

Shawn Hill 00:00

And I think you're really going to enjoy this episode in particular. Because this person when I was asking you, how they would introduce things like that gave me a made up word. And I love made up words, because made up words are when there's something that needs a word. It's just not there yet. And so someone's like, Well, what about this, and that also means they probably have unique and innovative solutions. So, we talked about notepad episodes. I think I'm going to write down some interesting stuff here. This one is Jon Szafran, from responsive and he's the business automation mist, we'll find out exactly what that means. But pretty much you want to know about systems, about automations, you will know how to just be more efficient and what you're doing, John is the guy you want to talk to. And that's why we're doing it today. JOHN, thank you so much for joining us here on the Nice Job Podcast. And I do mean, I noticed this joke of the made up title. I used to work for the Philadelphia Flyers for over a decade here and we had Lauren Hart sing our national anthem night in night out, she was absolutely the best. At one point, we named her the number one ranked anthem mist in the NHL. So she wanted to prove that she was the best singer. We call her the anthem mist, not a real word. So whenever a fake word comes up, I love it. Business automation. So I know some thought went into that, can we scratch the surface? How'd you end up with that title?

Jon Szafran 01:19

Well, we didn't really have anything that fit. So I guess technically, I'm in more of a sales and marketing role. But I don't think of myself as a salesperson. So being a business automation analyst really gave me the ability to do what I love to do. I enjoy working on a daily basis with business owners all over the planet, who are at different levels of their business, whether they're startups not started yet, or doing \$5 million dollars a year. And we look at different systems and processes and pains in their business and what we can automate and what we can use as a system and a software platform to solve pains in their business. And that's just not going to fit on a business card. So it's not really a sales type role. I want to work with people on an individual basis to find out what the pains are in their business and what we can do as a solution. How can we automate an answer to a solution to that problem? So I didn't have a word that really fit what I enjoyed doing.

Shawn Hill 02:23

So I made one up, I was almost surprised. He told me, actually, we found this title generator, this process that is automated for us, we plugged in the details of the job, and it came out with that. I tend to ask this question, almost every podcast because someone like yourself, I know, has a great answer for it. But I feel like every guest, you can really connect sort of with our audience by explaining a little bit of the backstory, because it sounds a little bit like you get to a transitional point, right, you're a business owner, you're going through, you go through the learning process. And then you sort of get to a point where if you're the certain type of person you want to pass that knowledge on, or you want to help others around you, make sure that you're part of the tide that's rising all boats, is there a moment that you can identify in your career that either a like, that's the entrepreneurial bug really sunk in, and I knew that was gonna go, do business and go from there. Or if that doesn't really have a compelling story, so to speak.

Is there a moment where you felt confident enough to really go just from getting it on your own to helping others as well?

Jon Szafran 03:24

Yeah, absolutely. So both Actually, I was at a professional point and a really good career, making a great, very comfortable living for my family. And I was extremely unhappy. I was working all the time in a thankless industry. That was I was just getting beat up. It was when my daughter was about to turn one, that I made a self conscious decision that something has to change. And if I don't change it, nobody else is going to change it for me. This child, this one thing that deserves all of my positive energy is the one thing that is suffering the most. I was coming home with no energy, and the energy I had was negative. And so we made a decision right there to make a change and not knowing what to do. I jumped off of the corporate ladder, and I in this is a Josh Latimer ism. Here's another made up word for you. I jumped off of the corporate ladder and built an airplane on the way down. So by accident, I ended up being a service business owner. I decided that with maid service I didn't have to reinvent the wheel. I had an aunt that was very successful in the maid service. I took a trip to Texas and we collaborated and I came back to Florida and we made a maid service. And shortly thereafter developed a pressure washing business so that I was pushed into being an entrepreneur. And then I never wanted to look back. I was having so much fun. I loved being able to solve people's problems in their homes. We were giving people free time. We were giving people their weekends back and Our family got our freedom back as well. We were able to go to the beach, we wanted to, I was able to stay at home and make my children breakfast in the mornings before school, it was liberating. But there was definitely a point in that journey where I was ready to do something else. There was definitely a moment where I was just ready. I felt like I climbed that mountain. And what was next. And that led me back to wanting to give back. And I was considering starting some, I don't want to call it a coach, because I don't think I'm smart enough to be anyone's coach. But I definitely have a lot of experiences that I felt were able to help other people on their journey. So it was a very clear moment in that journey, where I was actually pressure washing a pool deck and washing a pool cage. And I was coming up with domain names, I was developing a business plan while I was working. And I opened my phone to a notification and had an email from a responsive bid where Kirk Kempton was looking for someone to fill a hole in his business. And it was like he tapped me on the shoulder to come on that journey with him. And it's been fantastic. Now I spend every single day, looking at people's businesses from a subjective third party viewpoint, and offering a solution to different pains in their business. And it couldn't be more rewarding. It's, it's really, I'm having a ton of fun. And I get to meet all these interesting people. It's fantastic.

