

Shawn Hill 0:03

Welcome in for another episode of The Nice Job Podcast. I'm your host, Shaun hill. It is our season three finale. And I thank each and every one of you, whether they've listened to multiple seasons, multiple episodes or even if you've just listened to one, I thank you so much for your support. It's truly been an honor to host this podcast for three seasons thus far. We're excited for a potential season for you. We'll get that news to you as soon as we possibly can when we have release dates, or ever changing formats or anything like that, but we'd love to get your feedback. Drop us an email podcast@nicejob.com. I'd love to hear your feedback, your favorite episodes, what you'd want to see differently in season four, we want to make sure it remains the same in season four. We do this for you and want you to be a part of it. So podcast@nicejob.com. While we close out the season here in Episode 75, we wanted to do something a bit special. So let's introduce our guests for today. Hi,

Scott Baermann 1:05

I'm Scott Behrman, I'm a small business owner

Shawn Hill 1:08

Not only is Scott a small business owner, he was our guest on the very first episode of The Nice Job Podcast. So Scott wanted to talk about them.

Scott Baermann 1:19

I talked about thriving in survival mode. So how did it go?

Shawn hill 1:23

That's right. Scott. Behrman is back to tell us if he was able to thrive in survival mode, how he's gotten through the pandemic, the lessons he's learned, and much more. Stay tuned to the end of the episode with my three key takeaways, and a special message. All right, let's dive into Episode 75. Welcome everybody into another edition of the Nice Job Podcast. So glad that you're here. It's actually our season three finale, we made it 75 episodes. And we want to do something a bit special for this one. So we went into the Wayback Machine and found our guests from episode one. And I invite you to go back to listen to that episode, because it was really a time capsule, a moment in time, which we'll get into a bit more. But I also want to warn you to go back to season one, episode one, it is a much different show. We were doing it live, we were still trying to find our legs here. So I thank you if you've listened to all 75 episodes, I thank you because from episode one to now, we've grown a lot and I hope you've grown a lot as well. That's the whole reason we're doing this podcast, see me a better person and a better business owner. And part of the way that we are able to do that to make that promise with you that we're going to help you be a better business owner and a better person is to bring on guests and experts and overall genuinely good people to help you out and hear their stories. So I welcome back to the Nice Job Podcast. Scott Behrman is a business owner, he's a great guy, and he is back again in the guest chair. Scott, thank you so much for coming back on the nice job podcast.

Scott Baermann 2:56

Thank you, Sean, I appreciate you asking me to come back out. And I'm looking forward to speaking with you again.

Shawn Hill 3:02

And the idea to invite you back on was a little bit twofold. One, I really enjoyed our conversation the first time we really felt that no matter what topic or through your way that you'd be able to give some good insight and give some good advice in that regard. But I also look back at that first episode, it seemed like a time capsule for us here on the show, because those are initially going or our pilot is trying to figure it out. But we recorded that episode on April 16 of 2020. And when you say any day in the early part of 2020. Everyone goes, whoa, that far back. And our episode actually revolved around, we titled it thriving in survival mode. And at that point I look back through a couple of notes where you were in Illinois just got stay shelter in place orders, they just extended it a bit more. And no one knew that it would take on the life that it did. However, in looking through notes, I noticed that you were saying, Hey, we had to prepare for this for 30 days, or however long it continues to go. So in that sort of mindset. I don't know if you can really put yourself back in April. When you look at that person in April, do you like how you almost think of that moment? You're like, man, like you had no idea what was going to happen? Like you thought you knew and you didn't? Or do you maybe get a little bit of pride because I kind of felt pride in you, Scott because it felt like you were as prepared as you could be for something so unexpected. How do you think back to that time?

Scott Baermann 4:34

Yeah, I think for some reason, I was just gonna like a good mental state. I mean, obviously looking at a time where I had no idea. I mean, nobody did right. Nobody knew how their life was gonna play out or how their business was gonna play out. Yeah, I think I just had to believe that okay, this is something that hasn't come our way before. But it happened in the past. I mean, way back in the past, and other businesses, knowing what I've known through reading, have survived and thrived during downturns and during chaos in the world and different events. So I think that for some reason just felt like, yeah, it was really mentally prepared for that time.

