**Intro** (00:00:01): Welcome to this limited series, exploring stories of innovation, patent protection, and product commercialization in the state of Florida. This is James d Vergilio. In the summer of 2022, I moderated a series about Florida innovation and partnership with the Cade Museum, Florida House on Capitol Hill and the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame. I spoke with inspiring leaders, trailblazing the commercialization of transformative products across a variety of industries. Join us as we delve deeper into the process of bringing innovation into the public square.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:00:37): Wonderful introduction, and welcome in, to everyone in the audience. Our guests today, as Jimmy mentioned, are DJ Schmitt and Michael Finkelstein, founders of the Neuro20 Technology, which we're gonna talk about in depth today. Uh, those products are reinventing rehabilitation. Uh, DJ Schmitt is a former Second Force recon Marine served as a high threat, low profile personal protection specialist for multiple government agencies. And Michael Finkelstein has worked with medical providers and universities to develop electro muscular, uh, stimulation applications for EMS products in physical rehabilitation and human performance fields. DJ and Michael, it's great to have you both on the program today. Welcome.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:01:18): Thank you for having.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:01:20): So, let's start right away with what exactly Neuro20 is made. We've talked about it being revolutionary and amazing. What, what is the innovation and the creation that you have, uh, made?

**DJ Schmitt** (00:01:32): Well, yeah. Neuro20 is basically a full body suit that has pre placed electrodes over 20 muscle groups that can involuntarily contract, uh, up to 40 muscles, uh, by motor neurons, uh, doing this, uh, involuntarily where you can either do an involuntary or you can even do an override of a voluntary contraction. This activates the muscles, provides you a way to, uh, the neuroplasticity between the brain and the muscle to be activated. And it's used for recovery. Uh, it's used for rehabilitation, for muscular <inaudible> injuries and diseases. It's a way to accelerate your recovery, but you can also use it just for performance as well. You can utilize it to increase your performance levels, manage pain and recovery with our massage mode and cool downloads. So we have your basic NMES, neuromuscular electrical stimulation, FES, functional electrical stimulation, TENS units for pain, and then our own patented, uh, our own patented frequencies and wave forms, which we call PENS, which is patterned electrical muscle stimulation, which can fire any one of those 40 muscle groups individually, simultaneously at, within microseconds to, uh, replicate very specific movement patterns to reeducate the body to do so.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:02:46): Now, how long have you been working on this particular invention?

**DJ Schmitt** (00:02:50): Well, we've been working on it for about seven years. Uh, we actually started a company right in the heart of Covid and went out to do our capital raise, but we had years of, uh, innovation and research, uh, before we even actually created the company.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:03:03): Okay. So you've been working on it for seven years. And where are you now in the process? Is this something that we can go purchase today or where are we with that?

**DJ Schmitt** (00:03:10): Well, we just submitted to the FDA, so we are on, we are, we have gone the market last week, so we've only been on market for one week. Uh, and that's internationally where FDA is not required. And we, uh, submitted our FDA about two weeks ago, and we expect to have, we had,

we got approved for expedited approval and we'll be looking at the beginning of September having FDA and selling here in the U.S.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:03:32): And then where would someone pick up a Neuro20 device? Is that something you get through a, a physical therapist, you pick it up off the shelf on your own? How does that work?

**DJ Schmitt** (00:03:42): Go ahead, Mike.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:03:42): Yeah, so you would be, you would be getting this through your physical therapist, just therapist, physiatrist, orthopedic surgeon. Uh, it, it be prescribed as part of your treatment plan, and then, um, you would, uh, be utilizing the system in office or if you could use it outpatient, but that's if the doctor gives it to you to be able to take home and utilize. Um, and then eventually we're gonna be doing it remotely as well through like a telemedicine platform for people who can't get into an office or a rehab center. Um, so basically you, you take the suit portion of it, but the electronics portion of it would remain with the doctor. Um, and they, you would utilize it when you bring your suit to the office. Um, and it's not static, so you're not lying on a table and, and getting this, this is so that you can work in a space and actually move without wires, uh, you know, within a hundred meter range, um, which is kind of a game changer for physical therapy.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:04:36): Yeah. Let's talk a little bit about some of that data. Give me an example of patient who's not using your device versus one who is what, what are the differences? What, what does that look like now versus what it's gonna look like when, when you are out there in the market?

