



SEASON 3

EPISODE 12

[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: Hi, and welcome back to season three, this week, I have the honor of speaking to Jonathan and David who are cofounders of the Wired Impact. This conversation is one of my favorite of the season. First, we talk about how the agency moved from a fairly generalist agency to having a clear specialization and this is such a smart move for any small agency.

Much of what we talk about echo themes from back in Season One. Of course this current season is about connecting that specialization to a deeper mission and we hear how Jonathan and David did that, despite some advice to the contrary. We also discuss a more recent transition their agency has undergone with the move away from custom web and cut marketing services to a more platform approach.

There is even more value in this part of the conversation, especially if you are considering a similar journey with your agency. Let’s meet Jonathan and David.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:01:42.0] JG: This is Jonathan Goldford and my background is in web programming and development.

[0:01:46.2] DH: Yeah and David Hartstein. My background is more on the content strategy and analytics side of things and these days I actually spend a lot of time working with potential clients and talking to them about what they're looking for in a project and if we might be a mutual fit and then assuming we are just kind of at least kicking off the process with them before potentially handing them off to an internal project management.

Yeah, in terms of Wired Impact, we simply put, build websites for nonprofits. Historically, what that meant is doing a lot of custom development, we've been using WordPress for years, we're big fans of it but you know, doing a lot of pretty sophisticated, larger websites for generally kind of mid sized organizations and what we found is those projects generally speaking, for a lot of organizations, we're cost prohibitive and also time prohibitive.

They just took a lot of time to work from start to finish and so what we've actually done more recently is distilled down a lot of the best practices that we've seen over the years, just really be effective for nonprofits and help them move the needle on their missions and built that into a platform that is built solely for nonprofits.

A lot of the features that we've seen really be key to the organizations fulfilling their missions, they'll write in to some themes that we can make available on WordPress and everything is really tailored for nonprofits so that they can get a site that is still really robust and powerful but also pretty simple and affordable and they can get something launched faster than they would have been able to at least when we were building custom sites and so instead of something taking five to six months and costing thousands and thousands of dollars, we can get something built in a matter of maybe –

Somewhere in the ballpark of six to eight weeks and at a fraction of the cost just because we can use these themes that we've developed and delve them on our platform.

[0:03:38.4] BOK: Outstanding, yeah. I'm really interested in the platform approach, something I hopefully we can dig in to in this conversation. You know what I'd like to start actually is stepping back a little bit and talk a little bit about what led you to focusing on nonprofits and if that's something that was a very conscious plan early days with your agency or if that's something that's come about over time?

[0:03:59.1] JG: Sure, I can kind of take you back through the history a little bit. This is Jonathan, when I graduated from college in 2009, I was actually in to go to the peace corps about when you're accepted to go to the peace corps, you usually end up with kind of nine to 12 months off before you actually leave to go.

In that time, I actually went over to India and did a fellowship there working with a nonprofit to help build the communications network and when I came back, I just felt really invigorated and excited about the technology and the work that could be done there.

In 2009, I actually founded what was called JG Visual which is really kind of a marketing company and I thought, you know, hey, if this works great, I'll stick with it and if not, I'll go to the peace corps which I would have loved too. After about six to nine months, I decided, hey, I want to stick with this.

At that point, we were just doing kind of general marketing and then a year later, David actually joined me as a partner. We co-owned the company at that point and that was in 2010 and then as we moved along, we were kind of doing all different types of marketing, we were offering photography and video work and web design development and social media marketing, we were just kind of a general marketing company but as we kind of learned, we really wanted to focus more and more on online marketing and more and more specifically on web design and development.

We actually kind of began to focus on that but the other thing we did is continue to ask ourselves kind of two major questions, this is kind of how we always evaluated the work that we were doing. The first question was, when I come in to work every day, do I really enjoy the work that I'm doing day to day basis and then that question, we always felt like yes, when I come into my work, whether I'm doing web programming or content writing or strategy.