Shawn Hill 5:26

Is there anything that you think went even better than you expected, given over the past few two years, or a year and a half? Or things like that, right, like something where you're like, I felt we're kind of going wrong. Roll right along. You talked about the strength of business owners as you said, this has happened before, there's been tough times you've gone through, was there anything that you maybe felt a little confident about be like, man like that, like really worked out? Perhaps it was the strength of your team? Perhaps it was your financial planning or anything like that? Does anything stick out to me and I was a little confident, but man, it really showed up for me tenfold?

Scott Baermann 6:00

Yeah, I think the biggest thing for me is like being here now realizing the resiliency of my business. And not everybody's businesses are the same. But I think it's twofold. One of the

benefits that I have, being in Chicago, is just the amount of customers that we have available to us. Now we do be to be, subscription window cleaning. And a lot of our clients were under the same orders that we were under, they shut down, they couldn't let people into their businesses, so they were reducing their services. So we essentially went down to zero. At one point, like you said, earlier, we weren't cleaning windows at all, because we weren't allowed to by the city of Chicago. But what surprised me was just the fact that we could get back to where we are today. We're essentially like, even to where we were revenue wise. And it was just through a lot of perseverance, perseverance, through our employees, and our staff, to be able to weather that storm, and to really buckle down, and focus on the right things. And to me, the right thing that I tell everybody who works for me is that the number one thing we need to do is just communicate. If we can communicate with our clients, we communicate with each other, that'll cover a multitude of sins, you can screw up a lot of things, but as long as you communicate, that will carry you forward. And we did that. And I think that was the key for us to be able to like go to zero, and then come back to where we are today.

Shawn Hill 7:56

And that's quite a journey, you have to go all the way back, right? Because if I were to talk to you in 2019, there's always just the entrepreneurial mindset of like more ideas, more things, where can we grow, where should we support, and then all of a sudden, as we talk about thriving and survival mode, it's like, let's just keep things going. Right? Like, hopefully, we'll get back to that time as someone that does some be to be b stuff, and even have an interesting perspective of what it's like, I'm sure some of the businesses you serviced are gone. They didn't make it through as a fellow business owner. How does that really kind of attach to you because I know you as an individual are very caring kind of across the board. But it has to be difficult in your town where you have a lot of pride to see businesses go down without this probably thriving and having those same ideas. We talked about scaling, second location, things like that. And then now all of a sudden, it's just a part of history. Was that as difficult for you? As I know, internally, you're worried about your own wherever you're on staff, but just seeing your community around also suffering? Yeah,

Scott Baermann 9:03

I mean, it was for sure. We also liked it so after we talked, we had the shutdown. And then there was George Floyd. Riots. And we were affected in Chicago by that a lot. So there was a lot of looting that happened. So we were just getting right back to starting to clean some of our clients again. And then I remember this vividly. Our technicians were out cleaning windows and we'd get a picture. Can't clean this location, because there's more than the window can clean this location because there's boards on the windows. So I think that part also was just like really, it just makes you aware of the depth of just the impact that COVID had, that they're just all the things that happen to us as a society. And then being a business owner in that you have to navigate your own feelings, you have to navigate the feelings of your employees, and then also the feelings and the emotions of your clients that you serve. And, thankfully, I can't think there were businesses that closed that we that, that we just have on the list, like, we hope they would come back. And we don't serve them any longer because they closed their doors. But thankfully, a lot of the clients that we had for I mean, we're hitting 10 years are still we're still cleaning them.

So I'm really grateful for that and really happy for them, because they're small business owners, a lot of our clients are small business owners. And I'm sure it wasn't easy for them as well, but really grateful to be in it together, and then come out on hopefully, this other side, it's still this tense period and wondering what the future is going to look like. So that's where we're at right now.

