

EPISODE 02

[INTRO]

[0:00:05.8] ANNOUNCER: Welcome back to Happy Porch Radio. The podcast for progressive agency owners and web professionals. Season three is focused on the growing number of agencies who are making the world a better place.

We explore what this even means, why is it different from any other agency and how can it be reconciled with the real-world challenges of running a profitable agency? Join your host, Barry O’Kane as he speaks to leaders of agencies who are driven by verify use to positively impact the world around them.

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:43.8] BOK: In this episode I speak to Matt Schwartz who founded Constructive, a specialized branding in web design firm in New York. They work exclusively with non-profits and educational institutions. One of the cool things that Matt shares is how he views working with these types of organizations as a kind of paid PhD and how the world works. The examples he gives include vulnerable communities and climate change, and he describes that the work Constructive was able to do to being like impact at scale even though they are not directly working as he says where “the rubber hits the road”. Now, I’m totally inspired by this approach to running an agency and so, let’s go on and hear more from Matt.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:01:30] BOK: So yeah, like I said to start just say your name and give us a quick summary of your background and what led you to start the agency.

[0:01:35.7] MS: Sure, so my name is Matt Schwartz and I’m the founder and executive director of Constructive and we’re a social change brand strategy and experienced design firm in New York City. My background is in digital design and also writing, really, originally. I studied both

creative writing and visual studies in college and happened to graduate college in to the advent of the commercial web. So my, you know, my career, sort of, started. I graduated in 93' and, you know, really significant digital work and, sort of, large agencies starting to build out, you know, digital parts of their businesses was happening, you know, in that time and so starting in about I think 1995 I started working at, you know, places like, Young & Rubicam, had what they called new technologies at that time and then there was of course the first dot com boom and my time in, sort of, figuring out what it was I was doing, etc. just coincided with that.

So I did really mostly digital design for the vast majority of my career and started the agency now 17 years ago. Which really at the time was just myself and I always had some I mean I've always been a pretty politically/socially if not, you know, active, aware, and vocal person and, sort of, try to live my values that way and mindful of them and so as I started to figure out what is it that I want to do I want to start my own firm and, you know, choose the kinds of projects that we work and how we apply our time.

You know, that obviously made a lot of sense for me and I had a couple of projects as these things happen when you're starting where you get a — you get a project here and there and it happened to be in the non-profit space and, you know, those kind of content, we get additional work in that space and overtime, you know, just continue to shed any clients that didn't fit that model until we were, you know, fully just working with really non-profits in academic organizations, higher education, and also like K to 12.

And so, yeah that's been the path to and then of course, you know, there be job and there be focus has become growing and specializing and focusing on what it is we do and figuring out, you know, beyond just focusing on a certain sector in a certain type of work, how do we approach work differently, add value that might be different in other agencies in the space?

[0:04:18.1] BOK: Yeah, and that last point I want to come back to but just before that, you talked about that your values and living your values I think was the phrase you used, which is something that I think as really intriguing so how big of a part of the decision was that to — the decision for starting agency. Did you want to start the agency because of that or for different reasons?

[0:04:39.1] MS: Yeah, I'd like to say yes maybe but no, you know, I think I really the impetus to start the agency was that I wanted to, you know, I've always had a bit of about you, you know, whether it's entrepreneurial spirit or just, you know, hustling, right? I've always just kind of been that personality type and I think I found myself frustrated by having where I'd like things to go for myself and opportunities just being sort of hamstrung by folks who, you know, I've maybe I didn't think we're doing as good at job managing or whatever, you know, I was young so I think a lot of that I was just young and probably not as good as I thought I was, right? But, I always had the mindset that I could go do something or whatever and it just suited my personality type. So that was really the impetus.

[0:05:31.2] BOK: Yeah, so then you're going through this journey of building the business and the clients coming in and your trying to define what this new business that you're creating is. How long or how difficult was the journey from moving to from "I'm going to start an agency or run a business" to "I'm going to use this, under pin everything with this values, social change" as you describe it now?