**DJ Schmitt** (00:04:49): Yeah, your, your traditional EMS units are static. You know, there's a box with wires and leads and you have to lay on the table and it'll provide you a stimulation. We've developed this as a complete opposite way to get up and be functional and move. So you can now, instead of laying static and receiving your traditional electro muscle stimulation, whether it's be TENS or NMES, FES, you know, we now have done it so that you can get up and you can move in actual real life, real time scenarios to reeducate the muscles and not only the muscles that are injured. You know, there's a lot of compensatory muscles that during your movement patterns, and this usually causes more pain. So by com--, by, by creating, uh, compensatory muscles and stimulating them in the way they're supposed to move, that actually helps the injured muscle recover faster, in a better way.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:05:35): Yeah. So think of a Parkinson's patient who needs gate training. You put on our walking pattern, we're going to fire the muscles in the pattern of walking within microseconds, every muscle that's involved in that, so that that person is now walking down the hallway and they're working on their arm swing and their gate pattern, but now they're getting a recruitment of that muscle, which they wouldn't normally be able to recruit themselves in a, in a functional way. Right. We're overriding that and doing that involuntarily because we're doing a, what's called a galvanic contraction. We're contracting it on site and then sending the message to the brain that it's in contraction. Um, and we're doing that within a pattern. So anybody with a partial spinal cord injury, lower back injuries, cerebral palsy, MS, parkinsonism, any neuromuscular degenerative disease or injury, back injuries, orthopedic injuries, things of that nature. So those are the injured patients. And then we work with athletes on the human performance side as well.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:06:33): Okay. So wide application, obviously for this, this device and innovation. Let's talk about your road to this, this level, this level of commercialization. The idea, obviously, as you mentioned, is, is a game changer, potentially something that clearly improves this space when it comes to, to electrical stimulation. Was it difficult to obtain funding for this idea? What was, what was the journey like to be able to keep this going? Seven years is a seemly long time to bring something to market. How did you keep this afloat financially?

**DJ Schmitt** (00:07:03): Yeah, well, you know, we, typical startup, we were willing, you know, not only, not only us as founders, but our family and support network. Were willing to let us take this risk cuz of every business is a risk, every startup is a risk. So we've invested our own money into it for the first five years. And then about two, you know, then we went out and we went to go raise capital. We started raising capital right when Covid started. Uh, you know, we started raising capital in February and then March, you know, Covid hit, luckily we were at the Synapse here in Florida and we ran it and we got introduced to Harvard Business School alumni of South Florida. Uh, they stepped up, they seen what we were doing, they seen the potential and they invested. But it was a long road. It was hard road.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:07:43): We talked to a lot of investors. We were told to leave Florida many times over, go to Boston, go to go to, you know, Silicon Valley, you know, you'll get your money a lot faster. And we said, No. You know, we're Florida based, we're gonna be in Florida. We're gonna, you know, we've already, you know, four years of our own, four and a half, five years of our own money in time, we're gonna wait it out and we're a Florida based company and we're gonna do it. And you know, Harvard business stepped up and we had a lot of people trying to push us out of Florida. And by not. By staying in Florida and not going to those places because of Covid hitting, nobody could have expected all the delays and the supply chains and the shortages and microchips. If we would've moved, we wouldn't have been able to afford to stay. It's so, so friendly for companies here. We can keep our costs down. So we took a gamble of staying here to raise our capital versus going somewhere else. And it really paid off because Covid hit and we saved a lot of money by not moving.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:08:38): Yeah. And, and to jump in the University of South Florida stepped in and put us in the Tampa Bay technology incubator program. Um, and that also, you know, helped us with lowering costs on office space and things of that nature and contacts and, and giving some mentorship along the way. Um, and so that journey, that fundraising journey was interesting, to say the least. But we see the capital structure in Florida changing quite a bit right now since Covid actually. Um, and that's, and that's interesting. So we're actually happy that we stayed.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:09:08): And where are you now as far as launching this to market? When it comes to funding? I mean, commercialization is a huge enterprise, your product. Can you give us a little bit of an idea of what it, what it may take to actually get this, you know, across the country or in the market you're looking to get it into?