Or working with clients on their own online marketing, we felt like yes, the day to day work is great, we really enjoy that. The second question is really where we struggle and that question was, do we really feel like we're having the impact on the world that we want to have and at that time, we were working with all different types of organizations, for profit, nonprofit, big, small and we felt like we really weren't having the impact that we wanted to and so that was the point when we really start having conversations about do we want to make a transition to focusing specifically with nonprofit organizations.

Then in 2012, we actually made the switch from what was JG visual to wired impact which focus specifically on doing online marketing for nonprofits and at that time, a lot of people honestly said it was a pretty bad idea and that we really shouldn't focus there but both David and I have a real passion for the nonprofit space and that's what our background was in.

It was honestly just what we really cared about and so that's really what prompted us to kind of make the switch and then I can say six years later that we are very happy and excited about not only the direction we took them but also where the company continues to head.

[0:06:42.3] BOK: Yeah, outstanding. I really like the sort of genesis for you, that's really cool. Do you mind if we really quickly touch on the – you described that experience in India and then you mentioned the impact that technology can have. Can you talk a little bit about what you mean by that and specifically by the impact that the technology can have in those sort of situations?

[0:07:03.0] JG: Sure, yeah, I mean when you're talking about compound marketing a lot of times, especially when you're talking about nonprofits, I think one thing that you can always hit on is efficiency. When you're talking about capacity for an organization, you know, almost always, nonprofits are short on time and staff and a lot of the online marketing tools now obviously, not only serve to benefit them in terms of obviously reach and getting people involved with the organization.

Just also serve to do a lot of work in an automated way or save them a lot of time. An example of you know, technology benefiting you that ways, let's say something like an event system, you

know, which we have built in the platform which a lot of the systems have is you know, previously, if you wanted people to RSVP for an event, you might say hey, email me at this address if you want to join.

Well but, every time somebody emails, you have to record that, you have to respond to that person, you have to send them a reminder when the event is coming up and what allow this tools do, you know, just like any typical event system is, it allows people to register, it allows people to pay, it automates a lot of that process for them and it in turn really saves a lot of time and you can see that across the board with a lot of technology.

You know, volunteer systems, donor management systems, event systems. I mean, they all have these ways of not only concerning as a great marketing tool and allowing people to get involved but also really helping kind of alleviate some of the time constraints and nonprofits normally have.

[0:08:24.5] DH: Absolutely. I mean, I would also say on that front that it's been really transformative in shaping the sense of community and so you know, it used to be that organizations worked in a particular community and they had a certain support system in that community and everything was much more local, obviously you had large organizations, we're able to do things on a national or an international level.

But now, the world is just – it's a lot smaller than it used to be because we have technology that can allow us to not only serve a community that maybe halfway around the world but it also allows us to take supporters, whether they're donors, volunteers, just kind of support as whatever they may be into those communities that we serve and really showcase impact that may be happening literally on the other side of the world and made people feel very connected to those missions and very connected to the sense of community that we're trying to build.

I think it is less important for many organizations at this point that they're in a particular geographic area because they're able to actually cultivate this sense of community using technology in a really elegant and beautiful way.

[0:09:31.8] BOK: Yeah, couldn't agree more. Especially like what you're saying about, you know, obviously you understand and you're the market you're focused on in the nonprofits and the terminology and the examples you're giving is very focused.

When you describe this journey of doing that specialization and the sort of early stages of the agency, that's always the advice you get, you know, we got specialize, you got to have issue out of a clear definition of who and what your company is.

And then the challenge I often or hear agencies talk about is what about – we need this work, we need to take this work right now, there's kind of a perceived risk in that specialization, means saying no to things, means basically saying no to money coming in right now, yeah?

I thought, I was also particularly intrigued when you said that you were getting sort of people saying, hey, nonprofits is a terrible idea. I assume a lot of that was, or I guess my question is, how much of that was the commercial or the financial aspect of doing that specialization and picking the nonprofit niche?

[0:10:31.4] DH: Sure, I mean I think in terms of the apprehension that folks were telling us in terms of – they were communicating to us in terms of going into the nonprofit space, I think that was pretty much all driven by a belief that there wasn't, that these organizations wouldn't have budgets basically.

