.

Rich: (laughs) All right.

Shawn: So, Rich, what do you think about waffles?

Rich: Hmm, my general opinion on waffles. I'm for them. You know, I gotta be honest, when it comes to breakfast food, I'm not much of a carby guy. I try to stay away from the pancakes and waffles, but the waffles, I prefer waffles to pancakes, personally.

Shawn: Next time you come to Cincinnati, we'll hook up and go have some waffles and pancakes together. So, Rich, thanks so much for sharing about Movember and what's happening and we're really excited and we're happy to help and support in any way. So, stay safe and be well, and we'll talk soon.

[00:27:36]

Rich: Thank you so much. Appreciate you guys and all the awesome work that you're doing.

Shawn: Awesome.

Matt: Thanks, Rich.

Shawn: Thanks.

Shawn: Thank you so much for listening to this episode of "The Combustion Chronicles." None of this is possible without you the listener. If you'd like to keep the conversation going, look up Man on Fire on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and at manonfire.co. Give us a shout. Let us know what you think. And please, subscribe, rate, and review if you like what we're doing and if you don't do it anyways. And remember, always stay safe and be well.