Shawn Hill 06:30

Yeah, so you could just tell in the energy in your response to in telling your story, and where you ended up now that it just seems a perfect fit. Even from that standpoint, he can tell that you're energized and it sounds throughout your story. There's moments of re-energy, but the one part I would love to focus on is talking about your family wanting to be there, dictate your own schedule, and have opportunities to build the most important relationships that you'll have in your life with your family. And then you mentioned Josh Latimer, and Kirk Kempton, and other

people that have either offered opportunities or offered guidance toward being a coach. It is all this sense to center around the relationships that we have in our life. And, within business, sometimes I feel that can almost get overlooked slightly, because you're so focused on either your product or service, in executions, and even respectfully with systems and other things, you're so bogged down in there. And it's not that you ever lose the human element with automation. We both know that, but you get bogged down sometimes and almost get to internal and, and perhaps some business owners out there, forget about some of those exterior relationships. As you went through that first change, let's say getting off the corporate ladder and going into business yourself. Where did you look for advice? Or did you feel on your own? Did you try and fail or from step one, were you about taking on some opinion, taking on some feedback and trying to get some guidance?

Jon Szafran 08:04

No. And that Yeah, absolutely. guidance. 100%. Yeah, I flew out to Texas and spent some time with my aunt who was very successful in the insurance world for a very long time, started the maid service, when she jumped off of that ladder and was and still very successful. And so I didn't have to reinvent that wheel. We had that conversation in her living room. I need something new. What's next? Let's brainstorm. And it was basically here's a plan, and I didn't have to reinvent it. So she remained a mentor. I consider that relationship extremely valuable. And I wouldn't have gotten here without her guidance and help. Oh, it's just such an interesting journey. And I look at where I am now. And how blessed I am and how lucky I am and how happy I am. And none of this would have been possible. If every single one of those steps didn't happen first. It was definitely a process to get here.

Shawn Hill 09:05

Yeah, and not reinventing the wheel is a great phrase. Because sometimes you get so focused on, especially with a new journey of maybe trying to innovate and try to put your stamp almost like you don't want to do the same thing. Just you want to feel that little bit more of an individualistic nature. But it's also its guidance, right? Like you're not copy pasting, you're you're taking almost on the scientific principle of these are things we know these are hypothesis of improving, and sometimes that can come into the day to day of your business, including if you're trying to perhaps, you know, sell your service or or you know, grow the sales entity, the you know, that side of your business. You don't have to reinvent the wheel, right. There's some things that we know fundamentally that works and people have innovated off that just let's see from the sales perspective, is there one like, Hey, if you're just starting out, I know you might think this is you know, basic Bs, but this is actually very Important, and it's okay to still follow that along. Is there something that comes to mind?

Jon Szafran 10:04

Well, I struggled, I'm sure a lot of people do, when you want to build a business, you want to be the best, and you work in the US words like best, or you get so caught up in your logo and what it looks like. And what you may find is it's not as important as you think. Now, that doesn't mean branding isn't important. You want to have clear branding, but it's not the most important thing in building a business. And it's not the most important thing in building a relationship or building a

reputation. There are other things that are much more important in getting that foundation built. Don't run out and start running tons of Facebook ads, if you don't have any reviews on Facebook, like let's focus on building a foundation before we start focusing on the things that don't really matter. But man, we can talk about that could be a whole podcast just talking about business startup and what to focus on first.