It wouldn't be able to dedicate the necessary funds to their own marketing and that you know, we would end up not being able to keep the lights on and the doors open after a few years of focusing in a nonprofit space. Obviously we have found that not to be the case, generally speaking, it seems like – I mean, obviously there are organizations that are in the process of trying to fund raise and don't necessarily have huge budgets when it comes to their marketing.

But generally speaking, a lot of the organizations that we've worked with time tends to be a scarcer resource than a lot of times the funds to actually pursue marketing just because I think in a lot of ways, the cost of at least a lot of basic marketing has come down so much over the years that it seems like something that nonprofits really struggle with is making sure that they have the internal capacity to be able to adequately dedicate to their own marketing.

Just because they're so busy serving their community and actually doing the good work that they're doing and so that tends to be a more common challenge that we run up against.

[0:11:50.0] BOK: Was that process you described being very personally connected and caring about and the passion as those are the words you use. Was that process of doing that specialization, was it scary, what was the – was it difficult, did you feel like you were going out on a limb?

[0:12:05.1] JG: Yeah, I think in some ways we did, I mean, it's hard to hear a lot of you know, advisers and people we lean on to for support tell us that you know, we were cutting out a huge market, I mean, I think that's really what you are doing when you specialize like that but I think like we talked about, that's really always where our passion was and I think it was almost a very natural transition for us in a lot of ways.

Because that's really what we cared about so much. I think too, in a lot of ways, when you specialize like that, while it is scary, it also makes your job a lot easier, you're not trying to market your own company to the entire world, it's much easier to say, you know, for example, if you're writing a blogpost on your website, it's much easier to say, I'm going to write a blogpost that's specifically catered to executive directors at nonprofits versus I'm going to write a blogpost that's supposed to cater to every CEO president, executive director and leader of every nonprofit and corporation in the entire united states.

That is a very difficult challenge and I think what specialization allows you to do is really hone everything about your work, hone your marketing, hone your services, hone the way you describe what you do and the services that you're offering. I think in that way, it made it a lot easier for us and it was also that every time we talked about or wrote about it, it wasn't just, here's what we offer, it was –

This is how we feel like we're playing a part in making the world better and I think that that also was a lot easier for us too.

[0:13:24.0] DH: Yup absolutely. I think we also – I feel like we’ve talked a lot about the advice we got that said, don’t go into the nonprofit space, I do think there were quite a few people that also said, yeah, I know about you guys and this is a very logical – you know, I don’t know a whole lot about whether or not it will work out but just from my personal kind of passion standpoint, it makes sense.

It seems like a fit and you know, even just hearing us kind of talk about the move, there is definitely a certain element of nerves involved but I think we also just got really fired up talking about it and we clearly were both very excited about the move to the point where lot of people said yeah, give it a shot, you know, see what happens and take it from there.

[0:14:03.4] JG: I also want to add too. I mean, David kind of touched on this a little bit. You know, I think what has made specializing like this a lot easier is the fact that organizations and individuals are feeling a lot more comfortable working with companies that don’t exist directly in their city or region.

I think if – I don’t know if we had made this transition 15 years ago that it would have worked because I think a lot of companies still felt very nervous or sorry, organizations felt very nervous about hiring a company that that wasn’t in their city that they couldn’t go meet with face to face in a room and I think what we found now and the fact that most of our clients are not in the city that we’re in is that people are feeling a lot more comfortable with that.

I think there are still some hesitations but I think people are – you know, ask themselves the question, is it worth it to try to find the company that’s the best fit for me even if that means that I can’t sit in a room with them and I think a lot of people are answering that question yes now or maybe in the past they wouldn’t have.

[0:14:56.0] BOK: Yeah, I think that’s a really insightful observation as you said about timing or the changing in needs or impressions of people who have. You made this leap or you made this decision to narrow down and focus and rebrand. Did you see the positive impacts of that immediately? Was there a tough journey to go through in that transition period?