Shawn Hill 11:08

It really the sense of community across society and across like business owners was, I think, something that maybe didn't get enough of a spotlight, there was a lot of discourse, there's a lot of unrest. But I've also seen on the other side, some great communities coming together. And it's interesting that as a business owner, sometimes your world, your ecosystem seems like one within the larger run, right? Because you have your own team that's going to have their own feelings on what might be happening outside. And you're always trying to motivate them through their business, but you also care about them as an individual. So, it's not just about the job they did today. It really is how they're feeling and how they're doing. Did you feel yourself have to even invest a bit more in that over the past little stretch? Because it really feels like the ecosystem outside of your business? Was it even more chaotic? Did you feel like it ended up being almost a father figure? Or do you kind of every so often have to put on a hat of motivating them as people will not necessarily as you know, your tanks?

Scott Baermann 12:08

Well to be honest, I think I dropped the ball in that area. I think I wasn't present enough for my employees. Looking back on it, I think I was also like, shell shocked. And, like trying to navigate the stress that I was feeling, right, because when we first talked, we just started getting into it. So I had no idea it was gonna play out. And then we got into it. So there was just a lot more stress. And I think I've pulled into myself more than reaching out while looking back on my life lesson. Being where I'm at now, and I don't know if you want to touch on this right now. But the whole idea of the great resignation. Like we're navigating just trying to find people to work. But being on this side of it, and unlearning what I learned from a year ago, two years ago, I'm a different person. I have learned some lessons about investing into my people a little bit more intentionally than I was during the pandemic.

Shawn Hill 13:30

I wouldn't want to touch on trying to find more employees now and things like that, but just prior I want to go back a little bit. How did you find a way to celebrate positives during this whole stretch? Because it could come off a little bit shallow in a sense of always everything's negatives or trying to find a positive but you know the good company culture, really ways to kind of bring community closer is you have to celebrate the things I joked about here the Mitchell podcast, we celebrate getting to 1000 downloads, it took us longer than it probably should have. But I said to the people that were guests on our show and things like that. We're going to celebrate every milestone along the way. And now as we got 1000 in a month, like okay, it seemed a little goofy at the time, but it was important for us to do so and I know it had to be important to celebrate the good that was happening and try to balance it out without coming off performative. How did you approach that? How did you make sure that one telling your team it's okay for us to celebrate us

having a good day knowing that people out there across the world are having their worst days. How did you navigate being able to celebrate the good and obviously still keep a realistic mindset?

Scott Baermann 14:41

I think it's daily like trying to stay connected. And we have a funny businesses because especially with COVID are our window cleaners can come in, they we use cargo bikes, like they get on our cargo bikes, and they go out and sometimes they won't even sit we won't even like cross paths just because So that is something that we have to be very intentional about is just connecting with what as management connecting with our window cleaners on our technicians that go out every day. Just asking, how are they, how's things at home just even just in general, not just like work focused. But in general it is like celebrating together and saying we've gone through this hard time together, and we still have to navigate these different challenges together. So that's the important thing that we continue to try to do. And I want to just get better at it, connecting, being present and being invested in each other. I mean, you don't have to go into the depths of the personal. But we're people, we have families, we have lives outside of work. And work is a piece of our life that should support the other things that we want to see happen in our life. But it's an important piece, because you do a lot of the put in 40 hours a week, and it pays your bills. So navigating that and like just being in people's lives and trying to help them navigate what they're going through as well. It's tricky, but it's fun. I enjoy people, I want to see people thrive, not just survive, but I want to see them thrive. So we tried to push, push and do that every day.

Shawn Hill 16:38

Did you find yourself getting even a little bit more of a boost in celebrating others' positives, because I was talking in a panel discussion, and one of the other guests on the panel talked about is, I always would celebrate my team. And I always was a big proponent of that. And I got a little buzz out of it. But over this past year, it was just so great to celebrate every sort of thing that I felt like. I always say that their wins are my wins, but it felt a little bit more like that. Did you find that as well? But as you went all through this together, you really got a greater appreciation for celebrating the positive across the board.

