

Sid Graef 00:00

Hi, I'm Sid Graef. I love to have fun in business and in my personal life, and there's always something to be thankful for.

Shawn Hill 00:07

Welcome everybody into the Nice Job Podcast, thank you so much for taking time out of your day to be a better business owner, perhaps be a better person. But at the very least expand your mind. The more you're reading, the more you're listening. And the more you're trying to grow, I think more success will end up being in your future. In today's episode, we are buying into the time of the year and starting to think about all those out there that are looking back at their 2021. And looking forward to their 2022. And our guest in particular today, he has a podcast of his own. So, it's going to be a high audio presentation right here because he's familiar with the platform, but he's also full of knowledge and a full personality. So I think you're really going to enjoy him here. So with that bar set as high as I possibly can get it. Let's welcome the host of the 8020 podcasts. It is Sid Graef, Sid, thank you so much for taking time out to join us here on the Nice Job Podcast.

Sid Graef 00:59

Fantastic, Shawn, thank you very much. Thanks for having me on that Nice Job Podcast. I'm expecting this to be a lot of fun.

Shawn Hill 01:07

Yeah, that's what we try to do, at least since I've joined a nice job. It really starts to bring to the table the fact that business, your life and everything needs to have a good element of fun. And so actually, I want to ask you this question. How do you define fun when it comes to business because I'm a big proponent that fun is actually a key part of your bottom line. It helps with your company culture, it helps with your training, it helps as you grow and start to scale. But someone like yourself, how do you define fun? And where do you see its place in business?

Sid Graef 01:35

Fun is 100% critical. For me, it's one of my personal KPIs for anything that I do. If it's not fun, then I'm probably not going to enjoy it. And I'm probably not going to do my best. But I'll tell you an anecdotal story of when I went into Missoula, Montana and Scheels sporting goods just opened a store in the mall, we did a big cleanup for them. And I was talking to the new general manager. And he was as he toured around, I mean, it's a sporting goods store, and they have everything. And then a lot of sporting goods stores. So we're walking down the mechanical shooting range. Here we have a miniature bowling alley. And I'm like, Dan, this is so much fun. And he stopped his tracks and looked at me and said you can shop anywhere. Where do you get to have fun? I'm like, Oh, of course, that appealed to me directly. Because I want to have a good time doing stuff.

Shawn Hill 02:22

Yeah, and I think a lot of times people get confused. I always say my sort of mantra is fun and a childish thing, right? It's often attributed to the young, the youthful and things like that out there

just out there having fun, but fun really is a personal enjoyment. But then also, it's a good valuation of your time, right. Because if you're having a little bit of fun, along with the progress you make along with the lessons you learn and things like that, then comes a full complement and veteran in this business overall, an entrepreneur through and through. But I also know that you've made it a point to try to go out and help others. I know that you are often an emcee at industry events, you obviously have your own podcast, was there a point in your career or has it always been instilled with you where you thought, I have all this knowledge, but the best thing I can do is start to share it with others.

Sid Graef 03:11

It's funny that a lot of times when someone becomes more and more of an expert, or they have tons of experience or knowledge in the field, they feel less and less like an expert, because they realize how much more there is to know. So I don't really recall a point where I went, Hey, I know enough, I need to start teaching this. But I've always been the type of person where I want to help the next person. Like if I had a window cleaning company, we would still have a window cleaning company for decades. And I've many times driving down the road, I see somebody cleaning their storefront door with Windex and paper towel, I would stop my car and get out and just go to my friend's cleanup for you, and clean it with a squeegee and do a good job, give them a high five and go on and what like, I like to share what I know. Or if there's a better way, I want to show somebody a better way because I've struggled and struggled in my journey, my path. And most of the struggles that we go through are just not necessary. So if I can show somebody a better way, I want to do that.

