

# Robert Prioleau

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

brand, people, fly fishing, story, fishing, outdoors, life, thinking, storytelling, charleston, business, community, podcast, email, outpost, fly, world, writer, called, outdoor

## SPEAKERS

Robert, Dave S



Robert 00:00

Ask those those three simple but really hard questions to answer. What do we do? You know? How do we go about that work? Do we do it? You know, with a sense of humor? Are we the most cutting edge? Are we the most adventurous? Are we the most friendly to new anglers you know, but most importantly ask yourself why and write answers to those that are motivating and genuine.



Dave S 00:22

That was Robert below describing the three most important questions to ask for your branding. Welcome to today's session of the marketing podcast. This is outdoors online.co, the marketing podcast that helps you elevate your business through online marketing master sessions. Join Dave each week as he helps you grow your online influence via interviews with leading entrepreneurs from around the world. There you go. Robert pretty low. One of the big guys behind outpost and blue ion is here to share some serious tips for your outdoor brand. Find out who are some of the best brands and fly fishing what Seth Godin has to say about it and how to tell an amazing story. that resonates with your customers. Are you ready to grab your weekly dose of greatness? Turn up your buds. enjoy today's episode with Robert pre Lowe from Blue ion.com. Robert,



Robert 01:14

hey, it's going great, Dave, thanks for having me here this morning and it's it's awesome to be talking.



Dave S 01:18

Yeah, yeah, we we connected. Matt Matt Smyth from after connected us, he connected me to a few people that he thought were, you know, big players in the online marketing and kind of the digital stuff that's, you know, a struggle I think for a lot of especially flyfishing brands out there. So, we're gonna dig into you know, some tips and tricks to help people you know, kind of maybe, I don't know, maybe we can just say if at a basic level they understand things better you know, that might be a win but before we get there, can you just talk about how you first got in online marketing and then how that you brought that into blue ion and and outpost?



Robert 01:52

Yeah, for sure. So, I've been in most of my, excuse me, I've been most of my career has been in the advertising industry. So I've been Started in advertising down in Austin, Texas, then moved to Atlanta and then to Charleston. And today I split my time with our two offices between Charleston in the Upstate of South Carolina and a town called Greenville, and up in North Carolina, so my whole background has been in advertising and marketing strategy and execution. And so 20 years ago, we started blue eye on I was a strategist, I had a business partner who is the interactive designer, and a third business partner, who's a programmer and technology person. So that was the three headed monster we created 20 years ago, basically as a bunch of web geeks who wanted to get out of the sort of regular side of advertising and invest all our energies in the digital side. And, and then that, you know, over the course of 20 years, the whole industry sort of continued to grow and mushroom. So we went from being web geeks to digital marketing geeks to you know, basically full service today, but with a very digital core, at the heart of everything and then we're all kind of crazy about the outdoors. I'm definitely obsessed about the outdoors. And just every free moment I have, that's where you'll usually find me. And about three, three and a half years ago, we were like, Well, why can't we create a version of blue line that's just solely focused on, you know, outdoor brands, and maybe even more importantly, reconnecting people to the outdoors. So that's what launched this thing called outpost. It is a subsidiary of division, a team within blue ion. But we work with brands that connect people to the outdoors. And those could be conservation brands. They can certainly be fishing brands, they can be other outdoor brands. But it's been a really wonderful rewarding thing to be able to take you know, or years of work and the

experiences and the skills we've we've acquired, and point them in that direction. selfishly, it's awesome, because it's given us even more opportunity to be outside. That's cool. Yeah. So that's what the background is. And that's kind of what we're doing today. And my most of my focus is on the output side of the work that we're doing and working with those brands and launching our own kind of programs that connect people to the outdoors



Dave S 03:58

is cool. Yeah, this is There's gonna be fun for me because, you know, I think I've been talking to a lot of people that are specific into online marketing and we've been trying to you know, talk about some of the fly fishing but you know, you're you're right in the middle of it so and and the online marketing, right, and this is why it's such a perfect fit here.



Robert 04:17

That's why I love what you're doing is like bringing those two worlds together is like a is that's like the goal in life, it seems like is to bring all your interest into one place. So it doesn't it doesn't feel like work.



Dave S 04:27

That's exactly yeah, people kind of talk about jokingly Oh, what was the thing I heard recently from somebody talking about, you know, would you try to I guess monetize your passion or your hobby, right? Fly fishing, you know, sometimes that could be a struggle, right? You had a baby, not fishing as much as you used to right. But



Robert 04:45

ice cream guy opens an ice cream shop can't eat ice cream anymore.