Scott Baermann 17:16

I wish I could say that. I think this was just part of life, even my personal life. As a business owner, and I have four kids, I have a wife, I have different challenges. So I just lost my way to be honest with you during the second half of 2020. And it could have been just fatigue, and trying to figure out, like, what do I want to do? Where do I want to go? How do we keep moving forward when this feels so hard? And then feeling like I didn't do the best job of really connecting. I know I like being on the positive side, but just just be completely honest. Like, as a leader of my business, I didn't do enough to keep everybody together and keep everybody focused on the goal and the prize. And like I said earlier, I would have learned a lesson and I'm going to do different things differently going forward.

Shawn Hill 18:28

You don't need me to tell you this Scott, but I think that's okay. And I very much appreciate you sharing that then to just roll into the lead and be like this is great. And that's what when I listened back to that first episode, I heard you navigating, a little of that because obviously I invite you on the show to talk to other business owners and a little bit like look, I'm just like I'm figuring out myself here I'll share my story. Like I could almost feel you in a verbal sense if I would be like oh, here's our expert Scott Baron being like not the guy doing it try my best willing to share my story. We were very appreciative of that. So given the fact of how it went do you see yourself still on a comeback trail? Do you feel you're closer to even the highs and lows? We're going back to April 16. we're ever going to put that point on the chart there. Do you think you're extending up you think you're below you think you're getting back to even where we start?

Scott Baermann 19:29

Personally, I think I am on an upward slope because I'm able to look back, able to like being in a better place to look back and say, here's where I was. And here's the things that I had to put in place to like almost get back to where I was before the pandemic happened. Again, I don't know anybody else's. Everybody else's story as a business owner, but you were faced with If I've put eight years of my life into this, and I don't know what's going to happen, and navigating the wall, I had to take on loans from the government. And I gotta pay those back at some point in time. Yeah, so it's like, but I do feel like I'm on the upswing, and with the business well with urban street window works. So I've urgency window works. I love street window cleaning. I was a residential window cleaner, looking at purchasing another small business right now. So I'm definitely entrenched. I'm a small business guy. And I love small business owners, and I want small business, I want everybody if they want to, and can be a small business owner, because I think there's a million benefits to it. But there are some difficult things. And one of the difficult things is, if everybody else goes away, I have to do it all, that was November. And I'm just starting to get out of it. But November was just last month, and was the hardest month of the whole beginning of the pandemic to now which we're still navigating. Yeah, but I am positive, I'm encouraged. And I'm just trying to figure out, how do we navigate forward? What are the things we could do? I'm more focused on things like, What's the best thing for urban street window works? And I can step back and look at it objectively, I think, and say, this is a great business, can it be even better? If it was under somebody else's leadership? Or, you know, hire and so you know, just I'm at that point, right now, I'm really trying to figure out what's the next step for me.

Shawn Hill 21:55

And you talked about a note in November, I think you kind of alluded to it, and we want to dive, you know, super deep and specific. So but, you know, staffing? Yeah, trying to recruit training people there. Your great resignation is the term out there. And there's a variety of different perspectives people have on it. And so I'll ask him this way, because we're not a political podcast site or podcast or anything like that. But what has been the biggest change you've seen? Right? Like, like, what is something that, you know, this used to be something that would

net a lot of candidates or bring people in and just doesn't seem to be working? Like what gives me a firsthand account of why or how it's been so hard to find people?