[0:15:14.5] DH: Sure. I think maybe the answer is, a little bit of both, I mean, I think that from an internal standpoint, we saw the benefits immediately in that it just got a lot easier to talk about what we do and feel like we had a much clearer picture of the direction we were heading as a company, we had a much clearer picture in terms of our target audience, you know, just who were we trying to reach.

I think our – especially the content, we started creating, became a lot more focused, you know, we were able to write articles and think purely in terms of what is going to benefit nonprofits. You know, there was definitely a bit of an adjustment when it came to repackaging sort of how we talked about what we do and who we are just because folks knew us and not like we had a global reach or anything like that but people who were familiar with us and knew us in a certain context and you know, there was certainly a period where we had to shift the conventional kind of thinking around what we're offering but I think internally, we saw that benefit very quickly.

As we ramp that up externally, I think we started to see the benefits relatively quickly as well to the point where I don't think we – Jonathan, correct me if you remember this differently, I don't really remember a point where we said this was not the right move. You know, I think pretty quickly, we felt like the benefits outweighed whatever costs we had during the transition and that you know, we had just sort of been building on it since then.

[0:16:44.2] JG: Yeah, I mean, I think that you know, what we – it was nice that we did have going for us is that we've already been in the marketing space for a couple of years and we did have some nonprofit clients already.

It wasn't in that way like we were starting from scratch which I think made the transition a little bit smoother just in terms of you know, you're not starting from zero dollars in revenue and trying to make it enough to pay your salaries, I mean, we had a base at least of a couple of years that we could work off of so I think that at least helped ease the transition in some ways.

[0:17:13.4] DH: Yup, that's true. During the transition, we actually continued to serve clients, especially clients that had social missions because there quite a few organizations we were working with that weren't necessarily entirely nonprofit but had a social mission of some sort

and continued to work with them. I mean, for a long time there after and so that definitely was helpful too in terms of the risk associated with the transition on our end of things.

[0:17:38.8] BOK: That's really interesting, did you go through a period when you had to say no to clients or how newer came in or opportunities came up where you're saying no and was that process difficult?

[0:17:48.1] JG: Yeah, I mean, we're still dealing with that, I mean, we still have clients that we worked with from years and years ago that still come back and want to work with us and I think in some cases, it just depends on the project, they don't know that we have any really kind of set policies on that front, I mean, I think we love to help out older clients just because we know how stressful it can be to go find a new organization to work with in these kinds of ways.

It has been a struggle, I mean, we've definitely seen projects that we were interested and thought were really cool and we love the people that we're working on them but maybe it just wasn't a fit for the organization or our mission internally.

Saying no is definitely difficult but it's also – I think David would speak to this too, I think saying no as a service based business is such a critical component of success because like you mentioned earlier Barry, you can't spend so much time chasing work and always saying yes to every project that doesn't fit you well and every moment you spend on work that doesn't align with your vision, that's time away from whatever you could be doing to improve your foundation or further kind of build your base in your own market or just to further the organization and so I think that saying no is such an important part of actually being able to grow an organization. Which is kind of a funny thing.

[0:19:00.9] BOK: Absolutely, yeah. If anything, it's one of the toughest things that's why the advice is so difficult sometimes to follow but that specialization and that focus, totally. One last question before we talk a little bit about the transition to this sort of platform setup, throughout that conversation and throughout you describing your own personal interest and motivations, at no point was there a lot of agency and talk about hey, you know, I'm building up an agency to sell or there's a financial motive and front and center of what they're doing.

Do you find or have you found that there's any conflict between the passion and desire to help and work with these organizations that you're describing and the need to do more than just keep the lights on but actually have to be comfortable?

[0:19:45.6] DH: Sure. No, it's a good question and I think that you know, we have been intentional over the years about being very thoughtful about the work that we're able to donate because we obviously get requests for that a lot only being in the non-profit space and we do volunteer outside of work, it is something that we do take very seriously and feel like it is an important part of just our kind of personal fulfillment but in terms of donating work through the organization, through WiredImpact, it is something that we have historically just basically told folks, "You know we only work with non-profits" and literary everyone that we talked to would qualify for pro-bono work.

