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ACCELERATING ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS PODCAST

EPISODE
191

Sol Orwell

Show Notes at: <http://www.aesnation.com/191>



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Best of success,



John Bowen
Co-founder, AES Nation

John Bowen: As entrepreneurs, there's no shortage of advice out there. We've got an awful lot of people who are there to give us advice, who have never done it. Well I'll tell ya, we've got a really remarkable entrepreneur. I love on his blog, he's got the stardom, I look over to it and let's skip the bullshit. As you fellow entrepreneurs, you've all had bullshits, we've got all kinds of people teaching us how to be successful entrepreneurs and they've never done it. But they read a book, maybe one book more than we did, and they've got little experience.

This individual is a very good friend. We met through Jason Gonard at Mastermind Talks, and we had the chance to do a little rally car exercise, so we've got to know each other well through this. But one of the things that's so good about this remarkable entrepreneur that I'm gonna have us join in a second, is that one of the things that I noticed is that the fellow entrepreneurs at these mastermind groups all turn to Sal. To ask his advice, and one of the reasons is he's done it. He's been an entrepreneur for 15 years, six companies, over eight figures generated and like you and me, he's made a lot of mistakes, but he had a lot of successes and more importantly, he had a lot of fun doing it. You'll want to meet this remarkable entrepreneur. Stay tuned.

I am so excited to have you join us here at AES Nation. You are one of the guys who I want to share with all our audience because you have helped many people accelerate their success. Just as a really good friend, while you were doing your own businesses as well. So first of all, thank you.

Sol Orwell: Thank you for having me, John. It's a pleasure.

John: Well, one of the things, we've met at fun events and they've been fruitful for both of us and helped us each. I wanna ... You've got some great lessons you've learned along the way and what I'd like to do is a little bit of the back story first, because it's funny, Sal, I think of you as a quiet guy but everything you do is not quiet at all.

Sol: Right.

John: I don't know the whole background, so this is a little dangerous for everybody-

Sol: For sure.

John: But it is ... You have really made some things happen and I want to get some framing. So tell me how you got to where you are now.

Sol: For sure. We actually immigrated. I was ... I'm ethnically Kashmiri, which is Pakistani [inaudible 00:02:57] they keep flying over. I was born in Pakistan, grown mostly in Saudi Arabia, spent a few years in Japan, back to Saudi Arabia, did eighth grade in Houston and

then we immigrated to Canada. You hear about all these entrepreneurs that are always selling candies as a kid or lemonade as a kid, that was not me. Entrepreneurship to me was always about being independent and being free. I think a lot of other entrepreneurs, especially online, they can kinda empathize with that mindset.

Just to give you a sense of how independent I am, I was not born Sal Orwell, I legally changed my full name. The idea that I could not, that I could not ... That I did not get to choose my own name was ridiculous and I was like I'm just going to do this. My mom did call me an idiot, but she's used to the kind of escapades I do. Basically, when I moved to the west, I had a huge culture shock [inaudible 00:03:47] got into [inaudible 00:03:47]. It was my refuge, it was where I could be me. That's where I realized the opportunity of business right there.

Back in the day when there was just Ever Quest and before World of Warcraft or any of these other online games came out, I got into virtual currency. So you're a busy professional, for example. You don't have time to spend 50 hours to get the sword of doom, so I go to you and I say, "Hey, I will sell you the sword of doom, for \$300." You go like 50 hours, \$300. No brainer. We did really well in that.

After that, I moved into a new neighborhood in Toronto, this was before Google Maps came out. This is the first condo in this neighborhood and nobody knew what was there. So my now ex-wife and I, we actually went out with our old digital cameras, like 2003, and we took a photograph of every business there. We went inside, we interviewed the manager, owner and we put up a local search site. We were local search way back then, that did really well. We expanded from the neighborhood from Toronto, to Canada, to we went worldwide. We are now partnered with Google.

After that, I'd achieved enough success for me that I basically retired. For five years, I lived in the States, in Argentina, just kind of gallivanting around.

John: Give me your age at that time. So I'm 61 and it took me ... At 45, I had the liquidity event that I did retire. I lasted [crosstalk 00:05:05]. You're much better at all this than me. I only lasted six months. Did you ... Were you fully retired for five years?

