

Episode 5 - Military Leadership

Jad Sobh: You're listening to *Ground Breaking: Where Consulting Meets Innovation..*

Jad Sobh: All right. Welcome back to *Ground Breaking: Where Consulting Meets Innovation*. My name is Jad Sobh.

Peter Nabhan: And I'm Peter Nabhan. Jad and I work for a company called ECS Group of Companies and we're a nationwide engineering consulting firm.

Jad Sobh: Today, we have brought on two industry thought leaders, offering their lessons in leadership.

Jad Sobh: I want to introduce our guests, John Hicks and Ben Temple. John Hicks is a seasoned civil engineering professional with extensive leadership experience in both military and civilian sectors. He currently serves as the subsidiary regional manager and senior vice president at ECS Group of Companies, overseeing operations in West Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale and Miami, FL.

Jad Sobh: John, would you be able to share a little bit about your military experience real quick? And how long you've served?

John Hicks: Absolutely. I started in the Virginia Army National Guard originally in 2004, served there for about 13 years and now serving in the Florida Army National Guard for the last seven years. So, over 20 years of cumulative service. I started as a second lieutenant and have gone all the way up to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. I started my career primarily as a Combat Engineer 12 Alpha MOS. And then, through the period of the last several years have gone from combat engineering to more of a staff-level engineer brigade engineer. Now, currently serving as our construction and facilities management officer for the Florida Army National Guard, helping oversee the inventory of armories and other facilities that we have across the state.

Jad Sobh: Awesome. Appreciate all that. Ben Temple is an accomplished civil engineer and military veteran with over two decades of experience in engineering, project management and leadership.

Jad Sobh: He currently serves as the southern regional manager at ECS Group of Companies, where he oversees operations across offices in Western North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. Ben, if you could give us the same, we'd love to know a little bit more about your service and how long you were in.

Ben Temple: Yeah, yeah, not quite as extensive as John there.

Ben Temple: My hat's off to those that have made it a career. That's fantastic, John. I was in active duty for about four and a half years right out of college. I did ROTC in college went straight into active duty. Of course, 9/11 happened while I was on active duty. So, I deployed a couple of times there.

Ben Temple: I got off of active duty, started my career as an engineer and was actually recalled out of the inactive ready reserve and then spent another year and a half on active duty after that. So, the grand total was about five and a half, to six years. A long time ago, though.

Peter Nabhan: Excellent. Thank you, Ben, for sharing and thank you both for your service over 25 years of cumulative service. And then, honestly, being able to do both of them? That's not easy. You're doing John, in your case, you're doing two full-time jobs. That's quite impressive. But one thing, one thing that you hit on, I feel like our listeners would be interested to listen to, is you're in your maybe early twenties, you're still in college and you feel like maybe you got a calling. I think we would like to learn about the inspiration behind you joining the military or serving. John, I'm going to start with you.

John Hicks: So I think the initial kind of start to this, if I want to start at the very beginning, was team sports. I always enjoyed being part of teams and I played soccer and basketball. There's something about being part of a team that I really enjoyed being part of those types of organizations.

John Hicks: And as I was looking at my college career and where I was going to be going, I had looked at a lot of different colleges and the one that stood out to me the most was the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). There was something about the school, the institute, that really spoke to me in terms of teamwork and camaraderie and building up yourself to being more than just an individual. And I also had the ability to play soccer there as well, which was another bonus. So as I joined VMI, I experienced the ROTC life and both on the VMI side of the house and the military activities they had us do for the school, but also as part of the ROTC program.

John Hicks: And I actually joined the Army ROTC. They offered all services, Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps. But when they did the presentations for each ROTC. There was a rumor going around during the presentation that the army was going to give a \$600 stipend for clothing allowance. So that's what sold me at the time.