[0:05:52.3] MS: Absolutely, so, you know, as I alluded to earlier, I mean, when you're starting and, you know, I was in my 20's at that time you have to take work that comes your way, right? As long as you don't, you know, I never took a project on that I was vehemently opposed to what the client was about they were usually just, you know, either could have been for a relatively big brand doing like banner ads or something. I mean, we don't do any like kind of work now but back in the day, right, you would do banner ads there might be an agency that, you know, wanted to have me do freelance or whatever it was and, you know, you take on those projects because you're just trying to build your business and you're trying to figure out also, sort of, what kind of work you enjoy the most.

You know, you build a sense of the connections between the types of different projects you do and you know you get a better feel for yourself and you know as you hire people you get a sense of, you know, what kind of things you can do and enjoy doing and as I mentioned it just happened that at a point we, through really personal contacts that I had, started to get a couple of projects that were related to just none profit issues and of course as I mentioned given my background just personally I enjoyed that kind of work. You know, doing work for, you know,

clients who are selling things that I have no interest in and I don't think or even that, you know, interesting in general not really fulfilling work, right?

It's not a great way to apply your thinking and your skill and your talent and so more meaningful projects from how they aligned with my values and my interests and, you know, things I'd like to see and really what's my contribution of the world at the end of the day, right? I mean you have a finite amount of time on this planet, at least if you subscribe to that theory, which I do. You know, and you have an opportunity to do certain things and spend your day a certain way doing work and, you know, I'm fortunate enough that, you know, in part through happen stance by certain types of projects I, you know, got more projects that were in that area and then maybe 13 or 14 years ago just decided that's all we would do and, you know, found ourselves able to not have to take on projects that weren't in that arena and that's really what we did.

[0:08:12.4] BOK: And, was that process challenging of that transition? You say you're slowly shedding the clients or the work that didn't quite meet this definition, was that a difficult challenging process for either personally or in business sense?

[0:08:25.2] MS: It definitely was a difficult challenge personally and I'll say even there were times I actually, there is one time in particular where I made a clear statements of the company that we weren't going to take on a certain type of work and that is we had work that was tied to doing work for the financial services industry but the way we were doing that work actually was very aligned with what we are doing which was TIAA-CREF, which is not just TIAA and they are a financial services organization that is actually concentrated and focused on supporting financial needs and retirement needs of teachers of people in healthcare and government and cultural institutions.

Well, we wound up getting a project here and a project there, they're related to that just because and, you know, this was actually at the time that the dot com meltdown was happening it was — I mean, the financial meltdown in 2007 and we had finished doing that work and I just made the decision because I was actually very against the financial services industry broadly, you know, our client TIAA non withstanding, just there were practices that I didn't agree with and I just made it clear that we weren't going to do that and actually there was sort of some real support

for that notion and, you know, with regard to more broadly, it really was a shedding of clients so, you know, that's the challenge with any brand, right?

We do a lot of brand strategy work and when I'm working with organizations and I'll help develop brand strategy and one of the points is that you have to be focused, and the challenge with focus is it requires giving something up. So by doing that, you know, we were able to focus on what it is we did well and, you know, sure there are times where when you're not a huge agency and they have that issue you've got to make sure you have enough projects to keep yourself and your staff both busy and well paid and every agency has moments where that's a challenge.

But the focus was, you know, for us was a boom in that it allowed us as you say to go an inch wide and a mile deep into a certain area and be known very well for that and that's — so I didn't find it hard and I actually embrace that challenge and as a branding specialist as much as someone who does a lot of digital and we do a lot of technology work and development that's how I think about what great brands are made of and so it was a good journey for us to think that way about ourselves.

[0:10:53.1] BOK: Yeah, that's much more rounded than just, I don't mean just, but then purely the values part as well. Do you think that focusing process was harder or easier or neither because of the focus that you chose?