Sol: Yeah, I was 22 at this time, I mean, I would say I was 90%. What I do is I kept ownership of my companies but I had a put my number two in charge. I basically paid him more than I paid myself. No one knew who I was. No one ... I never built a brand for myself, I was building a brand for my companies. Essentially I paid him to run it, he ran it really well in many ways, he ran it better than I could. He had a much stronger technical understanding but yeah, it was around 22 when I launched off on this, and when I came back, I lived in Argentina, then Manhattan, then I came back to Toronto. I gained a lot of weight and as I lost weight, I realized these up-in companies were ripping us off. Six and half years ago, I created a company called,

Examine.com. We are now the largest database of nutrition research. We get over a couple million visitors a month. We've been in New York Times, Times, BBC, blah, blah, blah.

In about two years ago, I started talking about entrepreneurship. Because as you said, there's a lot of people out there who talk about entrepreneurship, but even honestly ... Even the ones that are pretty successful at it, not to be a jerk, I can't help it. But a lot of them were freelancers. They don't understand what HR is like, they don't understand legal, they don't understand the joys of managing 20 plus humans, which is ... Politics started coming in, you gotta ... One person needs tough love, and another person can't deal with tough love. I don't do any coaching, I don't do any consulting, but it was a great outlet for me. So I've been doing that for the past few years and the next project I already have lined up, I'm gonna do pets.

I bought Pet.org a while ago, and the common thread in all of these, you'll notice is that I always did these for myself. It was never like, "Oh this is a market opportunity." It was I went into online games, I went into local search, I was a lot heavier and I lost a lot of weight, so that's always been the thing that spurred me on, is I find this interesting, some of them become businesses, some of them don't, but all the while, I'm having quite the experience and joyride while I'm figuring this out.

John: Yeah, this is great Sal. I mean it's ... This is one of things that it comes across loud and clear when we've been together is that you're having a lot of fun-

Sol: Of course.

John: And we're gonna get into a lot of fun, and this is ... I always talk about we're in business not for more business, we're in business for supporting a great quality like building that great quality of life for all stakeholders. First part in like and self interest, but really we gotta do it for our clients or customers-

Sol: For sure.

John: For our teammates, our principles, and so on. You've been doing it repeatedly and you shard with me, and I wanna walk you through the five big takeaways. Before we turn on the camera, we were going over this and one of the first, I love because this is a mistake a lot of people in today's internet make is, you build a brand, not your name. The temptation Sal, is all of us want to see our name in lights. Tell me why you feel so strongly, why was this number one?

Sol: I've done this now for 18 years, until two years ago, pretty much nobody knew who I was. They may have heard of my companies but they didn't know who I was. The reason I think it's the number one thing is, all of us, I would imagine that are listening, are here to build

businesses. If your name is your business, extracting yourself from your business is a huge headache.

Like if I was Sal Orwell and someone hired me or bought my product, they expect Sal Orwell, right? If their emailing me, they're expecting Sal Orwell. With the company Examine.com, whatever, I can get rid of it. I can sell it, I can move on, I can bring other people. The guy who runs Examine.com now, we brought him in two years after we started the company. I mean this guy's a double MBA and PH from Hopkins. He's doing his PhD in Nutrition. He's brilliant. We could have never gotten him when we started. But because it wasn't Sal Orwell Supplement Company or whatever, we didn't have to explain to people why did we bring someone else.

Not to mention, at the end of the day, the brand becomes so much more than you. Like I'm an opinionated guy, I put out stuff that some people don't necessarily like, and such is the way of life. But no one holds that against my company. No one holds that against my employees, and the moment you become that person ... Like Papa John's, right? Simple example, the CEO is let's say, a loud Trump supporter, for better or worse, it is what it is. Some people take that very personally. They think that it's his fault that they shouldn't order from them or whatnot. If you disassociate yourself from the brand, people won't hold your individual beliefs and thoughts so strongly against everyone else, and we've got team members that don't necessarily agree with me, that's fine. In the real world, that's fine. But especially today, when things are so heated up, I think that having that almost barrier between your business and yourself is really, really important.

John: I couldn't agree more. And I think it's both. It's not just one or the other reason. I mean, in the past you did it for the sale, the exit. Whether you're never planning on exiting along the way, you just did it so that you had that opportunity. But now what we're seeing is ... You're up in Canada, I'm here in the States. I travel enough, I was there in Toronto last week and there is enough political noise on both side, every country. We're much more divisive that it's very important to really think that through.

But just the first reason, building so even if you never plan on selling it, having that option as entrepreneur's ... Most of us become entrepreneurs really to have freedom. To build a great quality of life and that's if we're ... Don't stick ourselves. Now, one of the things I love that you've done ... Number two and this is follows right in great order, is empowering your guys because you're no longer the brand. You can go to Argentina and I always ... My definition of a good business is when you leave for 90 days and you come back, and it's better, you have a very good business.