Shawn Hill 04:09

And we talked about knowing better ways of sharing and connecting. And that's a little bit of what we're talking about within this episode. And when we discussed beforehand what we wanted to dive into, I thought given the time of year and things like that, perhaps it's time for us to look at what business owners should be thankful for. Right? And because there's been a lot that's happened, really, there's always going to be something that happens every year after year or especially over the last year and a half, two years, there's been such a change in society. There's been such a change in our reflection on business owners, entrepreneurs, self starters. And I feel like there's a couple people that still feel like they're in survival mode. You know that one of the first episodes of this podcast was Scott Behrman talking about thriving in survival mode. We saw what we're heading down to how we thrive through that but some still feel in there and I feel like maybe this is the happy home Markey law episode the whole thing. But I know you put a realistic spin on it. So first and foremost, do you yourself practice trying at a time of the year? Obviously, this is a natural time to do so. Sure. But take a look around, take stock and deck right? What am I thankful for? What are the positives? What are the things that if I'm feeling down, I can start to rally around is that something you practice, yearly annually, anything like that

Sid Graef 05:23

We get something that I practice in. It's not a formal practice, but what I try to do every single day is, really realistically, look around and go, What am I thankful for? Because, as you know,

whether you're talking to business owners, or just somebody that's at the coffee shop, there's always something that you can complain about, like something happened to your car, your kids are sick, a key employee quit whatever it is, there, we face challenges every single day. And so I just in my own mind, I want to turn the focus to what are the things that are going right, because the problems are always there. So I'm a perpetual and professional problem solver. But I get to look at what are the things that are going great? How are my kids healthy? How's the culture a company, did we get a great feedback from a customer, they said, Man, you, your team was amazing, you know, those are the things that we always highlight and focus, because if you don't push it, it's like entropy things, things decay on their own, you have to push them forward, you have to put extra energy into making them better, making them improve, keeping people focused on the good things that are happening. Because like I said, there's always challenging or bad things that are happening.

Shawn Hill 06:30

So I was trying to think of a great way for us to go through, what you are thankful for, or what business as a whole, I'm allowed to speak for everybody. But so I've tried to figure out a way to maybe get some prompts to try to get us there. And so I have a couple here, I love to run by it. What if the prompt doesn't work, if nothing comes to mind? We'll talk our way through it. So I want to start off with this year 2021? What is something that's going to be on your I'm thankful for list or something you want to highlight that you're thankful for? That's relatively new. So are there any new strategies you implemented? Were there any new tools you used or anything like that? What would you say is the newest thing that you are thankful for?

Sid Graef 07:07

Yeah, I have to say that the key thing that I'm thankful for is our team this year. Last year was challenging for a lot of people, not just our company, and this was 18 years in business. And we lost almost every single employee that we had. And most of it was due to COVID related stress or whatever. Some people move, some people reevaluate it, some people just quit, we let some go. We're starting 2021 with one returning employee, which is a very challenging place to be. But I took a week off, locked myself in a nice hotel near the beach in Southern California, and just rewrote our company culture. And, the old joke is like, what's the difference between theory and practice? Like, everything works in theory? Yeah, but you don't know and practice. So I rewrote it. And I was very deliberate about the type of person that we need to have on our team, and about how literally I wrote fun into the code of our culture. It's one of our core values, we reclaim fit, it's clean, fun, innovation and trust. And like, those are the things we focus on all the time. But I wrote it out. And honestly, I was like, Man, I hope this works. We'd had a decent culture before. But you don't really know until you get into it. Well, it turns out that taking the time to be deliberate, and really determine in advance, this is how it's going to be. And we're just not going to settle for anything less. We had the most cohesive, most engaged, most deliberate, and most fun team that we've had in 18 years. And so even though we ran, we ran short staffed, like a lot of people have this year. Normally, we had 12 technicians in the field, this year, we had eight, we had our biggest month ever, we generated more revenue, and more profit than we ever have with a smaller team because everyone was highly engaged. So the thing that I'm

most keenly thankful for is a company culture that supports the type of people that I enjoy working with,

Shawn Hill 09:00

It is very cool. And I love that almost willingness to change culture, because sometimes people think because it's been working for a long, long time, that's going to work forever. But sometimes I'd call for more evolution and full change. But it's often a hesitation, because if it doesn't work, and it feels like you've taken two steps back, right, like if you try something, a new culture and change doesn't work, and you're trying to back to the old one, you're trying to figure out if you don't have turnover or things like that signs, it's really harder to make big knee shifts, when it comes to culture,

Sid Graef 09:31

True change like that, anytime you've got change, it's scary on its own. So we've all experienced that over the last 18 months. For two years, we have changed the kid from the outside that leaves you, maybe you're not you're standing on jello, you don't know which way it's going to go. But then when you add internal change to that, like, normally, that's scary, but in our case, it happened to be like, this is something that we can determine. So it was a positive change, and it gave everybody as they came on. They knew the direction we're going. It gave them a more solid footing in a world of walking on putting.