Shawn Hill 10:58

Well, me and that's like, what's the start of first, there probably are some things that are always near the top. And last, but it's not like it's true, I'll say 123. I know some people might, some people out there with some programs might disagree in a sense, but I do think of everything he talked about, and you mentioned reputation. And we talked a little before we started recording, of why that's an interesting topic to explore. But in my sort of opinion, and I'll say obviously, with nice shopping, Reputation Marketing, a little bit of expertise and that his reputation is going to solidify wherever you're trying. So again, you can say you're the best. But if no one's really backing that up, are you really you could say you even call what you're doing a premium package. But if you don't have the reputation for doing that quality of work, it's nothing but a buzzword and a tagline. And he talked about logo and branding is important, but sometimes we'll get bogged down by it. It goes back to what he said: relationships and reputation are really going to get you going. If you're starting in a newer community beyond just okay, getting customers getting reviews, we know that's a big pillar of reputation. Is there anything in there you've done in your career or things that you've heard of that really help people get off to the right step and start building community within their location and really starting to get the reputation of You know what, I haven't used their service yet, but I have a favorable opinion of them.

Jon Szafran 12:21

Yeah, absolutely. So there's, and there's and this is easy stuff. When you join Facebook groups in your community, your neighborhood group, your school's group, your church group, if that fits, whatever it may be whatever group you're in, in Facebook, be an active member, like give back, don't just be in there selling every Tuesday when they allow you to post your business on Tuesdays, be a part of those communities. And that's free. That's the easy stuff that you can do that doesn't cost any money to offer solutions. When you see a neighbor that's in need offer to help out and don't have a motive behind that. Just be active in those groups. We joined an organization I'm very proud of. And actually I've just completed a corporate partnership that I'm extremely proud of between responsibility and cleaning for reason.org. Cleaning for a reason is a nonprofit that was founded by Debbie Starr done and users or I'm sorry, partner cleaning groups will partner with cleaning for a reason to offer free cleanings to cancer patients in their communities. And we were proud supporters and partners of cleaning for a reason when I had my maid service. And now we are corporate partners with responsibility to continue that outreach. But to touch on your point, there was a conversation that I witnessed in a local Facebook group that I am active in where two people were talking about a service business and my name came up my company came up in the conversation to paraphrase was basically one of these neighbors saw my truck, which was wrapped and branded and had the cleaning for reason logo on the back. And the conversation basically was I've never done business with

them. I have never met John. But that's good enough for me that that reputation of giving back in the community was very well established. I was active in that group. I was answering questions. I was there doing charity work, I was an active participant in that group, but I wasn't looking for there was no motive. And it built part of that relationship. That reputation Foundation was there without any real I never service this customer. But the reputation was there.

Shawn Hill 14:38

And that wasn't any. You talk about being active in these groups. I think sometimes people think okay, it's now spending all my free time surrounded by the computer. But I don't know if it's the same experience for you, John, but what I've done with nice job and a couple of the other organizations that I've been with is you just be present when you are present. So it doesn't mean it has to be a 24/7 thing but if you're able to provide help within those groups, 10% of your total week or if there's if only when the opportunity arises, I think sometimes people go into groups, they're trying to get every conversations like going the ones with it, is that becomes the snowball effect. So people see you answering a question here and there, then maybe a bit more than maybe you do have some time on a Friday, and you can answer a bunch of questions or you have something happen that you just share, just to share. And that snowballs into that bigger reputation. Is that how you approach it as well? Or did you go a bit more dedicated, because there's a good strategy to both but I've always found that it doesn't need to be something as seeing a ton of your time and can still have a tremendous impact.

Jon Szafran 15:39

Yeah, I was definitely active, but I was not lending and consuming my world. First and foremost, I was running a business and raising a family. And we started the business to be able to spend time with the family. So, I was the president when it was available, or when something relevant was there. If there was a situation, and I would have done this in this group, if I wasn't in business anyway. And, I'm not actively in that business now. And I'm still very active in these groups, you build those relationships with those people, and you want to help them out. But if we have a storm coming, we would find somebody that was disabled, and we would go clean up the yard and get them ready. And I would do that anyway, it's just part about being a good neighbor. There were definitely some groups that I was more active in, there were groups that were very local to my neighborhood, there were groups that were active to my wife's world. And, I spent more time there. But anywhere I could add value to somebody else, or be a good neighbor was beneficial.