Dave S 04:48

Exactly. So so we're not gonna go you know, I'm not going that route. But I did want to talk about you know, I think it's interesting because and I think it would be helpful to talk about what I have Going just because it is so niche focused and the first thing you know the brand here and then obviously branding, right I know that's a big part of this thing what we're going to talk about here branding and storytelling because that's a huge part of any company telling the story but you know, I struggle with that a little bit at the start when I got this thing going I have the wet fly swing podcast, which has been hugely

successful you know, more than I thought it would be. But it's been a ton of fun and I started this new thing because of that right? I was like, wow, okay, let's see if I could serve another more niche down group and but it was like outdoors, fly fishing, you know, outdoors, fly fishing, I love I love everything. I love all the outdoor activities. But I you know, it's called outdoors online. You know, marketing rights is kind of this long name. And the thing for me was this Yin and Yang, right. That's kind of what I was thinking this black and white outdoors online. But it's really niche down into fly fishing, because that's really my passion. So I'd love to hear what your take is on the fly fishing versus outdoor industry because they're They're both I mean, fly fishing is really small Outdoors is pretty small. What what's your take on that industry and in niching, down, and then, you know, just that whole thing?

R

Robert 06:09

Yeah, it's like, there's a like a series of nesting dolls, like those little Russian wooden dolls, you know, it's like fly fishing down on that small piece, and then fishing, which is larger, and then outdoors, which is even larger. And then online, which is obviously universal piano. So I sort of fell in love. I love drawing circles on paper and sort of understanding how these things fit in pieces. I needed the connections or for all the reasons we talked about up front really fascinating to me and make perfect sense. It's like, you know, you're combining passions and skills into what you're both focusing on. And then that community out there who is trying to focus and achieve the same kinds of things in their lives, professional and personal, you know, so it all makes perfect sense to me. And I think the more interesting areas in life and work are when these seemingly separate things, the yin and the yang come together and become integrated. That's where all those sort of intersections or collisions are where the actually the fascinating stuff is personally in my mind. So when we tend to think about, you know, branding, whether it's for, you know, wet fly, swing out, you know, outdoors online, or just really any of the brands that we're working with, we think of it as much more than it's not, it's not about a logo, it's not even about a name. It's about some sort of like larger mission and drive that's behind that, you know, your effort. And, you know, that's got to be there at the end of the day. Otherwise, you're just like, selling content or selling products or selling services. And that's like an just a really difficult game, you know, and I don't even find it, to be honest, like that rewarding at the end of the day, what I find rewarding and what we found most rewarding about the work that we've been doing for 20 years is when it gets charged with some sort of mission and purpose and energy to like, let's make a positive dent in people's lives. And if you're if you can come have like dial a brand into that gear, it first and foremost, it's just a beautiful thing to be part of, you know, and that alone is a reason to do it. I, you know, the impact then that can have if it's authentic and genuine is awesome. You know, in a community, a community of listeners, a community of buyers are even, like literally a real

life community. And I think it's smart.



Dave S 08:23

Yeah, let's keep on that line too, just because I'm thinking about it again. And so you can hear my thoughts and I and I hope that people listening can maybe track along with this and their brands, but so the wet fly swing, you know, obviously, that was my passion fly fishing, and I've interviewed all these amazing expert, you know, from around around the world. But it's really for me about, you know, teaching people, right. It's tips and a lot of tips and tricks and stories, tons of great stories, but you know, people are learning about fly fish. And I feel that the more people that learn about fly fishing, they get better at fly fishing that stick with fly fishing are going to be conservation minded, right? Because they're going to protect their thing. So I don't talk about conservation law. My show because I know that conservation obviously it's the most important thing, but it's, you know, for a number of reasons, but one of them is people. They track out of it, right? I mean, it's a it's like a, you know, a negative thing a lot of times, right, like things are things are not going great in some areas, right? We've got, yes.



Robert 09:18

Yeah, you could bump some things that can bump people out. And you can it's certainly a topic that can create some



Dave S 09:22

strong feelings and strong feelings. Yeah. So that's, that's the wet fly swing. So that's kind of the back that I that's kind of why I do that I want to get more people in a fishing I want to teach them but the outdoors online is focused on these fly fishing brands and outdoor brands. And the thinking there is that I guess it's kind of on the similar track that if I can help these companies be more successful and stay in the game, they're going to help more people get into fishing and learn. So you know what I mean? So that's kind of the gist the thinking and I'm not sure if that's such a broad thing, or what would I be thinking what would somebody be thinking about on that three, if that's their take?