Shawn Hill 10:06

Knowing this potentially could be the same answer. As they're stuck in that you've let go of recently got rid of moved on that you're thankful that you actually made that that choice,

Sid Graef 10:16

I would have to think about it to really dig in. But as far as things that we let go of, we made a decision, just in the business world, we, as part of our reevaluating the company, we raised our minimum price. And so I knew that was going to take off or alienate some of our customers who have been with us for a very long time. And we have pretty low ticket stuff, but we went from \$100, minimum to \$200. Minimum. And there were a number of people that just were like, they were not happy, they demanded us to serve them, and to do the old price, and we just had no, and so we, you know, a lot of that. What's the opposite of low hanging fruit, I mean, it's unprofitable fruit went away. And we gave them an option of somebody else to call, but that made it interesting and made our employees feel more valuable. Because they weren't, they weren't going to do a \$35 job and being frustrated, because they get paid based on their production rate and their performance. And so it took some of the roadblocks out of their actual rewards for their pay.

Shawn Hill 11:25

So it's actually almost the difference between like the low hanging fruit, which obviously, the easy wins, but then the apples on the ground, which you can eat, but chances are it's not going to sustain you for long enough,

Sid Graef 11:33

Correct?

Shawn Hill 11:34

That's a good example. So the next thing is looking for what we're thankful for and what business owners should be thankful for? Almost yesterday, I gave a recommendation. What was something either an outside resource, a book, podcast, or something like that, that you discovered recently? Or if there wasn't anything last year, but I still am very thankful for when I found this. Yeah. What would that resource be outside entity material? What made you most thankful when you discovered that?

Sid Graef 12:03

Yeah, I look back around to our culture. And we didn't change the whole culture. But we highly emphasized different things this year. And one of the key resources for that was the fish book. Have you ever heard of the fish book, it's the story of the pikes place market, it's probably not quite a true story. It's a little bit proverbial. But we love that because they are key components that are key takeaways, choose your attitude, make someone's day work doesn't have to be fun for you to have fun at work. So we use that as a litmus test every, every week, every day to go, Hey, you're going to make somebody's day today. You choose your attitude. Like, let's have some fun. And that's, that's been a critical piece of our culture, build everybody. That's the first book we read. We have three books that everybody has to go through. And that's number one. And then we discuss it, and we like to get busy implementing it.

Shawn Hill 12:56

That's right. Yeah, I'm actually well familiar with fish philosophy, things like that had actually a couple of jobs in my career, people implemented that. Also, I'll shout out because it came up and I said, the next time we had both of the authors of this next book, actually on our podcast, Ninja Nautilus, and that measly of playing it forward, which takes the fish philosophy puts a little bit in of how to instill true FUN into your business as well. It's a very quick read, I'll send over to you to sit as well, the title and such mail seem to connect and send you one but playing it forward. That means Nicki and all this takes a fish philosophy, and I don't think it goes a step further. But they read that in a couple of other things and put together their own little catalog. But it was my own personal life that really started to shift how I approached any career path that I was on at that point, making sure that that was a big thing and became huge. If it doesn't have the right company culture, then it's probably not for me. So whenever I make changes, that's usually why I do so. So we talked about the book, The modular things like that. Is there a biggest win that you're thankful for? So in 2021, for you in particular, was there a big win? Or was there something you felt that industry wide or something like that was a huge game changer? And so one of the things that popped in my head we talked about, or we've talked on this podcast before, but it's like automation, for example, right? That's something that I really feel like a business owner should be very thankful for. And I think we've even seen a greater increase over the past few years. And what can be automated up here in Canada, the whole tap to pay their credit card thing is beyond prevalent, or they start to pick up a bit more in the state. So, quicker payments, contactless payments, things like that are also going and I think

business owners should be thankful for. Was there any big win for you or any big advancement that you feel yourself or business as a whole should be thankful for?