Sol: That's right.

John: That's the guys.

Sol: Yeah, I mean, my other viewpoint is we wanna ... We always talk about we wanna attract the best. We wanna have the smartest, but the best and the smartest are like everyone else. We want recognition. We want to be respected by our peers, we want to be considered experts in our area. When I mentioned Kamal. He's brilliant dude. Everyone thinks that he's the man that owns Examine.com. Now, he's a man who's in charge of it, he's the man making the decisions and there's two things. One, he knows nutritional research better than I ever will. He went on the Vitamin D task force when they upped the recommendation. I am not that man. I know what I'm good at and it's not that.

The win-win that is because we get millions of visitors every month, Kamal knows that the exposure and audience and influence he gets with us, is much larger than he ever would on his own. It's one of those perfect win-wins that Kamal can now say, "Hey, I've been in New York Times, and BBC, and Guardian," and whatever and whatever. But he knows he was able to do it because of the strength of the Examine.com brand.

When we did our last hiring call early last year, we had 500 plus PhDs apply to work with us. That blew our mind. So he knows that he never would have access to all these superstar researchers. Whenever we ... Bio is a big these days. Probiotics. We know pretty much every single probiotic research, we have access to them. He knows it's partially because of Examine.com, and we know it's partially because his leadership and his thought brings it to it, to the front. It's like ... We all talk about win-win and often times it's given lip service. I think this embodies a win-win for everyone involved.

John: Well let me ... I know my fellow entrepreneurs would be really upset at me if I didn't ask the question of ... That's a lot of traffic. That's ... And what are some of the lessons you've learned on creating, developing that traffic and it's not one viral cat post.

Sol: Oh god no. Oh my lord.

John: Then I'm familiar with the west side of it all, but share with us. How are you doing that and consistently because it's not like there are a lot of other people and you've got some big drug company's trying to grab that attention and there's no shortage.

Sol: There's a few things. I think the biggest thing is people get stuck in the cycle of I have to generate more content, I have to generate more content. We have maybe, I think 400-500 supplements we've covered, and that's across six and a half years. We have over four million words written on the website. Instead of trying to make a new post or a new angle, we have a great page on weight protein, how can we make it better? How can we make it better? Eventual, what's amazing is the mainstream media comes to us. Q-Z, they just did an article

on Info Wars and Gwyneth Paltrow and supplements. They had I think four different links to us. New York Times, like I mentioned, Time, BBC ... We didn't even know that the BBC was putting us in their book until someone, one of their editors, emailed us after the fact. Being like, "Oh by the way, we added your information on to it."

A lot of people I think just get too caught up on building new stuff, whereas our version is how can we iterate and makes things better? The other thing is everyone talks about paid traffic and Facebook, and social media. We're not even on Youtube. We're not even on Instagram. Google is still the king and the best way to do really well in Google is to get the mainstream looking to you, talking about mentioning you. So we've done a really good job of building relationships with journalists and with editors. Anytime they come across something that they don't know, they come to us. Part of that comes to us, is we specialize in our niche. We don't say, "Hey, come to us about health, come to about fitness." We say, "Nutrition research, supplement research, we're your men." If not that, then we can tell you who to go to, but that's not our area.

John: I'm movin' it because we're right there. The press is your friend, and this is something that you've positioned really the firm as the thought leader in this space, and that is so valuable. That franchise is huge and people don't ... I actually have always done media partnerships, it's been one of the most important things, but you've taken it to another level. Maybe, what are you doing in today's political device of ... Most people when we say the media or the presses are our friend. They go, "No, it's not."

Sol: You know what? Okay, if we take a step back, first of all, the press, the media, has got their ass kicked over the last 15 years, right? The internet has come and literally just slapped it all across the face, and so the media has done what the internet has become. It's become a chase for traffic, a chase for viral articles. BuzzFeed, for example, just totally changed the game. Now every single media outlet ... Pretty much their main, mentioned their KPO that they're measuring is how much traffic are we getting. Because the more traffic they're getting, the more ads we're selling.

So if you reverse engineer that, you realize ... Okay, imagine you're a journalist and you have an editor. That editor is breathing down your neck saying how is BuzzFeed putting out 15 articles a day, and you're putting out one or two? You need to do better. When you put that into consideration, you go, "Okay. If I can go to a journalist or if I can go to an editor and say, 'Hey, I can write a story for you, or I can be your resource, or I can get all the information you need. You just need to type it up or put it in your words.'" Suddenly, you're not some bloodsucker just trying to promote yourself. Now you become a useful resource.