[0:11:11.9] MS: I would probably say neither but only because I don't have necessary anything to compare it too, you know? I think it was probably easier in that, you know, as we say sometimes with clients as we're developing brand strategy work and defining things like organizational mission and values is that we have a screen of values that determines what kinds of work and actually what kinds of people we're interested in working with and who see us as a really valuable partner who can help them and be really good partner and so, you know, I think it's easier in that we have even within the sector of doing non-profit work and educational work.

We've been approached by organizations where I really disagree with their mission somewhat significantly. You know, we got approached by for example The Church of Latter-day Saints out of the blue, which is kind of interesting because I'm a pretty vocal atheist and I thought it was interesting and nice, you know, I'm not going to necessarily turn that away. I'm not, you know,

pro-organized religion necessarily for example but my first take was — and it was a big take. They said they had a really big budget it came in via email and I talked with my wife about it. Sort of one of the first things we talked about was, “Alright well, what’s your stands on homosexuality and let’s just start there,” and it clearly didn't align with my beliefs because they don’t seem necessarily tolerant of it or — and I hate the word tolerance, right accepting.

And so, we just said “no’, right? I didn’t even get back to them I think and I’ve had other ones where they were just maybe politically more right leaning than I am and I just don’t want to put our work to good right to advance that. So I think that those things make it easier. Those values make it easier to decide. The key is you have to have enough work to be able to say “no”. It kind of comes down to that.

[0:13:11.9] BOK: Yeah.

[0:13:13.7] MS: And, I’ve been fortunate to not have to have been very often as at all and certainly not in recent history to be faced with the moral dilemma and moral hazard of saying, “Should I say yes to this because we really need the revenue?” I haven’t had to do that and so I’m thankful for that on that I guess makes it easier.

[0:13:33.0] BOK: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense and you mentioned that screening process, can you tell me a little bit more about what that is? How defined it is and exactly how you go through that process?

[0:13:41.3] MS: Well, I'd like to say that there’s some matrix we plot someone against, you know, based on different how you use. But it’s not that way at all. I mean, it really does come down to you just get a sense of what are these people doing, who do they tend to work with? And I’ll say that maybe because our brand and what we're known for is pretty well-positioned in areas where the kinds of clients that we want to work with know about us. The inbound that we get are buy and large from a values prospective all clients we would more or less be happy to work with. I have, you know, that LDS inbounds that we got is one of the very few in the recent, recent memory. We did get one from a, sort of, right of center think tank.

That I was like, “Well, I can deal with that, I’m not a dogmatic, they are right wing, but they’re not, you know, they were center of right and because we’re known for that within a certain circle the decisions come down to actually screening whose a good fit based on what their expectations of a partner is and what their understanding of what engaging a firm like ours means and how much they know about what they don’t know and where they see us helping them and hopefully seeing that we’re someone who knows a lot about what we don’t know and that’s what they’re all about and it’s our job to learn all of that to help them.

Our screening process actually is much more now about, sort of, interpersonal and financial fit and what we see the working relationship being like and the size of the project just for what we can handle. Because small projects can be challenging for us because, you know, they can take up a lot of head space but not be large enough to keep the team busy. So, that’s kind of where it’s all gone to it at this point and I think that’s because we’ve really been clear about, who we are and what we do, and why we think it matters.

[0:15:42.8] BOK: That goes back to something else you said about, about the luck factor and obviously luck plays an important part, but I’m a firm believe in that you can influence or make your own luck because also what you are describing is a really clear run of position and then seeing the benefits of that and maybe I paraphrase slightly?

[0:16:00.6] MS: Yeah, oh, absolutely. Look and I’m with you that, you know, you make your own luck I’m not going to kid myself, you know, your own luck has made for you. I’m a white male who was born in to a, you know, upper-middle class family in the East Coast who went to a good college, you know, I’ve got a better leg of them most. But you do make your own luck in that. We’ve been very deliberate and purposeful about how we want to be seen and who we are, right?