Would have a very just cause to say, "Hey, can you donate some work my way?" And so it is something that we've been pretty intentional over the years about being pretty careful about not donating a tremendous amount of time just because we've wanted to be very thoughtful about what the future looks like for the organization and make sure that we are not only doing what we feel like is best but also what's best for the organization overall and for everyone that works for.

So we actually involve folks within our organization a decent amount in those conversations and had a lot of conversations about what is in scope, what isn't in scope and a lot of conversations about those moments where we can go above and beyond. Obviously we want to over deliver, we want people to be delighted and continuing to work with us and feel like they are getting a tremendous value in working from us but in terms of being able to donate a bunch of services and things like that is something that historically we haven't been able to do a tremendous amount because by virtue and effect, we only work with non-profit organizations.

[0:21:32.1] BOK: Yeah and actually that being able to be I guess sustainable by not giving away. You know that's I think really important to be able to meet the mission that you guys are describing.

[0:21:42.6] JG: Yeah, absolutely. Well a lot of it comes down to equity too. I mean we want all of our organizations to feel like they are important to us and they're front and center and they really

matter and if we are consistently donating a lot of services to different folks, it makes it we only have so many hours in the day and we want to make sure we give everyone sort of their time in the sun and what they deserve when it comes to working with us and what they have come to expect in working with us.

[0:22:07.4] BOK: You mentioned your team there, how important is the mission of the company to the team that you have and the recruitment process and the retaining people in the whole team aspect of your business?

[0:22:18.7] JG: It's incredibly important. I don't see a situation where we would ever hire somebody who didn't have a deep passion and commitment to the non-profit space. Everybody that we brought on is very passionate about the work that we're doing and about the organizations we work with and I think that generally, those are the people that are going to apply to work here anyways. I mean I think they kind of find us and then we obviously want to work with those people.

But in a lot of ways you almost don't have to search for it because nowadays they are the ones applying but they're also the ones who are spending more time in their resume and cover letters. They are also the ones in the interview that has that passion that really comes out and those are also the ones who can draw on personal experiences whether that's volunteering or working for a non-profit that can say, "This is how I'd bring those experiences into my day to day at Wired Impact".

And I think that makes it just so those people kind of end up being the people that we hire just because they end up being the best fits anyways. I think if even when someone came home with a lot of knowledge, if they have never volunteered a work at a non-profit in a lot of ways they might not understand a lot of the challenges that non-profits are dealing with on a day to day basis and so it would make it harder, not impossible but definitely harder for them to contribute immediately when they join the team.

[0:23:30.2] DH: Yeah, absolutely and I would say over the years we have explicitly started to even prioritize that more in the hiring process. We have a different road brick we'll use when we do interviews and things like that and we started to explicitly reward people for passion in the

non-profit space, experience in the non-profit space just because like Jonathan said that is so central to our feeling like being able to come on to our team and from day one being able to really put themselves in the shoes of the folks that we are working with and ultimately, make a meaningful impact.

[0:23:59.1] BOK: Yeah, that's something that I hear quite often as well as a benefit almost of this specialization part and impacts and the recruitment, the team, the motivation, everything. It is amazing.

[0:24:07.9] DH: Yeah, definitely.

[0:24:08.5] JG: Totally.

[0:24:09.2] BOK: Okay so let's shift gears slightly. So then you describe what is very common challenge again in agencies of the custom build and the custom marketing campaigns and the costs and I am trying to juggle all of that, what was the journey like to make to the conclusion that "Hey, we're going to kind of," – I guess what I am hearing is a kind of productizing of the service.

[0:24:32.3] JG: Yeah.

[0:24:32.8] DH: It's been a long time coming.

[0:24:33.6] JG: Yeah, it really has. I mean it has truly been an evolution. I think to say that we just woke up one day and had this conversation instead of like, "Let's do it", I think that that would be completely unfair and false. We overtime, we went from doing general marketing to specializing an online marketing to getting you more focused into web design and then we've also gone from you know when we first started as an organization, we were working with really small organizations.