The other thing and it always stuns me, right. People talk about marketing. They always go like put yourself in your user's shoes and don't sell what you can do for them, but sell how

you solved their problems. That's great but often times it's lip service. You go to a journalist, and you go "Talk about my company, it's the best thing ever in the world, huzzah." They're like, "Why would I talk about it?" Right? There's no ... No one ever angles the up side for the journalist. What we have done, and we've done this over years, is we connect with journalists, we talk about what they wrote about, we talk about how we can make their life easier, we say we know all the researches you could ever want. Even just today, the health editor of a major newspaper emailed me and saying, "Hey, there's this [Kirkamen 00:18:03] study I saw, what do you guys think?" Within 24 hours, we had given her all the information that she's ever need, it's gonna be in the article next week, boom, she links right back to us.

It's one of those minds that if you treat the media as a customer and you give them the information they want and have it ready for them and are available for them, they will love you. I don't think it's a coincidence that you see the same kind of people all over the media. It's because they figured out the simple thing, help them, not use them. I think that's the basis for that. It's not that hard to be honest.

John: Sal, do you ... One of the things that I've struggled with I'll bring my personal, is that there's now so many media outlets to really decide who you're gonna work with because ... You know I love your advice and one I've done throughout my whole career. My partner writes a blog for Forbes twice a week, I do Huffington Post. We have in our niches, we have huge relationships but what's becoming harder and harder is to make the decision because, at least in our business, getting more and more contacts with, that aren't the right media outlets.

Sol: Yeah. I mean, at the end of the day, it's almost like a triage, if we look at it, everything trickles downwards. If you get to the larger and "more influential" organizations, pretty much what you say, trickles downwards. My point of view for example is, if I ... For as an entrepreneur, for example, or someone that speaks about it, I've been on Life Hacker about half a dozen times. The amount of traffic Life Hacker set has been phenomenal. Right, I've been on which is Remi's safety website a few times. I've sent a few people over there. Phenomenal amounts of traffic. But I couldn't have gotten to those organizations without having gone through ... And not to sound glib about it, but lower media to that level. Right?

John: Right.

Sol: The other reality about media is, let's be honest, Forbes, Entrepreneur Magazine, many of them, they don't really send that much traffic unless they specifically promote that one or two article review. In the media in that case, almost becomes more of a leveraging where you can say, "Hey, listen. I was in Forbes, you should write about this, or Hey, you can trust me, I've been in Forbes and Entrepreneur Magazine, blah blah blah. This is why you should publish whatever I write." But I have found that the media, the old school media is great for

establishing your credentials but new school, Gawker, Life Hacker, Thrillist, those guys tend to a lot more traffic than everyone else, to be honest.

John: Yeah, that's a great distinction because I think that's where so many entrepreneurs make mistake. They think that [inaudible 00:20:53] if I get quoted in the Wall Street Journal, the ... My life will change, and I've been on the front page of the Wall Street Journal for ... You can get it really easy with a criminal thing, but the ... Having a quote, for the most part, it's entertaining your family members, some good old friend will look you up, but there's not much there. But there's credibility of being mentioned as you said. Then this whole new media, I like that separation. I haven't heard it that way.

Well let's continue Sal. One of the things you and I talk about, and we live. We've been having some good times together we're just gonna be doing another car event in ... We both enjoy food and cars. I'm sure there's a few other, and entrepreneurship. A few other things that we enjoy, but number three for ... Well I'm gonna make it number four now, 'cause we went ... Did press, but there's more to life than business and boy, I got a lot on this, but I wanna hear what you have to say.

Sol: I think and I think you'd empathize with this, a lot of people forget why they got into entrepreneurship. It becomes that cycle, oh I want to hit 100,000, I want to hit a million, I want to hit two and a half, five, 10, 50, whatever. Eventually you just go why do I want 10 million, 20 million, 50 million, 100 million, whatever. If you legitimately want to have a yacht that can hold two helicopters, all the more power to you. That's great. I mean, that's honestly great.

For me, it was one of those things where I live in downtown Toronto, I live in a four bedroom house, I have a kick ass dog, I have a pretty cool woman. I'm pretty content. I don't need a car, I can walk wherever I want, I grab an Uber or a cab, or rent a car if I want to go for a week somewhere. So I'm very content and I put more of my effort and energy into stuff like community building or fun stories or random things. A lot of people, they get lost in the thrill of the money and I think it's important for us to just sometimes step back and go, is it worth it? And not to say it's not, but what am I chasing?