John Hicks: 600 dollars was a lot of money. So, I joined the Army ROTC my freshman year and my sophomore year, I was given an opportunity to get an Army ROTC scholarship and I wasn't sure if I wanted to do that. Actually, at that point, I'd been through my first year at VMI and been through a lot of hardship your first year at any service academy and I was very hesitant as to whether or not I wanted to take the scholarship because it was going to be an eight-year active duty commitment following graduation.

John Hicks: And so as I'm sitting there contemplating this, the planes hit the two towers at the world trade center, 9/11. And at that point, I said to myself, "You know what, I gotta serve. I've got training. I feel like I can be part of the national response to this." So, I went ahead and signed on for the scholarship and made that commitment to serve beyond graduation.

John Hicks: And as it turns out, a lot of other people did the same thing as a service senior service academy. I was given an active duty slot guaranteed upon graduation. There were a lot of other second lieutenants commissioning that were part of other schools that weren't guaranteed a slot. So I was actually able to as I got to my senior year through a matter of several circumstances, given the option to go into the National Guard, which is more of a part-time service.

John Hicks: I was able to basically transfer my active duty commitment to a National Guard commitment upon finding a National Guard unit to join. So that's how everything led for me from going, to basically wanting to be part of some kind of team or service to actually going into the service upon graduation.

Peter Nabhan: That's a very compelling story, John. I can speak for myself. I got the chills when you mentioned 9/11. It's good that a lot of people stepped up to serve the country and protect us. I think that's very compelling. I appreciate you sharing that. And I love that it started about a team.

Peter Nabhan: We're all a team. We're all trying to achieve things together, collectively as a society, or as small as a soccer team of 11 people. I was going to switch it over now to Mr. Ben Temple.

Ben Temple: Okay. Yeah. I wish that I could say that I had an altruistic call to serve my country and had always wanted to be a soldier. The truth is, I needed money for college. As I was coming out of high school, I had the option to go to an in-state state school that I could probably afford.

Ben Temple: My first choice was an out-of-state liberal arts, private liberal arts college. It was significantly more expensive, and probably like a lot of military service members who came from a middle-class family that didn't have parents who were going to write a check for my college tuition.

Ben Temple: So I needed to pay my own way. I knew the part of deciding to go to school in Chicago was going to be that I was going to have to pay for it through ROTC. So, knowing very little and not coming from a military family, at orientation, I walked up to the ROTC desk and talked to the recruiter, said, "Hey, I understand you've got money for college."

Ben Temple: And he said, "Yes, I do. So step this way and sign right up." So I did ROTC in my first year, but actually not on scholarship. Had a blast, met some great people, a lot of the things John talked about, camaraderie and team building. And then at the end of that year, I applied for a scholarship, was awarded a top-tier scholarship that paid for pretty much my next what turned out to be four years of undergraduate, a total of five, if you're doing the math.

Ben Temple: And so that was it. I committed right then as a 19-year-old to give away four years of college and four years of active, at least four years of active duty and then, as I mentioned, some inactive time after that, but once I got involved, I will say that where I fell in love with the military, I was doing the ROTC thing, I was doing classes, I was doing school stuff and then the summer after my, I think it was my sophomore year, I had an opportunity to go to the US Army Airborne School as a cadet. So I went down to Fort Benning, GA and then in a period of three weeks, saw them train 400 dudes jump out of an aircraft safely five times. Just being a part of the actual army it was a training environment, but the real army and around guys that had signed up to do not just the basics but wanted to get to that next level was really inspiring and just watching these guys be devoted to it.

Ben Temple: It was a blast. So, I had a blast, came back to school, renewed and ready to go and then continued on with my career from there.

Peter Nabhan: Excellent. I love that at 19 years old, Ben, you were able to see an opportunity, take it and once you took the opportunity, which is honestly a great financial decision at 19 years old, you were able to find your 'why', when you actually served. I think that's a cool story. I actually have a bonus question here. So, for our listeners, Jad Sobh is actually in the military as well. So I'm going to ask about your inspiration behind joining Jad.

Jad Sobh: So I joined at a different time; I think I was probably six or seven years old when 9/11 happened.