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:09:23): Sure.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:09:24): Yeah. You know, like I said, we raised our capital to get the market and open up the sales channels we had, but when we start going to mass marketing, you know, the customer acquisition costs, it's gonna be a little expensive up front because nobody knows our product. And it's not a demonstrable product. You have to feel it to believe it. We've been in front of some of the best doctors and scientists in the world that didn't get it, even though they know EMS until they put it on. So,

you know, we're gonna be looking at another capital raise and we believe we're gonna get it here out of Florida cuz of what's happened in the last two years. We don't think we're gonna have to go out of Florida. Florida's really last few years is really, really the ecosystem for, for investment. This happened. So, you know, we're gonna probably looking and raise 5 million, you know, in the next year and a half to really do mass commercialization.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:10:07): Yeah. It, it, it depends on that early acceptance right. Of the product. Um, we have some amazing margins, so we can't get into all that, but you know, we, we are uh, we are very encouraged, um, about, uh, where we're going to be. Um, so we, you know, we may be able to, uh, float our own boat again for a while, but we wanna get this out to as many people as possible and it's gonna be the right partners, uh, deciding on, you know, um, who can also add to the story, right? So who's gonna, we, we were told very early on, you know, there's money and then there's smart money, right? There's money that comes to the table that has connections to get this into as many people's hands as possible. So who can get this out to distribution networks and hospital groups so that, and physical therapy centers. So that ultimately our goal is to get this on as many patients as possible and help as many people as possible. So it's really when we, when we raise capital, we're raising capital with a purpose. And what that purpose is, is to help people. So we wanna align our vision with obviously people who want the same thing, right.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:11:13): And also to maximize the return for our original investors