Rally racing is a great example, right? We make money and we spend it to have fun. One of the most ... Favorite things that I ever say to people is this is why we make money. Like I have a barbecue off we do every Super Bowl, and I spent a couple thousand to get this WWE style belt made. It should be there but I lost it. I came second this year. It's very embarrassing, and people go like, "What are you thinking? Like why would you spend that much? Or why would you do that?" I'm like, "That's why we make money." I know why I make money. Because I'm doing things like this, but I think often times people forget why they do that. I think it's more than take a step back and be like, you know what? There's a lot more to life than just your

business, your brand, your reputation even. There's a lot of fun to be had. A lot of things to explore, a lot of things to experience. I think sometimes we forget that.

John: I think it's so important, Sal. What happens and I've grown up in the financial industry and I had the privilege of working with a whole bunch of billionaires along the way. I will argue that money does buy a decent amount of happiness [inaudible 00:24:10] but you don't need a billion to get it. I mean I don't have any clients that have two helicopters, I do have clients that have yachts with helicopters, and multiple jets, and that stuff. And the relative degree of happiness along the way is not high and most of them, and they were intensely focused, they were right place, right time, and even they, with a few drinks would share ... I was lucky type thing. Just right place, right time. But you know what? You don't need that much money to have a great life.

I mean, nothing wrong with my financial guy, I like it and everything else, but making time along the way. I mean, one of the things I see with so many young entrepreneurs particularly, is ... I'm in Silicon Valley and there's people putting hours after hours, miserable life and family being destroyed, the whole thing. And if they just took a little time then maybe they would have that ... They'd be 10% less wealthy, but they'd have one heck of a great life.

Sol: Yeah. I mean, it's a rat race. We're not ... A lot of entrepreneurs at this level are not at a poverty level, they're not struggling to make ends meet. I mean I met entrepreneurs who are like, I've got a spending problem, and I'm like I don't want to sound like a jerk, but that's the most flippant way of treating your own expenditures. You don't have a spending problem, you're just being a problem. You can choose not to put your kids through private equestrian lessons and this and this. It's okay, so again we spend our time to make money but sometimes it's important to remember to use that time for other things. But if it makes you happy, go for it. Like if you're [Wiener 00:25:54] Chuck and you love the hustle and grind nonstop, that's fine. I'm not saying don't do that, I just don't think most people are built that way and I think they forget that sometimes.

John: Well I think, yeah, Gary V.'s a great example, you have a great guy doin' a lot for the world and all that, but he, his hustle is more than most people can do or should do type thing.

Sol: Absolutely. That's how he's wired, and that's fine. There's nothing wrong with it. I would never try to tell him to slow down. I just think most people would benefit from a little bit more R and R, for sure.

John: Well and in taking behaviorist studies is you should schedule. I'm wired, I love business, I tried getting away from it at 45, and didn't work. Actually my wife wanted me to go back, 37 years, she said, "You know, if you want to stay together, you gotta go get ... You gotta go start another business because I'm tired of doing fun things with you anymore type."

But the- Yeah, well it's funny, Sal. She, I ... Literally Jeanie, we went and every year we have our goals and the goal was I never want to get an elite level on any airline again. That was her big goal.

Sol: Wow that's quite the goal.

John: Yeah. And you know everybody's got different goals. You gotta respect life and so on. And I love doing business. You and I wouldn't of ever met if we weren't doing this, and this is good to hang out with really talented, cool, fun loving people. Why would you miss that by working until 2:00 in the morning every night or even 11:00.

Sol: Absolutely.

John: But one of the things that you really impressed me, you took it a little level 'cause I'm ... I got the part, I have plenty of fun, I got a great life, all that stuff, but you did something that I haven't done and I'm gonna say probably many of our fellow entrepreneurs haven't done and it's building your local community. So many of us are thinking national, global, with the internet, we can be everywhere. Sal, you've done some really fun projects and some of my ... Our fellow, your close friends, my good business acquaintances from Mastermind Groups think the world of you because of these events hanging out and trying out ... I almost wanna ... I was there on a chamber of commerce day last week, I'm thinkin' jeez, with all this fun stuff goin' on, maybe I should live here, but I did grow up close to that area. So I know the weather can be bad in winter.