Jad Sobh: So any memory that I have of that is very vague. And I really didn't join, until 11 years later in 2013. But I think the thing for me and you're getting it from John and Ben, is that everybody kind of joins for different reasons. I think mine was more so the family aspect of that. My grandfather, his brother and then their brother-in-law all served in World War II.

Jad Sobh: I had an uncle who served in Vietnam and then a cousin who was in the army around 9/11, who also did a couple of tours in Iraq. So, for me, one of the big ones was the family aspect of it. But then, also to have grown up around it in a sense, I think it was also to look for something bigger than myself and finding something that would give me a sense of fulfillment at the end of the day when the work was done. I've definitely gotten that over my time in the military for sure.

Peter Nabhan: Excellent. And I know you're still part time, so we appreciate your service too. I want to switch this back to John and Ben.

Peter Nabhan: So you have over 25 years of cumulative experience in the military and I'm sure you've learned a lot of leadership lessons. You're both leaders at ECS. So I want to know, maybe briefly. How did your military experience shape your leadership experience or leadership style within an engineering company?

Peter Nabhan: We'll take maybe John first.

John Hicks: As I'm sure most people hopefully recognize is that the military is really, built around the leadership principles. We actually have an acronym in the military leadership which describes loyalty duty. It describes respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage.

John Hicks: Those really embody the type of people that we look to not only have as part of a military organization, but also as part of leaders in any organization. The military model really helps shape and mold young people into actually practicing many of those principles on a daily basis and on a frequent basis under all different types of circumstances.

John Hicks: There are a lot of different challenges and unique situations that you are exposed to in the military and there's the guiding principles. In the different words that are part of that acronym, how those are applied in each one of those situations, that are consistent and that you stay focused on maintaining each one of those at the highest level.

John Hicks: One of the things that I also think maybe is misunderstood about the military, is that everything is about discipline. And that is true. There is a high level of discipline that goes along with being part of a military organization, but there's also a lot of compassion and empathy. There's a lot of understanding that goes into being a good military leader.

John Hicks: There are key phrases and buzzwords that get put around in terms of leadership styles. One of those is called servant leadership, which is something that I look to try to embody as far as my own personal leadership style, where you're willing to prioritize others before yourself.

John Hicks: When you're in the chow line, do you go and eat first before your soldiers, or do you wait for all your soldiers to eat before you eat? That's just an example of what a servant leader does. They look out for the others before they look out for themselves. They lead by example. They demonstrate self-discipline. They own their mistakes and take extreme ownership over how they

view their responsibility to the group. I often say that when you're looking at that team model and that team mentality, one of the more important things that I also look to incorporate, is always praising people in a group and disciplining in private and that's part of building the trust within the group. Having that self-accountability and self-awareness, knowing that you're always being watched. And as soon as you show them that you're not doing something that you're supposed to be doing, or you're bending the rules, or you're breaking the rules, everyone's watching you a hundred percent of the time.

John Hicks: Having a high level of self-accountability is also something I try to maintain for my folks by leading by example. I'm not going to send someone out there to do something that I wouldn't go out and do myself. If my people see that, that's part of building trust. Always give credit to the group. And always take personal responsibility for the mistakes. Those are some of the leadership principles that I've taken from the military and applied to my civilian career.

Peter Nabhan: That's really excellent. And the topic of servant leadership, from my standpoint, it's one of the best ways to actually serve and the best ways to grow enterprises and the military. Sounds like it's very much aligned with how we would like to do leadership. I want to pass it on to Ben to hear his opinion.

Peter Nabhan: Obviously he's been in this leadership role for quite some time at ECS. So I'm sure there are a lot of lessons you're able to share with us.

Ben Temple: Yeah. John really, really knocked it out of the park there. All of those things are exactly right. And I agree across the board. For me, I never really went through any formal leadership training.