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:11:16): And maximize the return for our original investors, of course.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:11:18): <laugh>. Right. And you mentioned the Florida ecosystem, which, which we talked about in our pre-show on Friday, obviously quite at length. And we've covered on this series this summer, Florida traditionally known as a place that's difficult to raise capital potentially for startups, despite there being so many startups in the state. And as you both have mentioned, you now expect to raise an additional 5 million from the state of Florida, and you do not anticipate that to be a hurdle, which I think is the sign of the changing nature of the state of Florida, a state, uh, of innovation for sure. Let's now take a larger step at the R and D process. So obviously your product very R and D heavy, you had to create something, you had to test something, you had to build a prototype, you had to get patents. What was that like? Was that a scenario where every idea you had worked or did you have some significant moments of setbacks and failure? Maybe you thought to yourself, I don't know if we can actually make this happen.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:12:08): <laugh> Okay.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:12:09): Well one, we never thought we couldn't make it happen, right? The road, you know, that's one thing we came in with. That attitude was done. You know, if you have doubts, don't do it. One of my suggestion, if you have doubts in your, you don't means you don't believe in yourself. So we've never thought we wouldn't get it done. It was a matter of when we would get it done. And there was a lot of R and D struggle, you know, I, you know, identifying different ways to manufacture. You know, one of the biggest things is actually moving manufacturing. You know, right now we are offshore manufacturing. Ideally our goal is getting manufacturing here stateside. And that's really difficult. But we see a shift even in that. So the R and D was a struggle, you know, working with multiple software developers, manufacturers, medical device manufacturers, textile manufacturers, and it was a lot of research.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:12:54): Spent years traveling, going to different facilities and sites, identifying so that we could have scaling, scalable manufacturing. Uh, and then with Covid hitting and all the supply chain shortages, we thought we were ready to go to market. We thought we had everything done. Then all of a sudden now we're fighting. You know, we're a startup company fighting with Apple and Volkswagen for, you know, different types of chips that need to be on our PCB board. So we have to go back and reevaluate that. It's always gonna be a changing, you know, I say you have to just always be ready for change and expect, expect the unexpected and, and be flexible, adapt and like the, like we say in the Marine Corps, adapt and overcome.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:13:29): Yeah, I would, I would only add to that is that the one thing that Covid did provide us the opportunity to do is improve the product during that period, right? So we were really thinking of coming to market with an MVP version of the product, um, right after Covid hit. Um, and because of the delays in the microprocessors and the high voltage switches, uh, being foreign sourced, um, instead of taking that time and saying, All right, well, let's, you know, let's cut the tail, the salamander to keep the body alive, right? That's the, that is a corporate strategy to keep the funds going that a lot of companies do, to insulate, you know, at times of crisis like that, uh, we invested in R and D during that time, that that's really what we did. We said, Okay, let's listen to our early adopters, um, and the people who were testing the prototype and let's get their feedback now and utilize that time to improve the product even more.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:14:26): So, the patterned electrical muscle stimulation came out of that, the contour shapes of the, of the muscles, uh, towards the muscles on the pads to hit more motor points that came out of that. We redesigned the connection to make it more stable, um, that came out of that. And so we went into R and D cycles during Covid, and yes, that was very difficult for all of us and for our investors to hear that, that we are slowing down commercialization, right? However, we were gonna have to slow down commercialization anyway. Um, that was just the fact of that period of time. And so, um, we decided to zig when everybody zags, and, and like he said, overcome and adapt and that adaptation took place during the time of covid.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:15:10): Is there anyone else in the world working on something similar sort of where you're gonna consider this kind of, you're able to walk around and move around during this process? Are you the only one doing this?

**DJ Schmitt** (00:15:19): No, they're competitor products. You know, we didn't reinvent the wheel, you know, or we should, we didn't invent this wheel, right? Reinventing it, you know, there's a lot of Nokia flip phones out there and we're coming out with an iPhone 13 version is like what we'd like to say. Uh, you know, there, there's systems out there, but they're, they're shared vest systems. They're wired and cabled into a machine. So you only have three meters of use. You can't do all the functional movements you want to do. Uh, and then there are some people now, like, you know, my one, my one partner overseas that helped me with the development, he's our manufacturer for the textile. He actually took the suit. We had an agreement, you make the suit, you can sell it in your country. We have the rest of the world. He made the suit with no FDA, no science behind it, really just a, a cheap version to get their market kind of like, you know, Yeah.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:16:05): He didn't put the R and D in it, right? Like