And, that has been without its lumps but it seems that over all that change has been quite positive and actually a specific point of that is that we used to be Matthew Schwartz Design Studio for 15 years and that became MSDS, which for those who may know is essentially Material Safety Data Sheet. Which I only know because my very first job out of college was as the Purchasing Manager in Human Resource person for an aluminum and anodization factory in Long Island City. And so, as a branding person, you know, I thought, “You know, I would never

advice a client to have an acronym as their name certainly not one that is a confused with something completely unrelated to what they do,” and so we rebranded it as Constructive actually a little bit a year ago just being again decided that it was time to take our own advice. That was a purposeful decision and it has turned into us being perceived and seen a certain way and yes you make your own luck that way and so we have been in the past few years in particular I'll say in the past three to five leading up to the naming very purposeful about what we do and spending a lot of time developing thought leadership and content marketing and providing webinars and speaking. I've done a lot of that in the past few years and that's been with an eye towards, you know, positioning our firm as a certain type of partner and it has been successful, you know, to some degree for sure.

[0:18:01.9] BOK: That's really interesting. So the thought leadership side of things and you describing that obviously as a very deliberate part of the process but has that been, from your personal point of view, how did you start? Was there a starting point? Is that something that just grow on out of the wealth of your experience or what are the challenges? Basically, I think I'm asking, what are the challenges for somebody whose wanting to start to do those sort of activities?

[0:18:24.1] MS: Sure, well I think it's definitely a challenge I will say that it is another job to be honest in a way. It's a job, as much as I enjoy it and I do and then like I said I have a background in writing, I've done quite a bit of writing and I do enjoy it. It's a job I wish I didn't necessarily have to do because I have other things to do that, you know, are part of running the business. But, you know, it's a challenge and it was both an out growth of my experience as you ask about. But, it also was a deliberate decision and that I knew it was important I think in the era of search and how easy it is for people to find for partners to work with who are specialized in our field of social impact, sort of, none proof consultancies design firms that service and support social change. Well that field has gotten huge in the years that I've been in with far more competitive than it was when I started.

Well, you kind of have an obligation if you want your business to be successful I think, unless you're very fortunate and have a lot of contacts and a lot of internal referral business that comes from just personal networking to do that kind of work. So, you know, the thing that's been fantastic about it is it does help hone your own thinking and I think, you know, you prove your

expertise and to yourself as well as to others and you learn more and you dig into things and I've become I think far more capable in explaining why we approach the work the way we do. And, thinking about us, as an organization as a result of that and the challenge is that there has to be some rigor and some repetition to doing that and then you also for a firm I think it's important for the firm to share its expertise. It can't just be me.

I wanted for a long time which is why I didn't go with Matthew Schwartz Design Studio and it was MSDS, because I didn't want it to be about me and my need even though I'm a significant part of it and so the firm sharing its expertise in setting up a process for that. It's just something that, you know, you can – you have to do if you want to have it done and we have.

[0:20:35.5] BOK: Yeah, awesome. Would you mind sharing just a very brief eye level what you mean by the process for doing that?

[0:20:40.7] MS: Really, just setting up some kind of schedule, having a content creation calendar, having engaging staff in the process and finding ways for them to contribute. Whether it's to doing a webinar or speaking, or writing articles and so for us we just, you know, it's never perfect but we thought was in essence somebody here writes an article it used to be every week and we would just rotate so that you would have an article, you know, for us it's somebody once every 12 or 13 weeks so I tend to try and write more frequently but for a staff we've moved it to bi-weekly so that we're always putting something out there hopefully, mostly, every two weeks and it's that somebody based on their discipline and their expertise comes up with something that is based on what it is they do within the company, the firm.

I and others here who provide sort of a supervisory role there, try to get some feedback on how to guide it and make it of value to the client so that it's clear what the value to the client our audience and maybe it is for other designers or developers even. But I mean our majority audience is hopefully, you know, people who are in decision making positions within organizations who can benefit from our expertise and who by reading articles gain something out of it and are inclined to talk to us. So, we just try to make it a process where there is a bit of schedule, there's a process for having staff developed, reviewed, edited, and published, and then, you know, shared in different channels.

