

NATIONAL COURT REPORTERS ASSOCIATION

KEITH LEMONS AND THALY PALANISAMY CONVERSATION

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(CART provided by a live stenographer.)

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CART Provided By:
JLE Stenography, Jodie Eckard, CRC

SPEAKER: Hello and welcome. Today we are here with 2024-2025 NCRA President, Keith Lemons, and Stenograph President, Thaly Palanisamy. We have brought together these two industry leaders to discuss the partnership and legacy of these two organizations, as well as insights into the future of the professions.

KEITH: Thaly, I'm Keith Lemons. We met last year at NCRF Foundation.

THALY: Absolutely.

KEITH: The funny thing was: You were just becoming President -- or CEO as I was becoming President. Neither one of us had a clue what was coming, did we?

THALY: That's correct. That's right.

KEITH: I want you to know, that since I'm not a lawyer. I don't ask questions and answer them. I usually take them down. Just a friendly chat between us. Nobody expects the Spanish inquisition.

(Laughter)

KEITH: Thaly, what I would like to do is in the past year, -- well, I'm going to go a little bit back before that. What led you to being involved with court reporting in general?

THALY: Well, it is a good story. My background has always been in heavy manufacturing, steel and forging, and such. I happened to be part of Hyco, which is the parent company of Stenograph. I was working for them for about a year. The Stenograph opportunity came up. In our profession, since the goal is to really, you know, help the business be at its best and I came in and knowing nothing about the court reporting industry. In the last 12-14 months or so, I feel like I've learned a lot. And I've also truly gained a deep admiration for what stenographers do.

KEITH: Uh huh.

THALY: You know, in the course of this 14 months and it is fascinating. It is -- I feel like it is a tough profession. Just doing what they are doing and amidst all of the chaos and taking the record, which is the most important part. And I'm honored to help an organization that provides the technology that's going to help the stenographers.

KEITH: So when you first came into this, you had actually pretty much no information on court reporting worked? When you started this?

THALY: I actually -- I did not know the industry existed. KEITH: Wow. That's pretty cool. You learned a lot in the last 12 months. 14 months.

THALY: I'm still learning a lot. I still learn every day. It's been fun.

KEITH: Would I be correct in saying you just basically applied general business principals to how you associated with Stenograph and learn how court reporting works?

THALY: Yeah. Absolutely. It is -- you know, you always look at a business and you want to focus on what the company does well as a group; right? So when you look back at Stenograph, you can't help

but admire the legacy that had with 85 years of, you know, being right there in the great major step of innovation and making quality products that our stenographers come different on. Much as I don't like it, some of us are four generations back; right? You know, it is a lot of pride for me to have this opportunity to be part of this group.

KEITH: Yeah. The upgrading thing I spent my whole career basically doing seminars about how you need to upgrade with the times. There were people that I was talking to a few years back that I was working on the OS PC. Which if you don't remember -- This was a different company. It was at least six generations earlier.

THALY: Oh, wow.

KEITH: So for some reason people in our profession seem to think we don't need to have and don't need to be technically accurate. Now, as far as Stenograph goes, do you make sure that we're looking back and being able to incorporate that technology, so if somebody comes into stenograph, they are still able to use it and figure out how to move forward?

THALY: Absolutely. Absolutely. One of the things that we heavily focus on is to -- I think it goes to the core value of Stenograph. It is -- we're truly in the business of making our customer's lives better. Whether you are a real time or high profile writer or whether they are just starting out, both are equal kins and equally important. We're constantly focusing on ways to make that transition easier and make the increase easier and, you know, make the software and the riders work on both hands of the spectrum.

KEITH: So you've had now 14 months to create your management team. How successful are you that you think it is still evolving? Do you think you have a really good management team in place now?

THALY: You know, truth be told, Stenograph has always had a great team. If you look at our profile in the last 14 months, I haven't really brought in anybody new. We have just had a fantastic team. I mean it. I'm not saying it just for the sake of saying it. We are focusing on the basics. Really our focus is, you know, we want to stay focused on this whole mission. There's one mission. How do we make our customer's lives better?

KEITH: Good.

THALY: That's where we are.

KEITH: I think that people in the court reporting industry can say that. It's been a flip from what was coming from the previous CEO. I'm not going to say anymore, other than we appreciate so much the job that Stenograph is doing making sure the customers are considering as what your core policy is. I would like you to describe your style of leadership. How do you manage that with Stenograph and also with working with the customers?

THALY: Um, I don't know if I have a definite style. I'm usually pretty open and transparent. And I would like to think of myself as real

and grounded and really stay focused on, you know, adding value. That's sort of outside of work. That's both, you know, on my personal life as well. My mission is to see if I can help better people's lives. Dave touch upon this morning. Really I try to look at it as what can I do in my work life to make, well, add any value that I can to the society Stenograph and court reporting industry or Hyco. And that sort of guides my style.

KEITH: You know, NCRA and Stenograph have a long history of supporting one another in endeavors we are looking at. What ways are you looking at partnering with us and what ways should we look at partnering with you to move forward in the area -- in this era that AI is trying to take over everything? How you see us fitting in together?