Scott Baermann 22:39

Yeah, I'm not quite sure why. And I can't put myself in somebody else's shoes, who's looking for a job or who's not looking for a job, who had a job that they're like, I don't want to go back to that. And I don't really necessarily need to go back to something right now. So I can wait a little bit. But I think it's the same. I don't think anything has changed in terms of caring for people. And, helping them especially with my business, I don't think so. Especially the way we ride cargo bikes in Chicago. So I get a lot of younger people, late teens, early 20s, who are just looking for a job. So I don't think my Devon demographic for my window cleaners is going to be cleaning windows in 20 years, 30 years? Well, at least not for my company. I always tell them, Look, you will not have to clean windows, I have a 19 year old son who works full time for my business right now. I tell him like you can go anywhere in the country, and you can make a good amount of money. Just cleaning windows. So you've learned this skill, and you've learned how to talk to people, even go use it and then go to California, you can wash your house in the afternoon, and you could serve in the morning if you wanted to. So yeah, I think again, it's just like caring for people. And right now, just today, I extended two job offers to two former technicians who were with my company just in the summer, and they moved on to something else. Because it just wasn't the right fit for them. And we talked this week, because I was in need. And I'll take an experience window cleaner right now as a gift. And they're two great guys. And I'm excited to have them back on the team. And I think it was getting to a point of being like, what how can we make this work for both of us? So it's getting back to that, not taking people for granted. I don't think I ever did but I think as business owners, we have to make sure that Work cares for employees and understands that they could go somewhere else, or they could stay home. We can't take them for granted.

Shawn Hill 25:09

I guess there's a lot of ways to make a living or make an income. I don't think a path of being a tick tock star is actually one that's viable for less than 1% of people. But I think to keep it on a positive side, and just my opinion here like he said you can't speak for everybody, you can't do every sort of business, but this whole awareness of what talent can bring, they can bring a table, I think right now, maybe a bit more skewed of where these talented people are showing a lot of pride and looking for very narrow, specific things. But I think evolution comes to what you said is. I would say, not taking for granted, might hit some people a little bit wrong, but I think it's more understanding, like we need to make this work for you. And for us, we can't pay \$10,000 an hour, right? It's not going to work for us, but we can find a way to make sure that you feel valued at that extreme moment. And so whether it's your culture benefits you provide, flexibility scheduling any of those sorts of things. And that's while right now, it's really hard for some people to find people to come to work, I think the evolutions in progress, we're now you're gonna start to see it start to swing back the other way, and you're going to get really eager, talented candidates with really passionate caring owners coming together. And they said we'll see everybody thriving, I think once we reach that intersection is where everyone kind of starts thriving again.

Scott Baermann 26:44

Yeah, I think that's a benefit to employers and small business owners. It's okay for people to take a step back and reevaluate, and say, what do I really want? What's really valuable to me, and then get back into the marketplace and say, here's who I want to work for. This is the type of culture I want to work for. And this is the type of work I want to do. I do coaching specifically for that. I've coached some people just to find like, what's your gifts? What are your talents, what's your skills? What do you want to be doing? Find a job that marries well with that, because you're going to be a benefit to your employer, when you're doing work that you're better here is a better fit for. And I want that for my team as well.

Shawn Hill 27:33

I love that. Scott. As we get ready to wrap the episode here, I want to ask you a question that we've been asking all of our guests here in season three. And I'm happy to reveal if it was actually inspired by thinking about our first episode. Because it was something that it was like, I feel like both answers. And so I'm really eager to hear your answer to this. Because it was inspired by you. But so the question that I've been asking all the guests in season three is, which do you embrace more challenges or opportunities?

Scott Baermann 28:07

Man, that's good. For me I would just go up, I got the opportunities. I'm always looking for opportunities. But it's funny, because I think the challenge opens up the opportunity. Like when I see a challenge. To me, it's like, okay, what are the opportunities here? How can we do things differently? What can we shift? So I get excited? So I think it's a combo. But to me, I default to opportunities, I want to see like, what's the possibilities? What can we do? That's what gets me excited.