Sid Graef 14:46

Yeah, so excuse me, the biggest win this year was something that was completely unexpected. A handful of friends and I are some business peers in the window cleaning power washing industry, I managed to get together and purchase the industry events called a huge convention. And there was some hesitation because last year everything closed down. And we bought a convention that normally brings in 1000-1200 people, but it's in person, you were like, I hope we can really do this in person when we had the event in Atlanta in August, and actually had the largest number of vendors, the largest number of attendees. But the feedback that we got was so key and so valuable. It comes back to what we talked about earlier about contributing to others, helping others along the way. It's an event to help people that want to grow their business or improve their business, connect with the right people. We bring in a lot of education and a lot of resources. And this year, I can't say it went off perfectly, but it went off so well that we are presold for next year, not 100%. But remarkably close.

Shawn Hill 15:59

Yeah, and I know it was. Unfortunately we had nice things that we were unable to attend because as we saw the CDC recommendation, things like that going cross border, we just wouldn't be able for us to cross border. But it was that and itself though, seeing those back, I think it's something people should be thankful for because and we dived into a little bit more, being able to actually meet in those groups, right, connect with, speakers, but connect with honestly, your fellow compatriots, your peers, and that sort of industry is it's almost like cross training athletes. You learn so much more from someone. I'm in a different region. So our season actually extends a bit longer because of our weather right up here. I'm just outside of Vancouver, we've reached the rainy season, the sun will come back someday, who knows. But it also rains a bunch. So window cleaners, things of that nature, I'm sure the business pivots a bit, it changes a bit a lot, your outdoor businesses but then to get in and actually be able to cross train your brain and hear other people's experiences and actually connect. So I think I'd add on that being thankful for events coming back. And the sort of conferences, and I said, you talked about it, it was huge, people were unsure, it was back and forth. And I know some cases spreading around even after the event, things like that. But ultimately, more often than not, people get so much value out of that. But it's certainly something to be thankful for. To sidebar a little bit. Do you think there's a way that people should approach events like that, to really maximize their efforts? That's probably an episode in itself. But if you got someone that just hosted an event, what would you suggest? If you're attending an event, this is the way you need to go into it?

Sid Graef 17:34

I would definitely do that. So, I teach the 8020 service business podcast, and I'm all about, like, there's almost always a way to step to the front of the line, there's a way with the same amount of energy and effort to get a much bigger result. And so here's a great example. The very first time I went to the huge convention as an attendee, like five years ago, I had never been to an

industry event, I didn't really care about hanging out with a bunch of window cleaners. I think they're all weird, because I use myself as an example. Like, we're probably all weird. And, but I just looked around, like, I started following the news feed and looking at who's speaking, who's teaching, and I checked out their bio, and I found five people that I wanted to meet. And ordinarily, if you go to a big event, and the keynote speaker, they're a little hard to get to, because they're the other press flash afterwards. They're like niche famous. And they just don't have time. But I just started, I followed each one of these people that I was interested in meeting online and I found some of the groups or forums. They're a part of it when they would post something, I would post a thoughtful reply. And I did that for about two weeks. Honestly, that's all it takes to get somebody to feel like they know you. And then I reached out to him with a direct message. And then I set up just I hosted my own quote, these are air quotes for those who are listening air quotes mastermind. As I am hosting an industry mastermind it's informal, it's the night before it's going to be at the sports bar, would you join me and all but one of them join me and we like, I ended up getting to talk to them talk shop, share ideas, and become friends with these guys. Without being in line, 30 people waited to shake their hand in hand of a business card. It's not difficult to get to know the right people. So to answer your question directly, if there's somebody there, like see who's going to be speaking, see who's going to be a vendor and map it out ahead of time, I want to talk to this person about this topic. I want to meet this vendor about this because I have questions about face to face time. You can't replace it with any other method of communication. Then on top of that, what normally happens when you go to a big event is like you come home you got a notebook full of notes yet 100 pages of notes, you're like man, I learned all that stuff. And then the notebook goes inside and you get busy and you don't do anything. So I started a couple of years ago, like I review my notes the day after either taking a day off or on the plane home, and I make my list of top 10. These are the top 10 things I want to implement. And I picked two and I for the next month, I'm going to focus on these two. And just focusing on those two gave me more results than the then 100 pages of notes ever did in the past that sits in your bookcase forever. You're like, look at that someday, you're never going to,