You know we were doing maybe websites that are one to five, one to \$10,000 and then over the last couple of years, we're doing much larger sites. You are building large websites that are 50 to 100,000 and now we are coming back to this platform which is actually kind of a monthly

service and I think there's a couple of things that really drove us. I mean from a business standpoint, there are two kind of big benefits from this kind of platform approach.

The first is just the reoccurring revenue and the predictability of the business. So the fact that we know exactly how much will be coming in from a revenue standpoint on a monthly basis is just incredibly beneficial from a planning standpoint and from the standpoint of looking and saying, "Okay well, we did this in the past. So let's go ahead and kind of predict out what our work and revenue is going to look like in the future" it just makes that an incredibly easy process compared to doing a ton of custom work.

The other thing is scalability. You know what we are finding is that we were able to carry over a lot of the work or some of the work that we did on custom sites but a lot of it was just that. It was very custom and so we would do work on one side and then we wouldn't be able to take that into another site and another site and so in terms of the return on investment on that work, it impacts that one organization but how do we build something that will impact every organization when we make a change or improvement and that's really what this allows us to do.

So that when we build a new theme or we make improvement to the donation system or the volunteer system or any of the tools that we have built into that platform, it not only benefits one non-profit but it benefits all the non-profits that are not only on the platform now but will be on the platform in the future and I think that those things have just made this kind of again, a natural evolution in terms of the point where we said, "This makes sense in so many ways".

This is going to be so much better not only for us as a business, not only for our team but also for the organizations that end up working with and so from that, once we fell to that and had that conversation it was an easy decision.

[0:26:54.5] DH: Though I think some of it too, honestly we just talked to a lot of folks that came to us and said, "You know I have a budget for marketing, we're just not enough for a full custom build. What do you recommend?" and we sort of got tired of not having a recommendation there honestly and the fact that we couldn't find a recommendation that we felt really proud of and really competent in sending folks to made us feel like there was a hole in the space that the more we talked about it, the more excited we got about potentially filling.

[0:27:26.0] BOK: So how did you actually make the move? Have you found that you needed to change to different clients? Was there a big shift of internal operations? Was it a big step or was it just a subtle process?

[0:27:39.2] JG: Sure, I would say it's a series of large steps and small steps that is honestly still ongoing in a lot of ways. What we basically did was we soft launched the platform in a lot of ways. We worked internally on building it and we started to talk to folks that would reach out for a custom site but maybe didn't have a budget for a custom site about this platform offering. So it was a way for us to almost do some one off market research just in talking to actual non-profit clients.

And what we heard from more and more folks is it really started to feel like a fit for them and at least there was some interest whether or not they ultimately felt like it was the route they were going to go forward. There was certainly enough interest to the point where we felt like we were sold on this being the future of where we are heading as a company and so about the middle of last year, the middle of 2017 we decided to actually adjust our website to really focus on the platform.

And really have that be our core offering and we still offered both ongoing engagements, so kind of larger retainer based marketing engagements to folks and then also, we're still doing custom websites but sort of on a one off basis a lot less than we have previously and over the last quarter of last year, we started talking pretty seriously about phasing out the custom website work all together to the point we were just doing the retainer based work and the platform approach.

And here in the New Year, that's really the approach we were taking moving forward. So we are not taking on anymore large one off custom websites and we are really focusing all of our efforts on certainly serving the clients that we still have moving through that pipeline of custom sites and then the platform clients really becoming our sort of primary focus moving forward in addition to all of the engagements we already actively have working with us.

[0:29:33.0] BOK: So is that a sort of 12 to six months process of getting to this point where you're saying, "We only take on this type of new work?"

[0:29:41.6] DH: Yeah, I would say start to finish that process is going to end up being more in the ballpark of 12 to 18 months just because our custom websites take so long to move through the system but we are actually now in the process of working on what will ultimately be our final one off project that's set to hopefully launch some time kind of late summer-early fall and then we won't be taking in on anymore one off custom projects from that point.

It will be all platform and all engagement and over the course of that next call it eight to nine months, we'll be slowly transitioning to focus more and more of our time on engagements and platform work.