Shawn Hill 16:39

Did you when you represented yourself in that group? So just go in as John through a company brand and things like that? How did people start to make the connection between John in your business just when you had those opportunities on those Tuesdays, you would plug the business or something like that? Or? Because I think that's a question that people have, should I go in as an individual, even though I'm trying to get some more recognition for my business, or there's some people that I don't say, want to separate themselves, but they'd rather not be known as the guy and instead, have the business be known as the business because they have a bigger team or something like that? How did you approach it individually?

Jon Szafran 17:11

I'm a neighbor that happens to own a business. So I'm a helpful part of your community, that is here to help. And we also offer solutions to help you get free time back on your weekends. So I took a very individual approach. I post very little in those groups from the business, sometimes I might have to have a cool before and after picture or something like that. But no, I became the authority of those groups in these fields. And I would answer questions that people had that were really related to our business, how to safely pressure wash your house, I would offer that advice. That's a good neighborly thing to do. And I use those groups. I found other guys to advertise it on those groups and have made some fantastic friendships. One of my very best friends, I met out of one of those groups that was advertising in my neighborhood, and I reached out and built a relationship with them. And now we work on jobs together. It's really, really cool. But no, I did it individually and it worked well for me but I'm still a part of that. And he talks about going into the business, the business is branding, the business has an identity, but what's the face of the business? Where does that reputation start?

Shawn Hill 18:28

Yeah, if they have some sort of issue with the relationship, right, that they were unhappy with the service, or even the other way around, they're so happy, they want to know the best way to refer to you and things like that. They're not calling to talk to the logo, right? They're calling to talk to someone and every relationship going to come down to the person in person, you talk about training your teams, and in permeating that sort of responsibility or that sort of mindset through your team, that's, I always find people get tripped up of like, well, I want to represent the brand like you are the brand deep down your face might not be on the logo, you might not be Tommy mellow, or you're on the side of every truck, it may not be named John's cleaning, it may not be named or anything like that, but don't get it twisted, it is your personality, your your entity, your essence, it is definitely deep ingrained in that business. And that's where it goes, if you make a personal reputation, then your business can almost buy a little bit off that cloud. So as you're getting started, if you identified yourself in the community as a helpful person, as you put a great neighbor, then you've already knocked down one sort of barrier when they're looking at the business as they now know the person behind it. Did you encourage your team at all to be active on Facebook or to make those sort of personal connections themselves?

Jon Szafran 19:46

We did some, we did the cleaning for a reason: days we call those feel good days. Whenever we had a cleaning scheduled within the organization. It was a big morale thing. We talked about it, we would celebrate it and we would do some social media around that. We never did, I didn't have a ton of team members that were really active on our social media, just because I spearheaded a lot of that. But we definitely, we made some pretty cool things with the team included and shared that out, because they're a big part of this too. Absolutely. And just to go back to your previous point about the brand and know who you are on the logo, when you're starting a business, let's just for a second, say we're starting a business and your first customers in that business are going to be your friends and your neighbors and your relatives and your community. Your reputation with those people with those groups, is what's going to get you

started, those are going to be your very first clients, you're building a business off of your personal relationship or reputation in that context. And then you can build your business relationship off of that foundation, did you answer your phone? And that's actually I can't say, I can't believe I have to say this. But that's very uncommon. Now, did you answer your phone? Did you show it when you were supposed to? Did you do a really good job? Did you knock their socks off with your follow up and continue to nurture that's how you're going to start building that reputation? But your reputation is first? Yeah, that's your first customers are going to be people, most cases,