Shawn Hill 20:14

It's almost like taking the event time. So if it's a two day three day event, but dedicate some time before and after actually dedicating it, put it in your schedule, put it in your calendar, make it something, it's going to be on your list. Because that's where the true learning and execution actually happens. So you're looking for, find him, perhaps you want to meet, make a plan, start to make some connections. And then you have your plan of attack, almost your battle plan for when you're at the event. And then afterwards, taking time, I love that everyone takes notes. I've spoken a lot of conventions, and I see people furiously writing away and going like that. And ever salt, I want to go and call them, a month later, they're like, hey, look back at my notes. You're just making me feel better on stage by furiously going away. But I love the execution, also putting it at scale. Because sometimes some of these conventions mean huge, it is a great example there as well, as people will say, I got so much it can almost overwhelm yourself. But if you make one or two big improvements from those types of events, that's going to be huge. Pardon the pun.

Sid Graef 21:25

That's going to be great for you. And then that's probably two things that aren't going to be on your learn about list next year. Yes, true. It's true. Think about how much more effective you are, if you're going to the gym, if you have a workout plan already prepared and written down, you know exactly what you're going to do. You don't waste any time walking around, I don't know whether to shove bench press or curl or get on the treadmill, you have a plan. And you're like, you don't waste time you're effective. It's so much, you just get so much more value out of your time.

Shawn Hill 21:48

Yeah, and I will say I know the huge, nice job was unable to make it but we're ready for next year is one of the biggest feedback we got from the huge like we missed you, we couldn't see you. They have been. So we know that audiences are dying for us to be back. So we're hoping to be back in a pretty big way next year. So if you're doing your pre-planning combined to help us, we're not the big keynote that's unapproachable. We're completely approachable. Thanks, John. Come on by and say hello to us.

Sid Graef 22:14

Shawn, I think the first time I met you was your speaking at the service software Summit. That was a pregame show for the huge convention a few years ago. And Atlanta. Is that right?

Shawn Hill 22:24

No. So the first time we met was that response, a con response. Yeah, when you're in Boger hosting, which is funny, because we've talked a lot about my background, as an emcee, I've run thousands of events like that. So I'm always drawn to whoever's emceeing an event whether it's like, we had no one. So here's Steve, or whether we brought in a particular sort of person. I always say also that in wedding toasters, I'm big, I'm a little too critical. My wife likes to say not everyone knows my technique and likes it, but they should. I want to hear all the words of this toast. That's right. But that's the first time we met was really only in passing, I think I had your record. Because obviously, as a nice job user, a nice little thing for us that we were going to build into something. Yeah. But no, that's a great example, though. Sometimes these events, you know, said you and I kind of talked online and crossed but really only had three minutes or however many we're not having this podcast of conversation, right. And you really get to know because sometimes, there are people that almost honestly play characters, but have this obviously, polished public persona, and there's a good chance you can break that down and really get to connect, you are not one that puts on a different front, you are the same exact person, if you run the sit in line at the airport, on a podcast, wherever else it is going to be the exact same guys, don't worry about that one. But there were a couple albums out there that play this character that played on stage. And sure, sometimes these industry events, you can really figure out. And so I would say one thing I'm thankful for is the realness you bring. And really just the honesty, because I think it's one thing that I've really gravitated towards this industry in particular, the coaches of the gurus that are just selling Kool Aid instead of selling results. I'd like to meet real, genuine people. So that's something in particular, I am certainly thankful for. As we get down towards the end here said, I want to make sure to ask you a question that we've asked

all of our guests here in season three is going to compare and contrast in the answers. We didn't see episode 63. We extract the first half of season three, put all those answers together. Towards the end of the season, we're going to put the second half that's where your answer will fall into. Oh, cool. But the question I'm asking everybody in Steve's threatening ticket in the business or the personal side is, what do you embrace more challenges or opportunities?

Sid Graef 24:37

Okay, this is the part where you're going to have to edit out a pause. I have to say that in my head, I embrace opportunities in reality. I get so much enjoyment out of solving problems. So when challenges come up, like that, I tell my team, if I were in the military, I'd be a really good field commander because when we're under attack, when things break, I'm like, do this, do that. So to answer very directly, I definitely embrace the challenges more.