**DJ Schmitt** (00:16:06): No R and D, he just put a basic on off switch, no software or anything. And he did 25 million in sales in the first two years. But with that, then you always run into the knockoffs, the Chinese knockoff. So even though he's, he's been on market and he did that, now we have competitors before we even gone to market fully. We have, we have people coming to market, you know, before us, but they have no science, they have no credibility. And like, like my manufacturer on the suit side, there's actually his best marketing because their system is so subpar. Once people start using it, they come over to him and they're buying from him in his country. So yeah, we are the leaders. Uh, you know, I designed the first washable machine electrode. Not everybody's using it. Uh, that was my first fail, is I didn't patent that part of it.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:16:47): Cause it was such a simple idea. Uh, so, you know, you, there's always a learning curve, there's always stepping, but there are competitors. If you want a competitor, if you wanna compare phone to phone type thing, you know, they can both make a phone call. The thing is, is we can access the internet, we can access app. You know, we, we have a lot of science behind, uh, technology, a lot of data and analytics. Lot of, you know, I, I don't like using these terms, but you know, we have the, you know, the internet of things where we have machine learning in there. You know, we have AI in there that's, you know, collecting the data. So every time somebody trains, we can get that data and create a better protocol for the next recovery session.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:17:26): Yeah. It, it's important to understand that. Yeah. And we secure that data, strip it away, uh, so that we can get group data as well on different types of diseases and, and things of that nature and what people's responses are to it. Um, what's really critical is that, uh, the software differences that our, that we provide and that patterned electrical stimulation, nobody has that.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:17:45): And they can’t.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:17:46): Yeah. Nobody, nobody has that. Um, we, we use a very good patent firm, Kenobi Martin, uh, there's your plug. Um, so, uh, you know, um, we, we definitely, uh, are are ahead of the field. It doesn't mean that the field won't eventually catch up, Right. Which is why you have to always reinvest in R and D. And we already have some things that, again, feedback from, from medical providers given to us. And that's so critical because you get that feedback and that's how you stay ahead in the R and D, right? And so we have some things in the pipeline. We have a another patent coming and you know, it's not just a one trick.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:18:24): Yeah. We didn't, we built out the basic shell of what we wanted, right? But all the rest of the build has been feedback from doctors, professional trainers, you know. And, and that's the key is we listened to our clients and build what they want. We don't build what we want at this point. We've got the basics, we got the shell. How do you really grow the company? You keep the R and D going with the feedback from your clients and putting in what they want to optimize their ROI as well. You know, we're talking about ROI as a company. The best way for us to have a good ROI, which is a return on investment, is to ensure that our end clients have the highest ROI as possible. So we're not only looking at technology, we're looking at the methodology, how it's used, how you can bill it, how you can use it, and, and getting their feedback and continuing the R and D out for what our customers want.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:19:08): Yep. So, so that's one big one. Then the other one is you have right supply. We have supply chain, you know, contract manufacturers that have regulatory oversight behind it opposed to other companies. Um, us going for an FDA approval is a big deal, right? Having FDA that stamp on your medical product is, uh, a differentiator obviously to foreign products. Um, and then the other thing is, is our team, um, we went, we were very blessed to be able to get out there and attract some a-list talent. Uh, the founder of the division of Neuro Rehab at Yale Medical College is our chief medical officer. Um, you know, we had, uh, our director of science ran two Nobel Prize winning labs at Caltec. So, I mean the, the individuals, uh, and I can, I can't name everybody, right, but uh, if you go into their backgrounds, you'll see that they were all experts at what they did.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:20:01): And that comes from something that we heard very early on actually. Um, you know, when talking with Harvard, right? Harvard is not necessarily a group of a person who's an expert in everything. The what makes their college great is that they have experts in every field, and then that whole campus becomes a collection of experts. So we did that, you know, that's the approach we took for a company, right? Let's get a collection of experts, have them collaborate, and then put some, put them on their leadership like DJ and see what happens. And here we are commercialization, you know?