[0:30:19.2] BOK: That's really cool and I am quite impressed. That's a relatively – I mean not as an experience that I've been through but that is a relatively smooth and efficient process. Was there any bumps and hurdles or challenges during that time?

[0:30:31.9] JG: Yeah, I mean I think one thing that we have struggled with internally is just planning for our own team and planning for our own capacity. So you know what's been challenging is we are basically trying to build a platform that in terms of the business aspects of it is not generating a lot of revenue early on but you need the resources and the people to actually develop it and make sure it is really great and that it will do and deliver the results that we wanted to.

But on the flip side of that, you have to make sure you have enough internal capacity to manage our existing custom website builds and manage our existing retainer clients and that has been a difficult transition. I mean it's been saying that we've worked a lot on and continue to work on in terms of how to kind of manage that transition and make sure that the team doesn't feel overwhelmed and it's definitely something that we've had a couple of times.

Where it's come up that people are feeling really overwhelmed and then we have to have conversations about how we can off load some of that work, how we can get support and I think that that – I mean that is a challenge for any agency but especially one where you're rolling out

a new product or service that is not generating enough revenue to where you can say, “Okay we are going to hire a bunch of people to help develop it,” and so you have to make sure to feed working hours and time.

Into your old work but then also feed working hours and time into the foundation of what it is the new service or product.

[0:31:49.9] DH: And I think that honestly in a lot of ways comes back to what Jonathan mentioned before about the team we have in place. We’ve always really pushed honesty and openness and that comes back both ways. So we definitely want to be honest with the team in terms of the direction we’re going as a company but we also really value them coming to us and saying like, “Hey guys, you know I just have too much on my plate right now,” or “I feel like this is a little bumpier than I would like it to be.”

And then it turns into a sort of a brainstorming session about what we can all do to alleviate whatever pressure maybe going on at the moment and how we can address that both near terms to make sure that people are having amount of work that is sustainable and also in the long term, we want to make sure we all have a shared vision of where we’re going as a company.

[0:32:32.4] BOK: The really interesting point for me there is that I would always say, “Don’t mix service and product,” kind of thing. But what you’re describing isn’t a mix. It’s a transition from one almost to sort of almost as a safe productized or platform which does sound really powerful and is really clear and as you said, it gives you a clear vision and a goal rather than a conflicting trying to do two or three things at the same time.

[0:32:53.1] JG: Yeah, absolutely. I think one thing that everyone on the team is really excited about is to just have more focus. I think that has been something else that we have struggled with is you just feel like you have a lot of balls up in the air. You know we’ve got this big custom websites and we’ve got this retainer clients and we’re trying to build this new platform. We are trying to market the new platform. I think that it just creates a lot of things you have to keep track of and a lot for the team to manage and consider all the time.

I think everyone on the team is really excited to just focus in on, “You know here is our vision, here are our goals, here’s what we are shooting for, here’s the plan” I think that that has been something else we have struggled with and we are really trying a lot better to outline that and eventually get to the point where we can really focus on a couple of things once we phase out on these big custom websites.

[0:33:36.3] BOK: So tell me a little bit about that vision? What is the vision for the future of I guess the platform, the whole thing?

[0:33:41.6] DH: Sure, well honestly I think that gets us the most excited about it is just the scope, kind of the breath of impact we feel like we can have in the non-profit space just because it is so much more scalable than building off this one off websites and so we never want to be one of these companies that build a tremendous number of themes and ends up with a sort of an outdated library of a tremendous number of things that can’t really be supported and it becomes this pick your template.

We’re just going to churn it out for you. I think it will always be a little bit more hands on than that because selfishly really like working with non-profits and getting a lot of face time with non-profits and actually talking to them and so I think for us, it’s about finding that middle ground of we like to expand it out, have some more themes than we do now certainly but make it something that is just laser focused on what we’ve actually seen be beneficial for non-profits in the past.