[0:21:57.3] BOK: Yeah, very cool. I want to go back to something you said a little bit earlier and you said something along the lines there's been lumps in the journey. Do you have any interesting or, you know, talking about those challenges when the situations you, the agency went through and how, kind of, how what you learned from what happened as you come out of them?

[0:22:45.1] MS: Yeah, sure I mean god knows how many of them there are Barry. It's like, there are no shortage of lessons learned and learned and lumps received. You know, I think first of all it's a constant learning process, right? And, you'd think after doing something for so many years that you've got every aspect down and, you know, I was just having a meeting with one of our new hires who's going to be leading our project management practice and talked about something and said like, you know, "You'd think after 17 years that we'd have this one particular thing I was talking about down you know, right?" But, not necessarily so or, you know, things change.

So I think, you know, there's one real big one and I — it depends on how firms start. Like for me the firm started as an out growth of, you know, my desire to do this and to build something that would create, you know, hopefully interesting and engaging jobs for people, you know, that, you know, earn a good living doing the work and it creates a culture here in the community and all of that. Other places maybe started by a couple of people and it may grow a little less organically, although I think it's all relatively organic. The thing that I think has been is that learning how to set process and structure in place because that's not my background for example.

So if you're an organization where one or maybe two people have started the firm, right? Very often you'll see two people who maybe knew each other in design school or one of them was a designer and the other happened to do web development and they, you know, start things. Well, I'm not a project manager for example and I appreciate it a lot but in the younger years of the company A) from a financial perspective you may have the people doing the work, be the direct contacts and manage their work in their process and you just, sort of, like communicate with each other to keep everything going and the work load is such that that works and it's a more direct collaboration between for example a designer and the client.

Now, we still have that in our senior leads and such are always involved working directly with the client but we've had to build out process and we've had to, you know, figure out where our blind spots are and figure out where things are a little fuzzy for us internally or figure out how we can be more clear in expectation setting for clients and there are a lot of those kind of things where it's, you know, for example how do we make sure that people in the studio when working on a project, understand very clearly what the statement of work calls for and what we've agreed to do and what the measures of success, financially and otherwise, are going to be.

Meaning, here's the project, here's about how many hours each of the tasks has set to it and, you know, for certain clients this looks like a very interesting opportunity and they didn't have as much budget but we really want to, sort of, we see some upside for us in terms of this could be a PR type thing or, you know, it's high visibility engagement so we'll over invest in this. Versus this is a project that we have to really stick to the budget. We can't, you know, invest our own time and money in essence as a result of that in doing. Well, you need to communicate that to people and you need to keep people on track, right? You need to make sure they understand how much time is left in each particular phase, etc.

Those are lumps and you take them the way they manifest themselves is when you, you know, do project health, sort of, recaps at the end of a project and when we started we didn't even do that kind of stuff, right? You didn't even look at the end of the project and do an assessment. It took several years to get to the point where we realized we should do that. Well, once you start doing that you start, sort of, getting a sinking feeling in your heart when you take a look at how much over budget you went on something, right? And so, process and so I take it back to the idea of design thinking, which I have a lot of interest in and, you know, you start with a lot of, sort of, ideas and energy and enthusiasm, and then through that you take it to this heuristic phase where you're, sort of, filling things out and, you know, playing with ideas and, sort of, getting feedback in the process of designing stuff for clients and also designing yourself as a company.

Then at some point you move to the algorithm stage and you move to this point where you have to keep doing that inventing and thinking in a design way for your own company. But you get to the point where you need to create those kinds of processes and you need to create scalable repetitive types of tasks, functions, whatever you want to say and I think we and the, you know,

most recent years of our history had been at the point where we being more deliberate about that stage of what it means to build an advantage and a sustainable business for ourselves that sort of capitalizes on all the energy and enthusiasm and that, sort of, soup if you will when everything is, kind of, mixing around.

So, to me, you know, lumps have been getting to the point where we now realize and are thinking about who do we need to hire, who's our next hire, if we're going to bring someone on, what kind of skill set do they need to have? How will they complement what we do? How will we work together? We're thinking about that a lot more because of those lumps.