**James Di Virgilio** (00:20:38): Yeah, for sure. And if you have questions for DJ or Michael, you can go ahead and put those in the chat now, and I will ask them directly to them. In the meantime, for both of you, when you've created something like this, you've gotten some investment, uh, from outside sources, you are certainly gonna attract attention from other business minds and leaders who may want to take your business in a different direction. They may have different ideas for what they want to do with that and the funding they may give you, uh, as anything like that happened to you or you have a big investor come in and perhaps have an idea about what they may wanna do that you've had to say no to.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:21:12): Yes, we have. And you know, that's one of the hardest things when you're raising capital. And I'll tell everybody out there, anybody listening that that's, that's in, you know, starting up a company or thinking about starting up a company. Don't let the investor, of course, you want to take, you want investors that are gonna be knowledgeable, but stay true to your core. You know, we had an investor that sat us down, billionaire on the Forbes 500, you know, and said, Hey, this is, I'll invest. This is what I'll do. Here's the deal I'm gonna give you, but this is what we're gonna do. And we looked at him and said, Thank you, but no thank you. And he threatened the R and D, you know, reverse engineer it. We were like, Go ahead. We were working on it for five years with some of the greatest minds in the world.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:21:52): Go ahead and try. And come to find out years later, we had to change the name of the company when we first started because of, of, uh, trademark issues. And their company that was supposed to do the R and D reached out five years later saying, Hey, you know, let's, let's talk, you know, we've been working on something similar. I said, Oh, have you? So we listened to 'em and they got nowhere. So don't let an investor take you. Listen to investors. They know what they're doing, but also you know that you are the expert in your product. And don't let them sway you from what your expertise are. All the research and time you did in it. And don't be afraid to say no to money. Cause it, you know, actually I think helped us with future rounds when we said, Yeah, we had X, Y, Z offer, We turned it down cause of A, B, C, D. Now the investor we're talking to now knows that we know what we're doing and we believe in what we're doing. And that's the key. Make sure your investor believes in

you and never, ever lie to an investor. I don't care. Minute it is, tell 'em the good and the bad because the second you lie to 'em, you have broken their trust and the relationship is over. I have to call my investors all the time with bad news. They're not happy with it, but they appreciate that. I don't hide it.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:23:02): I, I'm gonna, I'm gonna say that it comes down to when, when you're in the diligence process, James, you're both doing diligence on each other. It's not just one way diligence, right? Where you're just providing everything that you want to do to the investor. You're also doing reverse diligence on that, on the investor. And you're seeing if you, you should have a, uh, we went through eight months of diligence. You should have a, a trial run, a communication, a collaboration, and see what resources everybody's bringing to the table. And can you collaborate in the room? And, but you know, it's a fine line. You have to, you don't want your ego to get in the way and you don't want your, you know, expertise to get in the way as the owner of the company. It's your baby. You don't wanna hold on so tight and not release to the investor. Cuz that's a mistake too. So it's that striking, that balance of what can you release? Like he said, there's core principles you can't, but what can you release? Be fair and open and honest with the core principles and integrity is the number one thing behind all of it, which is absolutely 100%. Make sure that the investor you are working with is Integris as well, right? A person who's telling you that they're gonna aren't reverse engineer your product in the first meeting. That's probably not someone we would recommend that you go out and work with.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:24:20): Yeah, those are good. Those are good tips. And you've also mentioned on this session today, the role of feedback, uh, which I think is critical. Having interviewed hundreds of innovators in, in the past several years, feedback to me is one of the most important things that innovators can utilize. And you said something, DJ, earlier where of course you know, really what you did and Michael, you echoed this was you listened to the end user, the person who's actually wearing the device. How can we improve this further rather than, what often happens is, if we do this, we might make more money, or if we do this, this might help us, um, market this better. The idea is if the product is good, and I'm gonna summarize what I think is going on here, If the product is good to the end user, this is going to be successful. And you seem to be committed to that idea of making a better product, a better therapy for the end user, which takes a lot of R and D. And you've mentioned continuing that process into the future. So is it safe to say that, that you both put feedback at the top or near the top of your sort of entrepreneurial, um, pyramid?

