

# TRANSWORLD Business

THE LEADER IN ACTION SPORTS NEWS AND INFORMATION

January 2012

## STATE OF THE UNION

TOP EXECS ON THE  
HEALTH & FUTURE OF  
THE INDUSTRY



2011'S TOP SHOPS,  
BRANDS, REPS,  
AND PRODUCTS

**ACTION SPORTS  
EMPLOYEE SURVEY**  
Have we beat the recession?

2012/2013 SNOWBOARD  
HARDGOODS MARKET REPORT

2011 EXPOSURE-METER  
WINNERS



Before receiving this year's Stoked Achievement Award, Rodriguez swung by NYC's City Polytechnic High School to talk skateboarding, board construction, and life lessons with the kids.

# BUILDING THE P-ROD EMPIRE

PAUL RODRIGUEZ TALKS BRAND BUILDING, MOTIVATION, AND PHILANTHROPY

By Graham Hiemstra

Since joining Nike SB as the brand's figurehead in 2004, Paul Rodriguez has released five pro model shoes and helped morph the brand from a shunned mainstream outsider to a specialty retail rock star. Propelled by a clean textbook style and an insatiable hunger to succeed, his name has become synonymous with skateboarding around the world. At just 26 years young, Paul has built a lucrative business around what was once just a nickname, branding everything from apparel to accessories and hardgoods with the P-Rod name. Now, at the top of his game both on and off a skateboard, Rodriguez has begun giving back through a variety of avenues including the Paul Rodriguez Skateboarding Foundation. On a recent trip to NYC Paul was presented with the Stoked Achievement Award. We caught up with Rodriguez before the awards to learn a bit more about his recent involvement in charity, public speaking, and to gain an insight into building the business behind P-Rod.

**What draws you to work with organizations like Stoked?**

Considering how far I've come and what I've been able to accomplish, it's only right to want to help pass that on and help other people get their foot in the door. What drew me to [Stoked] was meeting Steve [Larosiliere, Stoked cofounder] last summer at a retreat that Nike sent some of their action sport athletes to. We talked and talked and found we had a bunch of things in common and had similar mind-sets.

**Have you always been involved with charity work in your community?**

I've never considered myself an activist of any sort. But anything that has pure motives and that gives back is something I'm into.

**Lately you've been doing some motivational speaking, does this come naturally?**

It's definitely more natural. My whole life's been one form of motivation to me, I thrive off inspiration. I'm always brainwashing myself in the direction of trying to improve myself. That's the subject matter that gets me going, and in turn, it helps me try and inspire other people. It recharges my battery too.

**Is this vision of improving one's self your main message when speaking to youth?**

My whole message is to get kids to not be afraid to go for the goals they have in life. To be honest, it has nothing to really do with skateboarding. Skateboarding is the catalyst that works for me, but whatever their desire is, whether it's skateboarding or pursuing an education, I want to support kids to go outside their comfort zones and challenge themselves and live their dreams.

I'm a person who's living their

dream and I know it's possible. It's not some unattainable thing, you've just got to be willing to do the legwork. The path to success is the same regardless of your goal—relentless work ethic, complete focus, and dedication—taking opportunities when they come, and not shying away from them. Not letting other people talk you out of it or talk you down. We're just trying to light a fire underneath kids. That's the ethic I'm trying to get across to whoever wants to listen.

**Who has served as inspiration for you when making business decisions?**

I've always been inspired and motivated by a guy like Jay-Z. His business savvy, mogul-ness. I look up to him in that sense. I haven't made any huge power moves, but I've started dabbling in my own little things, creating my sneaker shop [Primitive] and

starting an accessory line with Markisa. I'm slowly working my way up there, but right now skateboarding is my first and foremost passion. I'm in my prime and all that jazz, so I'm going to live that to the fullest while I'm physically capable. As I get older, maybe I'll continue to evolve more into an entrepreneur.

**Did this entrepreneurial idea of building a brand around the P-Rod name come from having a father in show business or did it develop organically from opportunities?**

A lot of it was organic, but seeing the success of my father growing up and seeing him live his dream was always in front of me as an example. I didn't have a regular nine-to-five dad. It was always natural to see my dad doing big things—as a kid I realized that and I've always dreamed of making something big of myself. It's always been part of my thought process and skateboarding just happened to be a passion that I fell in love with and it aligned with the rest of my desires.

**Was getting an apparel line with Nike more of an evolutionary process or something you've been pushing?**

Definitely an evolution. It wasn't a clearly thought-out master plan. But from the beginning all my role models were the Michael Jordans, the Bruce Lees, the Jay-Zs, the dudes who are the top of the top in their fields. I've always aspired to reach that type of level. I never wanted to be a person who falls in the middle. I didn't necessarily know I would have the opportunity to get a line with Nike, but I felt somehow, somehow if I kept working hard and kept capitalizing on opportunities that these type of opportunities will come along.

**How does your success and charity involvement work together?**

Obviously I'm pursuing my own dreams and desires, but I've also been a part of the Hood Games and opening three skateparks in LA. If I can't put my own physical effort and time in, I might as well donate to help. That's why I aligned with Stoked and hopefully there's a lot more to come in the future.

PHOTO: ROBERT LOTZKO