And make sure that the decisions we make are dictated by feedback we’ve actually gotten from the non-profit space and from non-profits we’ve actually worked with directly. So that we can make sure that if we’re say adding a new feature or rolling out an adjustment to a feature that already exists on the platform that it’s something that we know there is a hunger for in the non-profit space and that it’s likely to ultimately help them do the work that they are doing even better.

[0:35:04.2] BOK: Something that really intrigues me about the service you’re on, the way that the website describes it is as well as the platform, the actual website and themes and the features and functionality you’re describing, there is also the marketing ally or there is kind of

additional helping part to that service. Can you tell me a little bit about that because that seems to be a really important part of, from a non-profit's point of view of getting success from whatever they are doing with their own line?

[0:35:31.3] JG: Yeah, so this was just – I mean we are very excited about the Marketing Ally program because I think everyone can relate to whether it's your financial services or your website services or some other aspect of a product that you use, there is always that moment where you reach out to support or you reach out to somebody at the company and you just get either no feedback at all or you get misinformed feedback or you get information that is really not helpful.

Or it takes a week to hear back or the other side is that you need help with something and you just have no one to reach out to and that is what really what we are trying to fill here. So let's say that you build a great website and you are all of a sudden thinking, "Okay well I want to do social media marketing and I want to do email marketing and I want to have a form on my website to help me with this scenario or that" but you don't have anyone to reach out to that you can ask for just marketing advice.

You know, give me some strategic feedback on what I'm thinking and give me some direction and that's really what the marketing ally program is. So it's not technical support, it is support on specific questions you would have about your non-profit's marketing. So at any point, anyone that is on the platform can reach out with the question like, "You know I am interested in garnering more advocates on Facebook. What do you guys recommend?"

Or something as simple as, "Hey, I am looking at an email marketing tool. Can you guys make a recommendation of three tools that you think would be a good fit?" Or, "Hey, we actually just had a new logo developed. I'd love for you guys to just take a peek at it and just give us some feedback." And so what we are really doing is kind of being again that marketing ally, someone that you can reach out to when it's just nice to have either the marketing expertise or a second set of eyes on it.

And that is something we're really excited about because we feel like in so many services and products that kind of feedback and help is just so lacking.

[0:37:15.2] BOK: Yeah, I am really impressed with that because exactly like you said because when you see platforms quite often it feels like it is just focused on the raw wire, the raw metal so to say of the service or the product rather than something that can actually really compliment the mission of the organization.

[0:37:33.2] JG: Yeah, absolutely and you know if you think about any kind of website, the really popular website services like the Wix or a Squarespace or even GoDaddy's website tool, you just will never going to get that level of feedback where you're talking to someone who just works in the non-profit space, just works in the marketing space and has a really specific skill set. You know the other thing that we're really proud of is that we don't have anyone on the support team.

There is no support folks here so if you reach out for on the marketing ally program, you were talking to somebody who has a specialist in some area whether that person is a content strategist or a designer or a programmer and that again just I think furthers the level of trust and comfort you have that the response you are going to get is actually going to be beneficial to you versus kind of reaching out into the abyss and hoping that whatever comes back is actually going to be helpful.

[0:38:21.3] BOK: Yeah, totally inspiring. Cool, so unfortunately we're starting to run out of time but thank you so much for sharing all of that. I am really genuinely inspired there, you are talking about sort of that transition and the specialization and focusing on your passion and caring and there is so much in there that is really interesting and I hope inspiring and interesting for our listeners as well.

[0:38:42.0] JG: Great, thanks a ton for having us. We really appreciate it.

[0:38:44.5] DH: Yeah, absolutely. We appreciate you taking the time.

[0:38:46.4] BOK: Just before you go, for anybody who wants to find out a little bit more about you guys and about Wired Impact, where shall we send them?



[0:38:52.3] DH: Sure, so they can just google us, Wired Impact will come up but you can just go to wiredimpact.com. You will be able to read the Marketing Ally program about the platform in general and a bit about who we are and what we do.

[0:39:04.2] BOK: Outstanding, thanks again.

[0:39:05.7] JG: Awesome, thanks a ton Barry.

[0:39:07.1] DH: Thank you Barry.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:39:13.5] 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.

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