**DJ Schmitt** (00:25:26): Yes. I mean, you know, I am a serial entrepreneur. I had other companies. I opened up a defense contracting company overseas, you know, competed against DynCorp, ITT, major ones. And everybody said I was insane to invest money and go after them, but I knew what they were lacking. They were lacking the customer experience. They cared about money over there. So I opened up a defense ISP company in Afghanistan and I went in and I went after these large corporations that trade on, you know, major defense contracting companies. Everybody's like, you're outta your mind. You're quitting a $300,000 year job to compete against, against these big corporations. Yeah, because I was the end client for them and I've seen all the complaints from the end client and I'm building this company off of everything they're doing wrong, not what they're doing right? I'm looking at everything they're doing wrong, I'm building this company off of what they're doing wrong.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:26:11): I did that and within two years I was the number one ISP provider by listening to the customer. I am, I am a key believer in customer service and test technical support, customer

service under, I feel like it's a lost value in America. It's what America was built on was customer service. I've lived all over the year, all over the world and everybody was talking about American customer service. I see that slowly fading away. We're building it not only with customer feedback, but with customer service. That's the key. Uh, yeah. So yes, short, yes, customer feedback and service is at the top of our priority because that's ultimately our goal. How are you successful if you don't have happy customers?

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:26:50): Yeah. From a research and development standpoint, James, um, it's the learning cycle, right? And, and so if you're, you're constantly learning, um, DJ and I both came from different backgrounds, different fields, uh, before we did this venture. And it was essential to everything we do is to learn, um, agile companies, right? Everybody talks about agile companies. You have to have the most agility to, to win. Um, and that's true, but how are you agile? An agile company is somebody who's learned something and then response to that learned input, um, in, in a way problem solves it and, and responds quickly. And so DJ and I both grew up in backgrounds. When we say grow up, I mean as adults we grew up in backgrounds, um, in which we had to be highly agile to survive. I mean, that's basically what we did. Um, and so, um, it, it was natural for us when we went into business to learn throughout this process. And we're constantly learning. You know, we're not the experts in anything other than learning and communicating. Um, that's our job. Uh, the everybody else's job is to be the expert in the science, our expert in their particular field. Our job is to be expert communicators and learners. Really.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:28:07): The second I stopped learning is the second I need to replace the CEO of this company.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:28:11): Yep. That's it.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:28:13): Yeah, that's true. And that's well said by both of you. So now that leaves us sort of with a, a final set of questions perhaps. And Jamie asked this and I'm gonna add something onto her question. What brought you two together? You mentioned obviously you came together. How did that happen? And then what brought this, this product, this therapy into existence in the first place? You mentioned DJ, your serial entrepreneur, so you must have noticed something that was lacking in this field as well.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:28:39): Yeah, so I'll, I'll start with the latter, latter of the two questions. Um, you know, uh, 50% disabled from the Marine Corps, continuing my service overseas doing high threat, low level protect, uh, low profile protection where I sustained multiple injuries again, uh, you know, basically I walked with a cane. I got up to 250 pounds and I was in my mid thirties. Uh, I could barely sleep in the bed. I slept on the floor three or four nights a week cuz I had so much back pain. I just had a child and I couldn't even carry him around at one. He was eight pounds. And I could walk him from the crib to the couch and that would be about it. Uh, I went on a lifelong journey. You know, I, I was traveling the world, going everywhere from India, Japan. I lived in China.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:29:20): I went to a Shaolin temple every day for six months. Uh, trying to find ways to make me better because I was told I wouldn't be better. This was the best I could do. And it wasn't acceptable at the age of 35 and years and years of traveling when I was over and I, I decided to move to Mallorca for a little while and I was living in Mallorca, Spain and I bought a little bar. I was gonna have a little bar on the beach and I thought my life was over. I even rigged out a special chair so I could just