Sol: A little bit for sure.

John: Tell us a little bit about your logic of this building your local community 'cause that's a little counter intuitive for most people who are really knowledge about using leveraging businesses as we were talking about.

Sol: For sure. I gotta be honest, in itself it was out of very selfish things. As an immigrant, I was basically here by myself. My parents, my dad's job took 'em everywhere, so they moved to Berlin afterwards, and Amsterdam and so forth. So I was here by myself, and I essentially ... A bunch of us friends who were all here by ourselves, we basically became what we call ourselves, the Fam. We were like a little family. That's what really impressed upon me, about how important it is to have these close relationships where it's not necessarily about you can do this for me, or you're this spectacular person business or whatnot.

It just so happened to be that other entrepreneurs who are at a level of success, want to be able to bitch or want to be able to have a person they can say like, "Man, my project manager really drove me insane." And if you tell that to most people, they'd be like, "Why? You're an

asshole." They don't understand sometimes the realities of being a boss. Sometimes you have to do these things and people will go, "Why you being like this?" You go, "Well because there's 20 other people that rely on me." So that's what started it, and I've always really loved food. I loved going to nice places, not even nice places, just grimy places as long as the food is delicious. Especially coming from an engineering background, being involved in nutrition, people sometimes treat food as fuel, as if we're robots, which is some of the most insane things I've ever heard.

If you look at us culturally, historically every single culture has bonded over food. That's what brings us together. So it was almost a no brainer for me to be like, "Hey listen, you're cool, you're cool, you're cool. You haven't met all these other people. Let's get together and break bread." And that originally what it was. The first dinner I did, I thought it would be two hours maybe and ended up being almost five hours where we're like, all right. The kitchen staff was like, "All right, you guys need to leave. I know you know the chef but maybe it's time you leave." I was like, "All right." But the brilliance of all that is, the refrain is common is your net worth is your network and it builds these long lasting relationships that opens up doors to the international world.

I was telling you, when people come to Toronto, people in the entrepreneur scene. If they want to have a good food, people say, "Hey, talk to Sal. He knows good restaurants. Talk to Sal, he knows a lot of chefs." People, you heard of the cookies, people may have heard of cookies. It's like, "Talk to Sal. He knows where the best cookies are, where the best butter tarts whatever are." Then what's awesome then becomes its like "Hey, do you want to have a dinner, talk to Sal. He can bring people, awesome, interesting people that you would've never been exposed to, to the dinner." That's what it's become. Where almost once a month now, someone flies in to Toronto, they're very good at what they do in their respective industry. They want to meet other entrepreneurs.

The other thing is the exchange of ideas from entrepreneurs that aren't in your bubble. We all get stuck in our little bubble, be it internet marketing, or SEO, or wealth management, or whatnot. We're always living in our little bubble, so the idea's that expose the conversation with you vice versa with me. It might be even the same ideas, but it might be a little bit of a different viewpoint on it. Like I said, new media, old media, heard about it.

I find it's one of those things where it brings so much value. It's hard to quantify it. It's almost like on a balance sheet, what is it called? I'm blanking right now. Good intentions? No.

John: It's good will.

Sol: Good will, that's right. Yeah. Good will, right? It's almost like building good will but it's a massive, massive number. What's amazing now, is everywhere I travel, there's somebody I've met, online or through my local community. Everywhere I go, people give me

recommendations. "Oh go here." I was in [inaudible 00:32:22] last summer, and I got to hang out with someone who lives here. That would've never happened without the internet and making this work. I'm a huge fan of bring people together because the down line effects are so massive, and so many years down the road. Rally racing would've never happened if I hadn't met Jason who I wouldn't have met if I hadn't met you, J, wouldn't have met if I did meet Dango six, five years ago. Right? Down-

John: We're all so interconnected.

Sol: Right. It all comes together, and the only reason I met you J, was because he was in a bad accident on his motorcycle in Bali, and we came back to Toronto, he stayed with Dango, who happen to be my mutual friend, right? It's this where people are so worried about what's the return on investment, or can I sell my services to these people? Well they realize reputation can do so, so, so much more and it's not that hard to build because everyone online is running-

John: I wanna ... Sal, would you go ... 'Cause I think you have done it better than most. We got a good friend Jason Gonard who's also very good at it too. And the ... But I wanna ... Just go a little bit on the sausage one because ... As a matter of fact, I was reading here, and I'm gonna share your blog, so our fellow entrepreneurs can get your stories along the way and your journey. One of the things, we're all travel in this together, let's have some fun doing it.

