

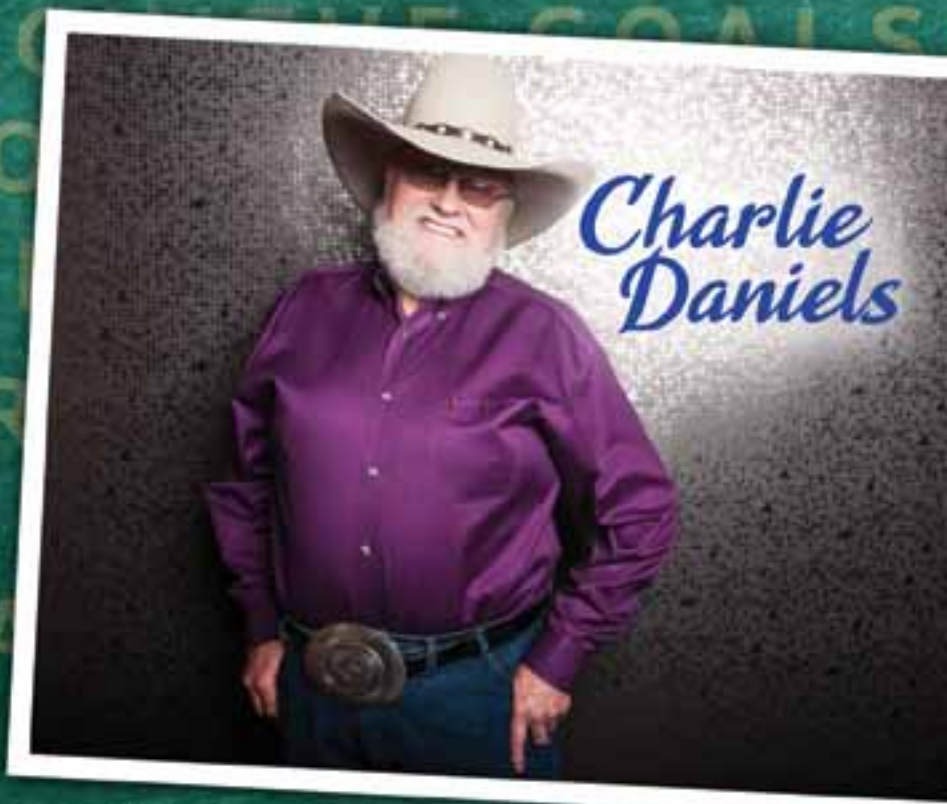
SearcyLiving



Paul
Vitale

Speaking

A DIFFERENCE



Charlie
Daniels

GET
Motivated



Paul Grau, Jr.

Making
THE DAY *Count*

SPEAKING A DIFFERENCE

► Vitale, left, serves as president and Birk, right, as chairman for Matt Birk & Company, LLC.

By Cecelia Wilson

WHEN PAUL VITALE WAS AN 8TH GRADER in Russellville, a gentleman came to speak to the students at his junior high school. For whatever reason, the speaker made quite an impression on the young Arkansan. "At that point I went to my parents and said, 'This is something that I really want to do as a profession.'" Vitale confesses, "I had no idea what that meant; I had no idea what public speaking was. But I knew that he had impacted me, and I thought if he could impact me, then I felt like that was a worthy calling [for me] to hopefully impact others."

Committed to the idea of becoming a public speaker at an early age, that drive stayed with him as the years progressed. During his junior year in high school, the Guidance Counselor asked Paul about his future. He had three plans. The first, he shared with her, was working within the NFL. After all, the diehard Pittsburgh Steelers fan (his family originally hails from Pennsylvania) had seen athletes as great influencers in society. Perhaps, he reasoned, being affiliated with an athlete or some sports club would be a great inroad to positively impacting the general population of

young people. With a laugh at that daunting career path, his Counselor asked about his Plan B. With the same enthusiasm, Paul announced he wanted to be a speaker. Unsure exactly what that meant, she ventured on to ask about a possible Plan C. "Well, if all else fails," Vitale told her, "I have a great lawn business, so I can always mow lawns for a living!"

Despite her confusion on his non-standard responses about life after education, Paul Vitale stayed on track with his dreams of being a motivator and difference-maker. He went on to attend

the University of Central Arkansas and in 1995 obtained degrees in Mass Communications and Journalism. After an internship at Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods during college, he accepted a position there after graduation and gained experience in advertising, public relations, and marketing for the next five years. Vitale went on to become the Director of Sales and Marketing for the Hot Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau. While at Hot Springs, he spoke frequently, extolling the virtues of Hot Springs and all the while gaining more confidence and expertise in public speaking.

After writing his first book, Paul decided to take a leap of faith. Not yet married, he knew if he was ever going to open his own Firm, the time had come and Vital Communications was born. Paul went on to be a graduate of the Leadership Greater Little Rock Class XIII, was named one of the 40 Under 40 leaders by Arkansas Business, and has been an active volunteer for Big Brothers Big Sisters, Make-A-Wish Foundation, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and Arkansas Children's Hospital.