[00:28:25] BOK: Yeah, there's so much there. Sort of, as part of that interwoven how interwoven in amongst all that is the high level purpose of, you know, the social change or working with brands, this sort of values driven stuff?

[00:28:38] MS: Well, one of the great things, there are two things, you know, I say about this and the first is that because of the work that we choose to do and the clients that we choose to work with. You know, most of us are not in our daily lives out and I mean most of us in the company out in the, whether it's in the front lines doing actual like let's say activist work or the majority of our clients are a bit more on the sort of policy and research, and they may do certain types of programs but maybe not activism in this kind of thing and supporting vulnerable communities for example.

Well, we're not out in the frontlines and doing that work, whether it's doing research that helps improve policy or actually running programs that help people. But our clients are and so, you know, your question as far as like how the values come in to it, well I look at it and we look at it here as that's our opportunity to make that contribution. Which goes back to, you know, what you asked earlier about sort of the work you choose to do and how those values inform what you're doing.

Well, we get to have that kind of an impact then for us we think in a way actually we get to have it a little bit of scale because what we're doing ideally is helping organizations that work with us to be more effective in a lot of different ways. And so, we're making our impact doing what we do for a living while the folks who are fighting the hard fought battles and doing the nitty gritty

work day in and day out to actually, you know, where the rubber hits the road of actual change happening while they're doing that. So we get to do it a little bit at scale. So that's the first part right, is that we get to play our part and contribute our part to the values we want to see realized in the world by that process and those partnerships.

The second part is that, this isn't necessarily values but I like to say that one of the best things about what we do is you do brand strategy and you do design work is that we get what I like to say is a sort of on going paid PhD in a class called How the World Works. Now, we, sort of, you know, based on the issues our clients work on we get to learn a lot. I know a lot more about climate change and carbon emissions. We've been working on climate and, sort of, the energy sector for a dozen years.

We know things about the judicial system. We know things about, sort of, vulnerable communities and families, you name it. And so, we get to learn from our clients because they're experts in those things and it's really exciting for us in a great client partnership where we really dig in and learn different facets of how different organizations are working on relatively big important issues. So that is in a way a value too, right? Because we a big value for us as designers is that you have to always be learning and you always have to be working with someone else because you're not designing if you're not doing it in a collaborative process.

And the same goes with brand strategy, and many of our clients are people who are learning and are listeners by nature in what they do and I think that's why there's a good partnership between design firms and social change agencies. So to me that's kind of a value, right, to always be learning.

[00:32:04] BOK: That's extremely cool, really interesting insight there. Two final questions, I know we're starting to run out of time. But to your last point there about design agencies and the broader environment for that, how do you feel about where agencies doing with the focus for example that you have with design maybe advertising, maybe technical, where do we fit and where those types of agencies fit in with — where's the future of that type of work?

[00:32:30] MS: Can you explain that a little bit? I'm not sure I get that. That's a big one and I bet I can give a go at it, but I'm not sure I caught it exactly.

[00:32:38] BOK: Of course yeah, it's a pretty — as you said it's a big question.

[00:32:39] MS: Yeah.

[00:32:39] MS: Where do you think the future is for design agencies and technical agencies doing the kind of work that you're describing there.

[00:32:51] MS: I see. Yeah, that's a great question Barry. You know, for me things that I've seen for sure is that in any industry as it reaches maturity it becomes, you know, fully mature industry or market. You know, it's when there is a commoditization of the services, the product if you will and the blurs of the distinction between one firm or one provider regardless of the market versus another are lesser and lesser and there are an abundance of buyers and an abundance of sellers. And, there is no doubt that the digital industry, if we're talking just about digital and really sort of grand strategy in such, has reached that point which why we specialize.

And I think the future for me in where we've tried to be is first of all being a consultative thought partner and thinking beyond. Design is about problem solving. There's a great quote that I refer to a lot from a guy named Herbert Simon. So, Herbert Simon said that anyone designs who is engaged in the act of taking existing situations and turning them in to preferred ones. And what's really interesting about that quote is that it's not about an artifact, it's not about making anything, it's about the act of designing solutions to things and creating change. And so, I think that there will always be a place for organizations that just do sort of, you know, tech work, building stuff, do design work, you know, making things and when I say design I mean in this sort of like the very limited sense that people have of like designing something visually and making an interface or designing a logo and all of that.