Shawn Hill 28:41

Don't worry, we've got a lot of long pauses when I've asked that question. I worked on articulating because almost exactly what you said the follow up is, you might get excited about both, but what are you looking to embrace more, right? Like, what are you trying to make sure of? Unfortunately, it's the fact that I edit this thing you think I'd remember there? So I said in particular, like well, one always leads to another right. And so what I want to see more in front of me is opportunity, but with challenges coming my way, I'll be ready, I'll be prepared. But we talked about embracing. I want to see opportunity after opportunity, every opportunity and maybe a little bit less challenge as a challenge. And I can tell you, Scott, I haven't checked in as much as I would have liked to from episode one, things like that. But I do keep an eye. I do a swing by the website and things like that from time to time. And I can honestly say that I think you've embraced both challenges and opportunities over this past stretch pretty admirably and I am always thankful that you are able to give us an honest reveal yourself wear on your sleeve there because I really think it helps people that will listen not only that first episode this episode as well. So I want to thank you sincerely from all of us here at Nice job for joining us once again on the Nice Job Podcast. If someone has heard this episode heard both episodes, they want to

find out more about you want to connect with you, you wanting to see what you're up to where should we direct them towards

Scott Baermann 29:59

The best place for me is LinkedIn. So LinkedIn, just Scott Behrman. And you'll find me there. And that's the best place to connect with me.

Shawn Hill 30:09

And we'll have that down in the description. So whether you're listening to the audio only or watching on YouTube, you'll find Scott's LinkedIn page below. Scott, sincerely. Thank you so much, man, it's great to catch up with you. And thank you for closing out season three here on the Nice Job Podcast.

Scott Baermann 30:23

Well, thank you for the opportunity, Shawn, I really appreciate it.

Shawn Hill 30:28

I'm not sure if you can tell him my voice. But it's an absolute pleasure to get a chance to reconnect with Scott. He joined us for the very first episode. And I mentioned at the very top, if you haven't listened to that one, you can hear the evolution of this podcast. But also, it's a time capsule to a business owner at that time, it was April 16 2020. endemic, we really started to see the beginning of lockdowns. And as you heard Scott, that journey, and then to now it was quite transformative. And that leads right into my three key takeaways for this episode. And the first one is, if you're not a different person, in some sort of significant way from when this all started, I think you've made some mistake. And I think you really need to be introspective in that way. The evolution of the business owners, the evolution of society, both the good and the bad or both of those are integral to really moving forward in a business society. So I stand firm that if you did not have a transformative experience in some sort of way, if you haven't learned, if you haven't evolved, over these past two years or so, take a look in the mirror, you might have some growing up to do. A second key takeaway with Scott, and almost every element in every answer talked about how important communication is, talked about communication to your clients, communication within your team and within your family. And that really was a pillar of what got him through the highest of highs and the lowest of lows, new lows even though they were possible. Over the past few years. Communication is often overlooked, and often snickered at, especially those like myself that have degrees in the field of communications. But it is the most important thing in every element of your business net and goes from your reputation through your processes to your recruiting. But here's my third takeaway. Scott touched on the great resignation and things like that, and kind of the evolving landscape when it comes to talent acquisition. And it goes back to my first point if you really should have evolved over the last little bit. But one thing he said I think that really stuck with me is how much it's really become understanding who you are hiring and why. But then also realizing that, yes, the salary, or just the small, little technical aspects of the job, probably aren't as high on the range of importance of new talent, as it was in the past. Creating an ecosystem for someone to thrive, I think is still the best way to attract talent. So leave with your reputation, have a great company culture, and

make sure you're evolving along the way. Those are my three key takeaways. And I want to thank everybody for listening to this episode. But once again, for your support of this podcast, nice job in general, this job in particular went through quite a big change in 2021, as well, but we're excited for 2022 to talk about customer driven growth and reputation marketing and whether it's through podcast or webinars, live appearances or anything like that. I can tell you at least the commute department here at nice job is dedicated to making sure that we are not just a software company, that we're in the trenches with you that were side by side and helping you learn, grow and become a better business owner and a better person. So once again, I am Shaun Hill and when we started this podcast when Scott was our first guest, but wasn't quite sure how we should end things and how I wanted to leave things off and didn't want to try to manufacture a tagline, what organically it came together and I hope it resonates with you because I mean it from the bottom of my heart over being healthy, over being safe. And don't forget that little fun out there as well.