Shawn Hill 21:18

You're going to that first level of reputation, that's where the trust starts the bit, build. And then as you add more to your team, they're looking for that I always like to remind people that your reputation is going to help you a lot with your marketing your sales and sort of the business element, it's certainly going to help you with recruiting as well, because people would like to go work for companies that have great reputations, Johnny, you're yourself, they're now working with a response, a bid, curse, a reputation that, you know, responsibility, synthesize all that has great reputation, not just for their amazing products, but because the people behind it nice job is the same sort of way, we're very much known as the people business and you always find it funny, if someone is ever complaining with a nice job people are reputation precedes itself. For a lot of times, it is just an ironic eyebrow like that I actually have gone to you and that one. I love it if I don't know there's a particular story and adapt. But we think about from the recruiting element of how that's going to help you sort of grow as you were looking to grow your businesses, or as you mentioned, you start with me then want to powerwashing right, so even just making some switch a service or starting a new business, how much were you able to kind of, you know, leverage off of or use reputation of either yourself or previous businesses to either help yourself grow or expand?

Jon Szafran 22:37

Yeah, so the decision was really simple. We were already offering an interior cleaning service, and we had a client base. That same client is also not going to wash the outside of his house, like, if he's not going to wash the shower, he's not going to clean his roof. So it was a natural, like we do inside and outside, we could cross market, our existing customers that we already built a relationship with and already had a reputation with, they were already sending us referrals, they live in our neighborhood, they already know us. So it was just a really easy transition to say, we also offer and then build off of that. So it was a really easy transition.

Shawn Hill 23:17

I'm sure not every single one of those people that ended up using you for both didn't already have perhaps an exterior washer, right? They didn't mean maybe they were that's really looked first, I know that you know how many buddy, but I'm sure there had to be a couple in there that were just maybe there's a crack in the armor a little bit dissatisfied with who they were using and the fact that you've proven your value throughout, bring on the exterior service. So I'm sure that giving you a leg up even with some competition you didn't have yet is because you've already had this deep relationship.

Jon Szafran 23:48

I don't have a metric to measure that. But I'm sure they existed there. You never really know but and that goes on to you know, we talk about reputation and how important that is and what reputation means and how you protect your reputation and build your reputation. But the relationship is just as important as, you know, I think of it this way. So your reputation is what someone generally thinks about you. And that may open the door to do business. But the way you keep the door open is building the relationship. So we want to open the door with our reputation. We want to keep the door open forever with that relationship. So we had those clients, we were introduced to them or we got to meet them because we had a great reputation. And then we built a fantastic relationship. We were a customer service business that happened to wash houses. And we built that relationship and that kept the door open and the referrals open from there.

Shawn Hill 24:44

You know, I think all that's left for us to do or not going to get to in this podcast is just to make up a word to combine relationships and you know, reputation, right, we got it. We got to go to the word generator and get something truly from the business automation. asked himself. JOHN, I appreciate the time. Before I let you go, I want to ask you the question I've asked all of our guests here in season three, feel free to answer this question whether personal or business, you know, take the answer wherever you'd like. But here in season three, I'm asking all of our guests, what do you embrace more challenges or opportunities?

Jon Szafran 25:21

That's a really good question, Shawn. Man, one or the other opportunities or challenges, I would say opportunities. And that doesn't mean I'm scared of a challenge, because I really love a good challenge. But you've got to understand that when the doors are being knocked on, you have to know when to open the door. And I look at that as my career, my journey and how I ended up here, if I didn't take some risk and open those doors. When opportunities not, I would have never had an opportunity to share my story on the nice job podcast, or have met the amazing business owners that I work with on a daily basis. Every single time my career has morphed into a different level, or a different field. It was because I saw an opportunity and I embraced it, I embraced the challenge of accepting that opportunity. Can I answer both ways? That way?