And I think that, that kind of work is increasingly commoditized and it's a difficult spot to be in and as things can be even more increasingly outsourced then you see things like crowdsource stuff. Well, that's all you need to know what to say that being a firm that just does design work or that maybe does dev work is going to be a difficult challenge because there are lower cost providers and if the buyers aren't necessarily sophisticated, they may not know the difference and so what you don't see is crowdsourced strategic thinking, you know.

And so, I think being a true consultative thought partner that looks at a client and says, “What’s the situation you are in now and where is the situation you’re looking to go to, where do you want things to be in several years and how are the things that we do, how can we help make that happen?” And for us, because we do brand strategy work at which kind of filters almost sometimes in to organizational strategy and we do a lot of messaging and positioning. And, we do a lot of the design and development side of things. There’s a natural pairing there at times.

I think other firms may struggle to do some of that a bit and I think if you’re not doing that kind of work it becomes, where do you become a strategic thinker that helps not just create a site but provide insight and value, right? Getting away from the idea of creating a deliverable of a website, right, into “the site is a manifestations of something and it serves a purpose in how do we work together to help it achieve an organization’s mission?”

I think the future, I don’t know what the particulars of how companies would structure themselves in what we’ll be making but I think, thinking of that way should be the first way of approaching it and then each company will find their own way to sort of position themselves as that type of partner. You know, one of the things I often say and I’ve written an article about it on our site is that in the non profit sector in particular, it’s just part of culture it comes out of procurement where a lot of large organizations will have this culture of calling design firms vendors and they’ll issue their RFP and, you know, say they’re looking for a vendor and to me a vendor is a slur. It’s not, you know, vendors sell you a hotdog. They don’t create any strategic value.

So, you know, the phrase that I always use and I’ll even correct people when we’re sort of talking to them is you know, “Look we’re partners, we’re not vendors and you don’t want to be a vendor and if you are that’s not the direction where the industry needs to go and will go in my opinion. So changing that mindset and thinking that way on our side is what I think has to happen.

[00:37:26] BOK: Yeah, that’s very clear it makes a lot of sense. There is so much more I would like to dig in to but we’re already running out of time.

[00:37:32] **MS:** Well, we can do a part two another time if you want.

[00:37:34] **BOK:** Yeah, let's do it.

[00:37:35] **MS:** I appreciate it. I'm glad you've found it interesting and you know and hopefully others will too.

[00:37:40] **BOK:** Awesome, yeah. And just finally so for anybody listening who wants to find out a little bit more about Constructive and about the work you do where can we point them?

[00:37:46] **MS:** Sure thanks. Well, we are at constructive.co and we're in New York City on the corner of Austin and Broadway. We're @heyconstructive on Twitter and we also have — we've created a product that is for producing digital reports and things that is at exposition.constructive.co. So, yeah, that's it — and we have last I mentioned we have a lot of thought leadership pieces, a lot of publishing. We have a newsletter of course on our site sign up and once a month we publish — our thought leadership announce, events, webinars, we do get webinars in conjunction with other organizations and that sort of stuff. So people can, if they want to stay in the loop, keep it not spam me it's once a month ideally as long as we are on our schedule we'll give you insight in to some of the stuff that we're doing.

[00:38:43] **BOK:** Wonderful, thank you so much and I'll put all of those links in to the show notes in happyporchradio.com. Thanks again Matt I really appreciate your time.

[00:38:48] **MS:** Absolutely, thank you Barry. I appreciate it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:39:01] **BOK:** You can get all the links and notes from this episode on happyporchradio.com where you can also find out how to send us questions, feedback and get involved in the conversation about this series. If you enjoy the show, please share with anyone else who might enjoy it too. Thanks for listening.

[END]