“Your attitude and your common courtesy and your smile do make a difference, MORE NOW THAN EVER.”



Four books later, the author/speaker met NFL All Pro/Super Bowl Champ Matt Birk. Their common interests eventually led to a new partnership under the flagship of the newly-established national speaking and communications company, Matt Birk and Company, LLC. Vitale serves as president and Birk as chairman over the company with offices in Little Rock; St. Paul, Minnesota; Naples, Florida; and Biloxi, Mississippi. Their client list includes such luminaries as the NFL, United States Postal Service, Walmart, Tyson Foods, ESPN, St. Louis Cardinals, Minnesota Vikings, Baltimore Ravens, Disneyland, Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, Mary Kay Cosmetics, Coca-Cola, True-Value, 3M, Delta Dental, Southwest Airlines, Dillard Department Stores, Oaklawn Gaming and Racing, U.S. Cellular, and U.S. Pizza Restaurants. It's fair to say the pair have been able to achieve an elevated level of success throughout the country for their themselves, their clients, and their staff.

Though motivation and inspiration are part of the Firm's focus, the companies that call on their combined expertise are looking for assistance in making cultural changes, bridging the generational gap among their staffs, and need proven methods to help with teamwork, leadership, sales, and customer service. Speaking, as it turns out, is just the “fun part.” The entire process is much more involved. Doing due diligence to understand a company's goals and objectives is necessary to formulate a proposal. Once a company hires the Firm, Vitale or Birk will work on keynote presentations or handouts for special events, internal training for half-day or all-day onsite sessions, as well as guidance in leadership and communication skills for the benefit of the client and staff. Afterward, there may be follow-up, more training and additional tools provided to enhance the progress already made.

Paul Vitale loves the job that he began contemplating when he was in junior high school. “Every day is unique; every group is always different,” he admits. There is a certain level of satisfaction in knowing something he or Matt Birk have said sparked enthusiasm or drive in one individual or in one group of people whether they are within the confines of Arkansas, Minnesota, or on either coast. And though the travel can be grueling these days for the husband



▲ Paul Vitale and Matt Birk's common interests eventually led to a new partnership under the flagship of the newly-established national speaking and communications company, Matt Birk and Company, LLC.

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“Every day is *unique*; every group is always *different*.”

and father, it has been a rewarding profession that saw Paul’s love of football and speaking paired in the most unlikely way to become a dream career.

When Paul first graduated from college, he began to write letters to NFL teams asking for an opportunity for a job, to speak, to do something/anything. After numerous rejections over the course of several years, a gentleman in the front office of the Minnesota Vikings answered Paul’s letter. A group of 30 students had won the “Gridiron Greats Challenge” and would be traveling to Minnesota. “This event is in December,” the man told Vitale. “It’s going to be cold. I’m not going to pay you; I’m not going to pay your way. But, if you want to come up here and speak for ten minutes, come on.” Paul Vitale jumped at the chance. It turned out Minnesota Vikings player Matt Birk was at the event accepting a community relations award for his work in the state. After hearing Vitale speak, Birk approached him, impressed, and said, “We should have a conversation.” A decade later, the two men are in business together all because of a chance meeting.

It is a lesson he wants all young people to know. “It might take decades, it might take a lot of letters, (or these days it might take text messages or Snapchat),” Vitale says. “But if you really are passionate about something, [don’t forget that] you never know who is in the back of the room. You never know who is coming through the drive-through at McDonald’s. Your attitude and your common courtesy and your smile do make a difference more now than ever.” You never know when opportunity knocks, so be ready. 🐾

▲ *The companies that call on their combined expertise are looking for making cultural changes, bridging the generational gap, and need help with teamwork, leadership, sales, and customer service.*

For more information for your company’s needs:

MATT BIRK AND COMPANY

Paul Vitale, President and Matt Birk, Chairman

Contact: 501-626-2630 Website: Mattbirkandcompany.com





This is a vertical advertisement for Doublebee's GO!. At the top, it says 'LET'S GO!' in a red and blue box. Below this is a speedometer graphic with a needle pointing towards 'F' (Full). The speedometer has 'E' and 'F' markings. In the center is a large circular logo with 'GAS IT. GRAB IT.' in a blue arc above 'Doublebee's' in a large, stylized font, and 'GO!' in a smaller font below it. To the right of the logo are three social media icons: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Below the logo are two Doublebee's GO! cups. The middle section has a blue background with white text that reads 'CENTRAL ARKANSAS' LOCALLY OWNED CONVENIENCE STORES'. Below this is a photo of a Doublebee's store interior, showing a counter with various food items and a sign that says 'CHESTER'S'. The bottom section has a red background with white polka dots and a large 'Doublebee's' logo in a white-bordered box.



**“You never know when opportunity knocks,
SO BE READY.”**



▼ *Matt Birk is a 15-year veteran of the National Football League and Super Bowl champion.*



▲ *Committed to the idea of becoming a public speaker at an early age, that drive stayed with Paul as the years progressed.*