Ben Temple: I didn't consider myself a leader coming into the military, so everything I know about leadership, I learned in the military and through formal and informal processes, watching people and just working with some really great leaders that exhibited all the traits that John just mentioned. But specifically, the servant leadership part, there, you'll hear different people have different experiences in the military, but there are certainly quote-unquote 'toxic leaders.'

Ben Temple: There are people that are in it for themselves. They're trying to steal the spotlight or they're trying to look good, but those are really few and far between. In my experience, I worked with some really great servant leaders when I was there and it's the example for really everything that I do.

Ben Temple: It's hard to pinpoint the specific practices that we implement at ECS in a leadership role, it's really more of who you are as a leader but the ones that John mentioned of putting other people before yourself, primarily, our job exists as leaders to, to clear obstacles out of the way for our people to do good work, to hire good people and turn them loose, to do great things, hold people accountable and make them more successful.

Ben Temple: And ultimately, that's what it's about. The other thing that you touched on, John, that I really resonate with is, giving praise in public, criticizing in private and that you are as the leader. This is something that maybe we need to talk about more often: the leader is ultimately responsible for everything their subordinates do and fail to do.

Ben Temple: We talk about that a lot in the military. And we could talk about that more at work because that really is the essence of leadership, which is that you take ownership of what your subordinates do. When you think about the world through that lens, it makes you want to support people more and throw them under the bus less.

Ben Temple: It makes you want to make your subordinates better because you know that ultimately it's a reflection on you as a leader in their performance, if that kind of makes sense. Not that you would do it from a selfish standpoint, but it creates an environment where you are all about the other person and not about yourself, which is a great environment.

Ben Temple: I think you can also tell that ECS was founded by and led by military leaders. So, if you think of Henry and the others founders that were, in the military, it's in the ethos of this company, whether people realize it or not.

Jad Sobh: Yeah, absolutely. It's definitely one of those things. I think even at my level, having come in on the enlisted side, it's definitely something that you or you're working towards from day one. Everybody at some point in their career from, E1 private all the way up. You're going to be put in a leadership role at some point and it's not necessarily sink or swim, but you've got to adapt and overcome.

Jad Sobh: So we're going to stick with you, Ben, for this one, so we've talked about, like, how it's influenced your leadership style and all that; what was it like your first command experience, whether it was in a training environment on deployment, who was it that helped guide you? What was that feeling like as a whole? It can be a little anxiety-inducing at times that first time you're stepping up in front of your Joes and you have to—start leading.

Ben Temple: I'm laughing because you're exactly right. I immediately go to my first platoon as a second lieutenant, fresh out of school. This is something else that people that aren't in the military can't appreciate, that as a 22 or 23-year-old, you're entrusted with tens of millions of dollars of equipment and dozens of subordinates.

Ben Temple: And yeah, it is super intimidating on day one to stand in front of your soldiers and that they know nothing. And you got to just own it and go through the process. So I had a great platoon sergeant who was a 20 or 18-ish-year guy who thought he was old at the time.

Ben Temple: He was probably 38. If that and he definitely took me under his wing. He had that place whipped into shape and he made me look like a rock star from day one. We'd be working out rucksack BT and he said, he's my partner and he's like doing all the heavy lifting the whole time, making me look like I'm doing all the reps and just set me up for success the whole way, steered me around a lot of potholes.

Ben Temple: Literal and figurative, as I think about it. So, he was the key to that success. Then as I moved to the next unit, I was in more of a staff role. Like I said, I've worked with, in my opinion, some of the best leaders in the industry—Downrange and doing some fun stuff.

Ben Temple: It definitely is all about the team when you're in those positions.

Jad Sobh: Absolutely. John, what about that for you? What was it like?

John Hicks: It's interesting Ben brought up the platoon sergeant. I know as a second lieutenant stepping in front of your soldiers that you're leading for the first time, you're really leaning on the experience and the knowledge that your platoon sergeant, who's effectively your right hand. For those who don't understand, there's two chains of being in the military. There's the officer side and the non-commissioned officer side or the enlisted side. And that non-commissioned officer, that platoon sergeant has, at that point, probably 10 to 15 years of experience in the military going up from private all the way up to typically a Sergeant First Class.