Shawn Hill 25:11

And we've had a lot of people, like the whole thought process, that answer is why I like this question because somebody will say, I find myself taking on more opportunities. When I find opportunities, I go for it. But I'm really embracing the challenges I have. I feel better after that, or I feel more opportunities come from the challenges I embrace. So if I'm not embracing challenges, and I feel like I'm not doing more than others, you'll see the other way. Like, you know, what, I face a lot of challenges. I'm good at it. But honestly, I feel like I'm at my desk when I'm embracing these opportunities and not making it arbitrarily harder on myself. So we get a lot of people that really noodle an answer, and I've gotten a couple said that, well, email me like a week and a half after we do this and go. I think it's actually more than the other way. Any answer you give is the correct answer. And that's why I like this question when comparing and contrasting. And I would even say, I'm thankful that all of our guests have taken on just being completely honest, that question, not just given a boilerplate of, you know, here's why it should be this.

Sid Graef 26:12

So it's interesting, because I think about opportunities a lot. I mean, that's what I'm writing about and planning for things. But the reality is, the challenges are, they're tangible, too, right in your face, you like this happened? We need to fix it. And that for me, it's just crystal clear. Like, let's jump in and fix it.

Shawn Hill 26:31

Well, as I tell everyone, if a week from now, and you think your answers changed, drop me an email and make a little out of date, when we do that the next combination episode. Said, if someone's listening to this episode, they weren't familiar with you. Or you know, they just know they want to learn everything they can, they want to dive in and see what you're doing.

Sid Graef 26:54

If someone reaches out, connect worse, redirect them towards the easiest places is the 8020. Show calm. So it's the eight, zero to zero show.com. That's easy. And you can find me on

LinkedIn. I think there's only one sad graph, or at least there should be because there's only so much of me that people can handle.

Shawn Hill 27:12

yeah, that's that graph but then he's like I'm out you know,

Sid Graef 27:15

I know he quit he changed his name because I forgot

Shawn Hill 27:17

I think it's the graph now he just trained. Well, Sid has that information. If you're watching on YouTube the description you probably saw on screen listening to audio, only find it down below in the show notes as well, but say thank you. sincerely mean it. Thankful for your time today, here on the Nice Job Podcast. And thanks for being such a great friend. Nice job as a whole. Well, cool.

Sid Graef 27:38

Well, thank you very much. And before we go as it went to you, thanks. It's, we didn't go into a similar backstory and I don't really want to but like I started in 1993. And there were no resources for people to learn about service business or about the industry or about how to run a bigger business. You go to the library and check out some basic business books but guys, like you companies, like nice jobs that are just, like, frequently like putting out valuable content to help people improve their business. I'm so grateful for that. So thank you for having me on. And thanks for being a leader in the industry to help other people have a better business and reach your goals. It's so important. Thank you.

Shawn Hill 28:18

Well, it's right back to you my friend. And that's something, that nice job and I was brought on. You know, Lars Christiansen, one of the key things he said is, we're not gonna put out great software. We're also going to try to be, you know, thought leaders, but we're going to try to actually create communities that bring people together because that's the tide that raises all boats. And I think I finally got that analogy Correct. You listen back to the history, this podcast. I always screw up that last part, but this time we got it right and said thank you once again for your time and look forward to our next conversation.

Sid Graef 28:45

Cool. Thank you, Shawn.

Shawn Hill 28:49

There you have it, Episode 69. In the book Special Thanks once again to Sid graef for joining us on the show. No key takeaways from this one, but I'd love to hear what you are thankful for. Drop that in an email podcast at nice.job.com. As for the exclusive offer just for podcast listeners might see in the description below our Black Friday sale. That will continue through cyber week. And for podcast listeners, you can extra 10% off if you sign up using our Black Friday sale. Just

drop us a message at podcast@nicejob.com Or let our customer success team know in the blue chat bubble and we'll give you an extra 10% off the rest of the year. Once you're 50% off, complete an exclusive offer available nowhere else. So hop on it soon. Thank you once again for listening to the Nice Job Podcast. I'm your host, Shawn Hill. Till next time, I hope we're being healthy and safe. Not to forget a little fun out there as well.