Sol: 100%

John: But you share a little more detail in the pictures and I just had a really good time lookin' at that. I think maybe I should do that here at my local community.

Sol: Oh absolutely, there's maybe about a dozen people now doing their own versions, but the quick, quick version is, if you even step back a little bit and you talk about philanthropy on entrepreneurs, almost all of them go like, "I'll sell my business for \$50 million and I'll write a check for a million dollars." There's a lot of entrepreneurs that are doing well enough that can give a \$1,000 bucks or even \$5,000 bucks a month and they wouldn't feel it. My challenge became, how do I bring humans together, have fun, and maybe bring a charitable component to it. Through a series of bizarre events, I started doing these food-offs. My friends and I were very competitive with our food but in a good way. We did a cookie-off, then we did pie-off and I'm always like how can I make things more intense? So when we're doing this pie-off, I'm like why don't we invite some professional bakers. When we did a mac-n-cheese-off, why don't we invite some professional mac-and-cheese makers.

Early this year, when round two of the cookie-off was gonna happen, I was like, why don't we make this crazy? We had almost 200 people show up, we had 27 professionals show up. They made cookies, we raised \$2500 bucks, it was great. Afterwards, everyone had so much fun, they're like you have to do this again, and I realized it's fun and entrepreneurs want to bond with other people. Jason does a great job. Basically, if you meet someone from Jason, you know that that person knows their stuff. They're not crazy, they're not an entrepreneur. I built a mini version of this reputation and I said, "Why don't I do another food-off and just bring in entrepreneurs." Then I thought, why don't I make it something ... I always want a challenge, right? Cookies are very easy because they're not hot, and I was like, "How can I do something that's hot?" So that's why I settled on sausages because no one was excited for it and I thought it would be a hilarious adventure.

But yeah, we ended up with 29 different sausages, types of sausages. The winner was a Reuben sandwich sausage. Number two was a foie gra with ice wine sausage. Number three was a chang mai sausage from a Thai restaurant. We had 29 different sausages. We had over a 1,000 total sausages, we raised \$10,000 for charity. I spent a couple thousand dollars of my own money so I could say 100% of your tickets goes to charity. My viewpoint on that was if I spent 2K but I'm able to generate a 5X-ROI for the charity, why not? That makes sense. What's awesome though, is because I don't do any services or consulting or anything like that, people were more than happy to join. They knew there wouldn't be any pitch. They knew there wouldn't be any like, "Oh one last thing, you should buy this or upsell."

My favorite part was 21 people flew in to Toronto just for ... There were actually a couple people that literally arrived on Sunday night and left ... Or Sunday afternoon. The event was Sunday night, and they left on Monday morning just so that they could experience this. I mean, people ... There was a Philly Cheese Steaks, there were some crazy, crazy sausages. What's awesome was at the end, we were able to donate all the extra sausages to a shelter so nothing got wasted. But what was amazing throughout all this was the bonds were built were fantastic. I was a ... In the conversation starter was so easy because the food was like ... If you were there, I would've been like "Hey have you tried the Philly Cheese Steak?" You'll be like, "No, I've been busy eating all the Chang Mai." I'm like, "Hey what about the non ice wine, foie gra sausage?" You're like, "No, I'm having the Pastrami Barbecue." And I'm like, "Oh cool."

John: Nobody said I had that last night too.

Sol: Exactly. Of course there was effort to get the chefs there. I've built up my network in the restaurant industry too because again they know that I just do these dinners. But overall it was a huge success. I've told maybe a dozen people that I'm gonna do the cookie-off next year and pretty much all dozen have already agreed to fly in for it. So I need to figure out how to scale it without losing the but that's the brilliance of it. Everyone can do this. Food brings

humans together. It's such an easy ice breaker. Normal icebreakers are "how's the weather? Or how's your day?" But when you have food, you're like, "Aw this thing is so spicy." Or you're like, "Oh I love the cilantro in it." And especially more with networking people are always a little bit shy. Sometimes, right? They don't know how to get the conversation, that's the hardest part. The spark plugged conversation. I found that this was the greatest, greatest way to start conversations.

Afterwards, all I've heard is just rave reviews about ... Honestly people didn't even care about the food that much, as much. The food was almost the background music to the actual relationships ... Sorry, being able to ... That they were able to build because they knew I curated the humans and that was it.

John: You gotta take those ideas and run with it. Let me go, I'm gonna go to resources real quick and pull up, first your SGO.com. Let's get the bullshit and why don't you just ... If they sign up, put the email, what are they getting here?