John Hicks: But I'll tell you, that's one of the more significant relationships that I've learned from, even to this day, being a subsidiary regional manager at ECS. As far as my role and responsibility and, or my position in the military, I came into the National Guard, but the National Guard, even though it's part-time, you do get activated and called for active duty service.

John Hicks: As part of that, I activated both Iraq and Afghanistan on active duty full deployments. I remember my platoon sergeant and I being activated for Iraq in 2006. So, going from part-time and me working at ECS to being pulled out of that and then sent to a war zone and having him there by my side helped him being my right hand and helping me through a lot of very challenging and difficult situations in combat.

John Hicks: I can't say enough about the importance of having someone that you can lean on at that level, someone that can help you with complicated situations. Helping you with pushing out your directives and in your vision to soldiers, to keeping them safe, to keeping them in line, keeping the morale up, all of those things that, as officers and as leaders of an organization, we cannot always do.

John Hicks: We cannot always have the pulse of what every single soldier, every single team is doing. That platoon sergeant fills the gaps. I will say that was probably, one of the most important people that I had, who I learned from initially when I first got into the military and to this day, bringing it full circle to civilian life as an office manager or department manager or regional manager.

John Hicks: Always look to have that right-hand person there by your side, whether it's an assistant office manager or an office administrator. For me, it's always been an office administrator. As a branch manager, I always had that office administrator who would always fill in the gaps, who would always give me feedback and who was my litmus test, if you will, of how things were running in the office.

John Hicks: Having that open dialogue and conversation, even though that's an administrative person, get over yourself for the fact that you're a branch manager and you think that you're important. Understand that those people also have experiences. They have different perspectives. They have ideas and thoughts that can really improve you and shape you as a leader within the organization. I really harnessed a lot of that early on in my career in the military with that platoon sergeant, for sure.

Jad Sobh: That's awesome. So we've gotten over some of those feelings from some of those memories. So John, we'll start with you and then throw it over to Ben, of, obviously when you're in the military, we're going through training courses all the time, whether it be the distributed learnings now, or actually like Ben going to airborne school or something like that, so were there any courses or maybe even some key experiences that you had, during your time or in John, your case,

while you're still in that you would say has impacted your success? Both in the military as well as on the civilian side.

John Hicks: Yeah, the first one that comes to mind, which is probably one of the most difficult schools in the military, is the Sapper Leader course.

John Hicks: I know, Jad, you're a combat engineer; you're probably familiar with the course. Basically, it's 28 days of hell on earth. It really tests you to the ultimate boundaries and beyond the boundaries of what you could ever realize that your body, mind and spirit could ever go through.

John Hicks: We're talking about a course that really breaks you down all the way to the core and then continues to break you. A lot of people know Ranger School as an example for the listeners who may not necessarily be familiar with the engineer course it is comparable. Now, Ranger School is a longer course; it's several months long with different phases.

John Hicks: Sapper School is, in my estimation, all that just compressed into 28 days. But, that course in itself makes you realize that you can really push yourself beyond boundaries that you ever felt like you could push yourself beyond. They throw fear into the mix by having you jump off repel towers face first when you're really not all that familiar with how to repel.

John Hicks: They teach you how to do something over a course of 15 minutes. And then they have you go and execute it. Like you've been doing it for several years. They have you lead during periods of I won't say, starvation, but they definitely have, you only eat once and you're doing missions all day.

John Hicks: You're on sleep deprivation. There was one example where I was on a mission for about 23 and a half hours. I had 30 minutes where I sat down, fell asleep and then you were back at it again and you had another full day of training on patrol. Just, you learn so much and you really understand the value of teamwork and relationship building because I was always the type of person that I always felt like I could just figure it out for myself for the most part. Like I can figure this problem out. I can solve this issue. I can take on this task. But that's a course in which they force you to rely on all different types of people with all different types of experiences. Otherwise, you fail. It doesn't matter how good you are individually. If you do not learn how to work well with others, you will not do well during the course.