Robert 09:56

Well, I think that a that's an invaluable service for those like, let's say Those that are specifically in the fly fishing, you know, retail trade, then that you know that the skill set and the topics and the guests that you're, you know, bringing into this conversation for

them is invaluable in terms of them thinking through this work. You know, they're stressed, they're got a million jobs to do they never have as much budget as they should, and wish they could, you know. So you're, you're literally helping them kind of sift through all these options, and then try to prioritize and execute better. So for that alone, that's great. I would guess I would just say with the larger context of branding, and maybe the first priority before kind of like lining up and prioritizing and executing all your digital marketing campaigns, is to truly understand why does that, you know, why does that fly shop exist? You know, what is it trying? What dent is it trying to make in the lives of its customers and its community? And that's that's the that's the funny because that's the same question you're having, you know, without doors online about what kind of data you trying to make in your audience. Yeah, you their lives and their businesses. And so it's like backing up, you know, probably four or five or six steps. And getting to that initial, why question is like, why are we doing this? And why does the world need another podcast? Why does the world need another fly shop? You know, if you can answer that everything afterwards becomes both easier and more effective. And without it, you're just like, I think you're scrambling and you're having to spend more money than you should, you know. And so it's like, that's super, super important to us. But about two years ago, I was down in Austin with NAFTA. And they had this wonderful dealer summit. And we started out a seminar on sort of branding and brand strategy for specifically fly shops. And to get into this notion that there's a larger impact that you that you have on people's lives and to think about that sort of meta story behind their shop and their team and their community. We asked them to take like 10 minutes and write a story of someone that you know, whose life has been changed by fly fishing. And then we had like three or four of them stand up and share those stories, and they were unbelievable stories. I mean, like, goosebumps, you know, tear jerking stories, you know, and we're like, well, maybe that's the source material for where your brand needs to sort of base itself. And then you can obviously move off, you know, into different types of products, different types of experiences, different types of content, different types of digital marketing, you know, but it all needs to route back to that, that trunk, you know, it's like, this is why I do this. And man, if you can line that stuff up. Again, I just think it's both rewarding and more successful. And so there's two reasons to do it.



Dave S 12:39

That's awesome. Yeah, I was when I do these shows, you know, like now, I try to think of somebody I've talked to recently. I try to, you know, when I can talk to somebody each week, and you know, it's usually a fly fishing brand, it's a shop it's a guide, something like that and, and just listen to them and hear what their struggles are and then and then address those thinking of, you know what I mean, sir Doing something for that person, you know? And yes, so that's one of those things I've always thinking about. And, you know,

and I mean, there's all sorts of questions that come up on that, you know, where do you think would be a good place to take this conversation? I mean, I think we have a lot of things we can dig into, would it be good to focus on, you know, maybe a shop as an example, I have some other ideas. There's lots of brands and things that I worked at, what do you think is the best way that if we had, say, 30 minutes?



Robert 13:26

Sure, yeah, I want to like let's maybe stay on this sort of topic of storytelling, because I think it's a useful sort of lens to then evaluate the 8000 things that you could be doing.



Dave S 13:38

Yeah, it's interesting with the story because I've thought a lot about it because I've been doing kind of some of this online marketing stuff for a while. There's all these there's some big companies like there's like the story brand company. There's the I kind of know the community called fizzle, and you know, Chase who's not 30 bar he talked about this thing between like the Luke Skywalker and Obi Wan Kenobi About being the, you know, like, you know, you're not you're not Luke Skywalker, right as as a company, you're like Obi Wan you're taking, you're helping them Scout, you know what I mean? Like, that's all story based. Yeah. And that Star Wars, right and Star Wars that the ultimate story that a lot of movies are based on. So, you know, like you hear a lot about that in this in this internet marketing space what what's your take on that is that can somebody break it out and just go watch Star Wars it'd be good with it and all the rest of that,



Robert 14:26

you know, I'm not an expert, but I guarantee that Star Wars is also was based on other meta stories, you know, that came that came before it. So they're, they're probably at the core of things, very few stories. And in fact, I heard something in a podcast recently that was super cool about someone saying like Robert Redford or someone that said like there's really only one story in life and it's struggle, you know, and, and in a beautiful way, the arc of a struggle story about you know, a situation and then things getting dark and then this this sort of hero or heroes are able to overcome that and now they've achieved a new state. You know, of Something and that's like, that's the story of everything. And that's, that's what motivates and captivates and moves people. And there is so much research that sort of has been written and shared, whether you're looking at TED talks or reading books on it about the power of storytelling, you know, and that is the thing that moves people and changes people and provokes them to actually do things. So, you