Sol: All they're getting is me saying, "What's going on?" Then I'm gonna send you some articles I've written. For example, some somewhat esoteric on how important readability is. That's one of the biggest things I rave about is that people make their websites really hard to read. This is the stuff I've learned over experience, right? I thought about thank you page often, I think about ... I talk about mindset productivity. I'm never ... There's no affiliate pitch, there's no JV, it's just me rambling on about topics I think are relevant to today's entrepreneur and the other thing is I love conversations. So if you sign up, please say what's going on. I wanna hear, I wanna know who you are because that's what I really relish.

John: Sal, also the Examine.com, just I think you've shared with us what it is and just having the ability with so many questions today on supplement, what works, what doesn't work. It's a great resource, so maybe if fill in a little bit there, if you will.

Sol: Yeah for sure. Examine.com, basically if you have any question about any nutrition topic or supplement topic, we've done the research. Our research is so good that we've even been plagiarized. Like our alcohol pages have been plagiarized, and our testosterone. When I say plagiarized, I mean like in peer reviewed papers. Not random websites. It's actually been republished the research that we did. Basically, we have an entire team, we have everyone from registered dietitians' spectrum, to medical doctors' spectrum, to researcher, to PhDs, to pharmacists because they know a lot that people don't fully appreciate. We just investigate the research. We don't sell any supplements, we don't sell any ads, products.

All we do is an education company and professionally our biggest customer base, so you can go to it knowing that we'll give you the full picture. Easiest example is there was a huge amount of hullabaloo recently over coconut oil. The American Heart ... Health Association ...

Sorry, Heart Association said that it's really bad for you. Other people were like, "No, no. They're wrong. They didn't do an actual study." So we actually did an article on saying, "21 reasons why coconut oil is the greatest thing ever/ will kill you." It's one of those new ones. [inaudible 00:41:06] where everyone's so busy being black and white, that if you want gray, we will give you the gray. No one does it more in depth than us. I will literally challenge anybody to find any page more in depth than the ones we publish. We've been ... We're at four million words, we've been doing it for over six years and this is all we need.

John: Yeah Sal. This is great. Let me give the, our fellow entrepreneurs my key takeaways and there are so many. It's just ... If I may just go through our big five that Sal gave us. Number one, build a brand, not a name. We're in it for our freedom, entrepreneurs. We never know. I know I had a business that I plan on having for the rest of my life and had two partners. I had the largest share but not control. All of a sudden, somebody showed up with a very large check, and my partner is I went for the ride, and it was a great liquidity event and so on. But that's where you've gotta make sure that you're building a brand. That brand is that experience, it's not just a logo too.

The empowering your guys ... Boy, that's something we all know, but we don't do, and we've got to give them the opportunity to shine and really bring in people as we're growing our business that are better than us. That allows us the freedom.

The press is your friend, I think you got some great insights that Sal shared with you. This is something I've built a number of businesses off media. Today, I have multiple media partnerships. This has been phenomenal. They have distribution and I did like Sal, the distinction between old and new media. It's a good reminder of where you can get credibility and where you can get traffic, that distinction.

More life to business. I say all the time to myself is that it's not about getting more business. Another million, two million, 10 million of revenue is not gonna change my life. What is, is building the right business to support the quality of life for all the people I care about. That includes clients, teammates, the principles, and so on.

Then we gotta have fun and one of the best ways. I've one of my ... A very good friend of mine, Sal, went and he was a very successful high tech guy. Went public, he's on four boards still, he's in his 70's and he had no friends locally. So he went even one step further than you and he just bought a restaurant. He bought the best restaurant in town-

Sol: That's right.

John: Yeah, now he knows everybody. He's actually opening up another one. He's got the most successful one, the whole thing. So he's having a great time. Nothing ... Above all, remember Sal's advice on breaking bread together. Can make a huge difference.

Sol: 100%. I do wanna throw in a warning.

John: Go ahead.

Sol: Unless you have a lot of money, do not buy a restaurant.

John: Yeah it's exhausting and the amount, he's profitable. He's the most successful restaurant marginally profitable. So you'll go from there. So AES Nation above me, go to. We got the transcript, the show notes. All the links that Sal and I talked about. I gotta tell ya Sal, it's been great. Everyone out there, let's go out and make a difference. Take these lessons, your clients, your future clients and your communities are counting on you. Don't let 'em down.

Sol: Thank you for having me, John.

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