slide back and forth so I didn't have to be on my feet and just serve cocktails until I died miserably ever after. And I came across electro muscle stimulation over there, actually one of those big vested cabled systems. And I started using it and there was a little advantages to it.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:29:58): I started feeling a little bit and I started really researching. Cause I did have a degree in electrical engineering and I always overlooked EMS because of what I've seen in the U.S. Uh, you know, no, no disrespect to the ab buster belts and things like that. Every company has their, they made a lot of money. Uh, we're not just about money. We're about fixing people as well. And we believe we fixed enough people will make even more money. But, so I worked for multiple EMS companies overseas. I sat on their board of directors and advisors. I invested money in the companies to try and get it where it needed to be for the US market. None of them could do what we wanted to do. Uh, they weren't capable of doing it or just didn't want to do it. So that's when I got a letter of separation done by a very good law firm and said, You know what? Go out on your own and build your own and build my own. So I got the separation and everything I seen wrong, just like I did with the internet company. And everybody said I was crazy. And two years later they were all bidding to buy me out because I was such a big thorn in their side. I basically used that same model to build this out, put the right team together and do it that way.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:30:56): Yep. Uh, my side of the story is simple. Um, I, uh, was working and living in New York City. Uh, I was doing two jobs at once. I was an inner city educator, uh, in a very poor community, a disenfranchised community, um, high crime area. Uh, and then I also had to become an officer with, at Fort Apache Precinct, um, with the N Y P D, uh, to help those students. I moved down to Florida for a change of life, uh, also because I had a small child born and, and needed to, uh, change my life, uh, a little less risk involved. Um, came down here as a school administrator and uh, we moved to suburbia. And in suburbia I met DJ while he was, uh, walking around with his cane and not doing so well. Um, this is before his EMS journey and, uh, you know, both of us having backgrounds, um, that were a little bit more, um, active, let's just say that.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:31:53): Uh, in terms of life and death situations, we bonded, you know, we, we got to know each other, but then he moved away to Mallorca to go run a bar. Um, and, you know, that was the last I thought I was gonna see him. He knocks on my door a year later, uh, walking and he's lost, I don't know, 40 pounds, you know, 45 pounds. And, uh, he said, I've got this thing that I'm working on this, this technology that I'd like you to try. And I had had two back surgeries. So I tried it, and it did wonders for me. Um, and so I said to him, Can I please, please, please do this with you? And left a 20 year career in public education, uh, and have been on this journey now for almost six and a half years. Um, but uh, you know, had I not met DJ I wouldn't have been on this career path. Um, but it was, uh, fortuitous and so wanna--

**DJ Schmitt** (00:32:46): Hold that against me later

Michael Finkelstein (00:32:47): Yeah. I've, I've held against you every day, but, um, but uh, you know, um, here we are and, uh, we're both very happy that we've, um, put ourselves in a position to help some people now. Cause that's what we did in our former careers. We just didn't know you could make money helping people at the same time, <laugh>.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:33:06): Wow. That's a, that's a great, great story. Uh, it seems like a made for, made for a movie story there, especially with the bar in Mallorca. That's,

**DJ Schmitt** (00:33:15): That's a goal to go back there.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:33:17): The goal is going back just without <laugh>.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:33:20): Right, Right. No, that's great. It's great. Well, it's been great to have both of you on the program today, DJ and Michael, you can obviously learn more about their, their innovations and products at Neuro20. You can Google them and find plenty of information there. You can also take a look at their headers there where they have information as well. Once again, on behalf of all the partners here delivering this program today, thank you DJ and Michael for being on the program.

**DJ Schmitt** (00:33:43): Well, thank you. Thank everybody for having us on the program and thank you Florida for believing in us.

**Michael Finkelstein** (00:33:49): Yep. Thank you. Florida Inventors Hall of Fame and Florida Embassy. And thank you Cade Museum. We can't wait to come visit you. Um, we really appreciate all the support the network in Florida that's being built around corporate success. We really appreciate it. And James, thank you for hosting.

**James Di Virgilio** (00:34:04): Oh, you're welcome. That's wonderful. And now I'm gonna turn this over to Liz

**Outro** (00:34:11): Radio Cade is produced by the Cade Museum for Creativity and Invention located in Gainesville, Florida. This episode is part of a virtual series conducted in partnership with the Florida House on Capitol Hill and Florida Inventors Hall of Fame. The theme song was produced and performed by Traci Collins and features Violinist Jacobson.