THALY: That's a great question, Keith. We ponder on this a lot in terms of the two important faucets; right? So NCRA, you know, the group and how it is organized and what you guys do. That is so critical to developing and growing this industry. All I think about, you know, when we come to the AI part in a little bit here is: how do we grow this profession? How do we bring more people and more students and more people into this profession. It is a fantastic profession. It is needed. Our legal cases have grown by the day. And, you know, we have a working blueprint. It is a great profession. How do we improve this? That's really where I feel like while from a Stenograph standpoint, we focus on technology. We -- Our way to add value is number one to make sure that we are getting the products up to speed and in line with the latest technologies that will help a court reporter or stenographer be at their best. Now, as you know, we also wholeheartedly support institutions like yourself and anyone else that is really helping the industry grow. The way that we see adding value is by supporting you. So you do what you do best. We're right there by you. And helping and supporting. While, you know, we stay focused on getting the technology development and getting the next set of products.

KEITH: I'm going to switch lengths here a little bit. We're talking about AI. For some season all court reporters, I wouldn't say all, but most court report efforts think AI is the bogymen in the room. There's so many things AI can help us in the transcription without taking over of the human-centric part of court reporting. How do you envision Stenograph helping with that?

THALY: Absolutely, Keith. I want to start off by really saying maybe more of my personal view. I feel like there's always going to be a human court reporter present in the deposition; right? The way Stenograph and we look at this is -- look at AI specifically; right, is how in a lot of ways, you touched upon it, most stenographers, this isn't my opinion, this is what we hear from the floor, they use AI to help with research and making them more productive. The value added from a stenographer is when they are at a deposition, they are

taking more depositions. They are getting out the transcripts; right? Anything in between. That's where -- that's the gold standard. We cannot get a human to or a AI to do what they do in clearing the record, but I feel like we can use AI to help them once they get the deposition at or trial or the hearing or the proceeding. How do we enable a stenographer to quickly get out a transcript to move on to the next one? How do we enable them where our -- their accuracy is better? The misstrokes are lower? What can we do from the writer technology and from an AI technology that's watching and saying, okay, hey, you always do this this way. Did you mean this? Give me permission to correct it on your own. We still want the stenographer to be in full control.

KEITH: For example, if you wrote that you are taking a family matter that this functional family was occupying the home instead of saying this dysfunctional family was occupying the home.

THALY: Exactly.

KEITH: AI should be able to help you understand the context? Is that what hoping?

THALY: Yeah. We want to leave the choice up to the stenographers. They know -- they know their job the best. What we want to do is give them all options. You want use it for context? Great. We'll give you a suggestion. You want to go look up a proper noun or street address or whatnot. We want you -- We don't want you to stop and go to Claude or ChatGPT or anything like that. We are working on things where you can see that right in your screen and Case CAT. It is all about how do we get more efficient? Get more precise? And yet still give the stenographer complete control over what they put out at the end of the day?

KEITH: So we have -- what would you see as the biggest issue facing court reporting as a profession at this point rather than AI? Other than AI? What would you say?

THALY: Frankly, I don't see actually see AI as a threat at all. But to answer the question, I think we got to grow and get more students into the profession. We got to get the graduation rates up. And really we have that -- that's the biggest opportunity and I know I've shared this with you before. I shared it with all of the leaders. Anybody that is helping with that and we love that. We have a lot of respect for the, you know, bodies like NCRA and others members that do that kind of work. We want to support them. I feel like that's -- the threat is not outside. The threat is inside.

KEITH: Would you -- like I was saying partnering with or being willing to work with NCRA and other places to help us with legislation issues and things like that that come up? So we can have a common ground to go to the legislators with?

THALY: Keith, you know --

KEITH: It is difficult.

THALY: Yeah. It is. Not because -- I want to be careful how I say

this here; right? My value add and how we see ourselves contribute. I don't know legislations. Frankly, I don't spend my time there. I'm spending time on when I say me , Stenograph, we are so focused on. Know technology. We can enable it. We can leverage it. And we want to be cognizant of what is happening. And, you know, we want to support the efforts from any bodies. Frankly, I don't follow a lot of news. We're, you know, we'll be happy to support.

KEITH: That's kind of like what I was thinking of. If we have technical issues that we need to have some support for to say this is how it is done.

THALY: Absolutely. Absolutely. 100%. 100%. We'll be happy to do that.

KEITH: Well, I have enjoyed this conversation. I think that following -- I think in the last year or so, you've grown more for Stenograph than I've seen in the last 25 years, so I really want to congratulate you on that. Anything that we can do to help you and you can do to help us, please know our door is always open. I want to thank you.

THALY: Thank you. Thank you so much, Keith. Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for the kind words. I want to reiterate that Stenograph is committed to this industry. I'm personally committed to doing everything that I can to support and grow this industry. So.

KEITH: Thank you.

THALY: I'm excited and looking forward to it. Thank you.