John Hicks: And I'll say that was probably the one course, like significant course that really put a lot of things in perspective outside of the deployments I was on in Iraq and Afghanistan. That's probably the course that pushed me beyond the boundaries of my own capability and I was able to accomplish it, which obviously meant a lot, so that was my big experience as far as the course, but highly suggest if you're not familiar with the course, you could look it up and you can see all the different tests and tribulations that you have to go through.

Peter Nabhan: By the way, John, how do you spell it? And how can a civilian sign up?

John Hicks: I don't think you'd want to sign up, Peter.

Peter Nabhan: Sounds wow. Sounds like a hell week.

Jad Sobh: It's, the joke, the between, obviously, I'm in a weird position where I was both infantry and now I'm a combat engineer. So it's a little head-butting with myself that goes on because engineers and infantrymen typically like to butt heads on things.

John Hicks: Yes.

Jad Sobh: But the joke is that Sapper is harder to get because there are a lot less people walking around with a Sapper tab than there are Ranger tabs.

Jad Sobh: So that's the thing that they, the engineers rightfully hold over infantry in that regard. But Let's throw it over to you, Ben. What about you?

Ben Temple: Yeah, like I mentioned, I think airborne school comes to mind. It certainly is not to the limits of Sapper School. I do a lot of sappers and rangers, I was in the airborne infantry battalion, but. The US Airborne School was my first real experience with the active duty military. Like I said, it gave me an opportunity to be face-to-face with a well-run training environment and the NCOs running those guys around. The thing that was, I won't say life changing, but it was significant for me was, I was 19 years old going through this airborne school and it was hard.

Ben Temple: I won't go into the details of it. There were definitely challenging parts to it. But I remember in particular, you do all this, these PT, do the long runs and people are dropping out left and right. We lost something like 30% of our class and airborne school. And I remember at one point hanging in the harness shed is one of the kinds of breaking point training exercise you go through hanging the harness shed hanging from a parachute harness for a couple hours, your legs are falling asleep and everything's miserable. They're yelling at you and it's hot It was July in Columbus, GA, but I'm watching people literally pull their harnesses and just walk away and they were done. They're walking around with a popsicle, asking people to quit and they give a popsicle. But I'm watching these guys drop and I thought, you know what, if I'm going to quit, it's going to be an active decision that I'm going to have, to raise my hand and quit. And it doesn't matter if it's a run, it doesn't matter if it's a harness shed, it doesn't matter what I'm doing. As long as I don't quit, I'm going to get through this class and through this course.

Ben Temple: So that was pretty significant for me. Again, as a 19-year-old, I kind of feel my way in the world that I've carried with me since then, is that if you're going to not accomplish something that is a goal of yours, it's because you chose not to accomplish it. It's not because circumstances got in the way.

Ben Temple: It's not because it was too hard. There's very little that we face in our life that is actually too hard for us. It's because we choose to quit. And so that's something I've carried with me throughout. As long as you don't quit, you're probably going to get where you want to go.

Peter Nabhan: Absolutely. Mindset is everything.

Peter Nabhan: It sounds like both of you were very exposed to very challenging situations early on, which helped you be mentally tough and physically tough and now you're able to take on almost any challenge. Moving forward, I'm going to send you all the tough problems John. Since you can take care of it.

Peter Nabhan: No, that's awesome. Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with us. I think our listeners would really like to learn a little bit more. Just get a kind of a look under the hood of what it's like to serve and how you can transfer that into your civilian life.

Peter Nabhan: And since we're getting close to the end of the podcast, we'd like to end it with the same question that we ask everybody. And the question is, are you able to share about something in your life that has been groundbreaking? This could be personal or professional or, in your case, obviously, in the military.