Shawn Hill 26:13

Yeah, you absolutely can do whatever answer you give, I always say it is the perfect answer. You know, that's what I want to ask all of our guests to get so many great perspectives. Just from that, that one simple question there. And, and, John, I'll say, I'm appreciative that you took this opportunity to call on the night show podcast, because it certainly was an opportunity for all of our listeners to gain a little bit more insight and knowledge, as well. We mentioned you know, your Africa on Facebook, and things like that. But if someone's listening to this episode, and they want to either just connect with you, they're interested, perhaps of what they could, you know, do with you on the business side or the personal side? Where should we direct them

towards? Where is the best way for people to either learn more about you or get in touch with you,

Jon Szafran 26:52

You can certainly reach out to me via Facebook, or the responsive website, I get that responsible comm any of those contact us links, you can find me, I can link my personal email or calendar, anybody, if anybody has questions about what we do, or what we offer, or just want to have a conversation with somebody that may have walked in your shoes and could look at your situation objectively without judging you. I'm open to those conversations as well. So you can email me. You can schedule time on my calendar, through a response. I'm not sure if we're able to share that here, Shawn or not. But okay, reach out, just let me know, if you'd like to have a conversation, there's no commitment, there's no, you know, I'm happy to help. I truly feel blessed to be able to be a part of so many people's journey, even in the little tiny, miniscule way that I can. If I can add value to you in any way, reach out, I'd be happy to chat. So the last point I wanted to just real quick, I know you're running out of time. But when you build a reputation, and you build those relationships, you still have to deliver the goods, guys, that's not the end of the game, you got to show up. You can't build an unbelievable brand with an unbelievable reputation and have a great relationship, and then not answer your phone when the customer calls. You have to deliver the goods that don't ever stop.

Shawn Hill 28:09

Yeah, and I love that. And thank you for getting that in. I said, John, we always have plenty of time. I just love whenever we get like a couple of good ones in there to let people bask in it. And I always say, I am not, not against in any way, bringing guests back for part two, part three. So if you're listening to this one, you want to hear more from John, let us know either in the comments. You can message us podcast at Nice job calm you can whatever way to let us know that you're loving John. And we'll bring them back for part two, and maybe even part three as well. And those links, those descriptions that he mentioned where to get to talk to them. We've made it a little bit easier for you to see down the YouTube description you probably saw on screen as well, if you're listening to the audio only just look in the show notes in the description as well. We'll have them there. As I said, if for some reason it's not quite working out, message us. We'll gladly put you in touch with John as well. JOHN a pleasure. I'm hoping the audience is going to ask for a bit more because I certainly enjoyed our time together and I hope we can do it again soon.

Jon Szafran 29:02

Thank you so much. Again, what a privilege and an honor to be able to share today. And I love it. I love it. So I hope to see you again soon.

Shawn Hill 30:28

John Szafran was our guest in Episode 59. Hope you enjoy the episode, let me give you my three key takeaways. Really, the whole episode was about building a foundation I loved. And this is a quote from John said, don't run out and start running tons of Facebook ads, you don't have any reviews on Facebook, like focus on building a foundation, before you start on the

things that don't really matter. And I think that's huge. Creating a connection within your community, creating limited reputation is going to be the building blocks for everything else that you're gonna do, while growing your business. While making that connection, another quote from John, when he talked about his social presence, he said, I'm a neighbor that just so happens to own a business, I'm a helpful part of your community that is here to help. That's why he's been successful. And that's how you can be successful as well. Don't go in trying to just push your brand or push your services, be an actual helpful member of the community. And you'll watch how quickly when that reputation grows, that you're closing more sales, because you already have a leg up. And a key point, I don't want to let go as John talked about the small things that really help you get a personal relationship going things like answering your phone, and making sure that you're knocking their socks off with your follow ups and you're continuing to nurture the relationship and build an actual relationship. Get your reputation going, because your first customers are gonna be people, you know, in most cases, but how do you get to that second and third level to have them be as familiar as those initial customers? So those are my three key takeaways. If you have one that I didn't mention, be sure to send us an email podcast at nice.job.com Didn't you made it all the way to the end of the episode, I'm going to give you \$25 off your next month of Nice job. And if you're just signing up, I'll even give you a free month trial to go along with it. All you have to do is send me an email podcast at nice.job.com Make sure the subject line is episode 59. And just give me a key takeaway from this episode. We'll get you hooked up with that special offer. Be sure that email gets in our inbox podcast at nice.job.com before September 29. Thank you so much for tuning in and making yourself a better business owner and a better person. We'll see you next week for episode 60. Until then, we hope you are healthy. We hope we're safe. And don't forget to have a little fun out there as well. See you soon