Peter Nabhan: John, I think we'll start with you.

John Hicks: Groundbreaking situation that is happening right now. For us at ECS, as we talked about before, we're all about growing our organization and growing our organization internally. We are in the process of doing that right now as we shape our office structure in Florida as we continue to grow into Southeast Florida more specifically.

John Hicks: There's been a significant evolution of growth at ECS and where I'm at in Florida right now, we are taking advantage of that and we're about to start a new operation in Miami. I'm heading up that effort right now about to form a new office there. Really exciting opportunities are going to be had as a result of that.

John Hicks: We talk about, our team and the trust that's involved with that. I've already had about eight individuals join ECS with the anticipation of forming that office. People that already live down there in Miami without a home office, that are waiting for us to start that brick-and-mortar office there.

John Hicks: These are people that joined with the understanding and the knowledge that, you know, hey, they're putting a lot of trust in me as the leader to see that through. And we're finally at that point where, we're on the cusp of doing that right now at this moment. I'm just really excited about the new opportunity that's going to bring. We're going to be building out a full office there, which is going to provide a lot of opportunity, not only for the people that we anticipate hiring from the market but also for the people that we already have on our staff.

John Hicks: That's, what's the most exciting part about it is as we start a new office, there's going to be a lot of opportunity for a lot of our existing staff to gain experience, to then be promoted into positions of higher responsibility. That's what ECS is all about. It's growing the group that we have, growing internally, teaching, training and mentoring and seeing professionals like myself, who started with ECS in 2004, find opportunities to become future office managers or department managers and subsidiary regional managers.

John Hicks: That's one of the last things I'm going to leave on the podcast. I always look to impart all of my knowledge, as much of my knowledge as I can, to my staff to make them the best they can be because one day, they need to fill the positions I previously held. So it's always training your own replacement and never be afraid to hire people that are smarter than you, because having that diverse thought and knowledge across a wide spectrum, you can't replace it. Always look to find opportunities to help your staff or promote your staff. Through the growth process.

Peter Nabhan: That's amazing. And I love that you shared that, which is, you told me before our podcast that you started up in Washington, DC, then you moved your way down to Florida. You opened up Orlando. Then you opened West Palm Beach. Now you're looking at Miami. So you're always groundbreaking.

John Hicks: There's going to be a literal groundbreaking here pretty soon. I guess maybe not literal, but a new office location here in the next month or two. Yes,

Peter Nabhan: Good to hear Mr. Temple. I'm going to finish it off with you.

Ben Temple: Yeah, that's I'm glad John mentioned that there's, groundbreaking is the name of the game right now. ECS new service lines, new initiatives, new offices. I was going to head in that direction, but John already hit on that.

Ben Temple: But I will say just on a personal level what's groundbreaking for the Temple family is I've got two kids in college. I've got a daughter that's in high school. So, I'm approaching the second half of my career here. I'm going to be at a transition point here in the next couple of years where I'll be empty nest and things will look different around the house

Ben Temple: But, what that means for me professionally is I'm really glad to be working at a firm like ECS where I know that the org chart is growing, not shrinking. I know that there are going to be a lot of opportunities out there to go do more exciting things. So for me, it's just as you talk about groundbreaking, I think, okay, we are, going to be breaking new ground here in the near future and I'm so glad I work for a company that has opportunities in spades across the country, whether it's in different technical abilities, different locations different opportunities to grow in company. It's great to be a part of a growing company that makes me less nervous about the second half of my career coming up. So that's where I'm breaking new ground soon.

Jad Sobh: It's good stuff, guys. Definitely groundbreaking, as we've been saying. So, just gentlemen, both of you, thank you for your time today.

Jad Sobh: Thank you for your service, obviously, from everyone here at ECS and for sharing those lessons in leadership. So, just to close us out here, don't forget to subscribe to our podcast on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you listen to your podcast. You can also find us on YouTube and thanks for listening to *Ground Breaking: Where Consulting Meets Innovation*.

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