know, the way we we fundamentally believe that and, you know, I look to them to brands, maybe they're overused examples that I just sort of geek out on all the time, or Patagonia and yet yeah, you know, big brands, lots of money. So it's, it's, you get sometimes obviously, you got to take that down into a much smaller scale, but still, they are just geniuses and really, really good at executing storytelling at a super high level, about their brands, down to an executional level. And I just think that everything they do is always is always developed, always presented, always offered within the context of a story whether that's a new product There's always a lifestyle story and a human story to that new product. It's not just a tech and feature story now. Patagonia's mean brilliant, I mean, look at their mission statement, which they have continued to sharpen down to something that now just as we're in business to protect our home planet, right, that's an evil mission statement. And that's an unbelievable sense of mission. Right? That then dictates everything they do after that, you know, and I just think that, you know, you can't go wrong, looking at those two brands, if you're in this sort of outdoor business. Yeah. as being ones that are, I think, remarkably driven by passion and positive impact. And then to really damn smart about how they go about that work. You know, the more they amp up their storytelling, the more they amp up even their calls related work, the better they do in their marketing, you know, and their performance. And I think there's just fascinating lessons all day long on that.



Dave S 16:55

How would you paint that? You know, Patagonia with Yvonne shannara he's, you know, He's obviously this kind of bigger than life. You know, he's interesting guy because he seems like he's just at every point just done what he thinks is right, you know what I mean? Like, forget about all the because all the you know, I think they came out with the first organic, right shirts or whatever at a at a scale and everybody does it right? I mean wetsuits, yeah, all this stuff, right? But he's this very conservation minded person. I mean, what if you're another brand? You don't have a guy like that, you know, leading the way? I mean, how do you do it? Is it I mean, or do you have to be that passionate about your thing? And just be like, so focused, that you know, what, I know, this is the way we need to go, regardless of what everybody else is saying.



Robert 17:39

Yeah, having a super charismatic, you know, like, I'll follow that person anywhere kind of leader certainly helps, you know, you think of I mean, you know, even Steve Jobs who was, you know, I think a prickly character probably to work with and around, but my god, you know, like, what inspiration and drive that that you know, he was able to create for a whole brand and really a whole community. So, yeah, I get that and that's, that's



Dave S 17:59

so How long would you expect somebody getting into the say they have a new brand? Or a brand that's been out there for a while? Maybe it's struggling a little bit. How long should they expect this thing, you know, to take to get to some point, you know what I mean? Where obviously the Steve Jobs took him 20 years right or whatever it was before they got the iPhone or something like that. What what's your take on that?



Robert 18:20

Yeah, well, I draw the line from so it whether it's a single charismatic leader, like some of these brands we've talked about, or it's really a team, I'd say like Yeti I, I personally don't know the charismatic leader, you know, who is behind all that I think of is more of a team community. And the fascinating thing is the good ones actually, the brands become more about their community of customers than it is about the brand itself. So let's say that first that first exercise for like, let's say a fly shop, is to me to understand and hopefully have some internal drive to say we want to have a positive impact in people's lives. And I mean, God, what's better than fly fishing, right? The ability to get people outdoors to connect with nature, connect with each other have moments away from all the chaos Analyze, this is nothing but good material to work with there. So that's the first story, the meta story that we that we talked about. And then I sort of tip over and you say, Okay, well how do we bring storytelling into our overall digital marketing effort. And that way, we're delivering stories that move people to either join or to buy or to sign up, or to share or whatever, we're not creating ads that hopefully trick people in to doing something, you know, like our content becomes useful, entertaining, and even moving to people instead of an annoyance. And I think I feel really strongly about that in this industry. Because fly fishing to me is a beautiful part of my life. And I think obviously, many other people's lives. And the worst thing we could do is be jerks and the way that we market to people, you know, and interrupt them or trick them, or, you know, whatever. And so, if I start with that meta story, and that is genuine, and that's the positive impact we're trying to do, then how do I bring those stories down to a level where I'm publishing content, sharing things in my own materials, my own website, my own blog, my own podcast, you know, my own events, my fly tying classes, you know, my shop, you know, that is all the media that you own. And if you think of yourself like a media brand then that's nothing but storytelling and all all capacities and you just need to determine which ones are best for my audience, which ones do I have some familiarity with and comfort level in and how do I want to prioritize those across my own channels? The second bucket we go to is well what about earn channels? Now? How can we get others to share the stories that were shared that

we're telling and that might be through your Ambassador team or your you know, some influencers in your community, you know, or maybe local press and media who want to cover a cool program that you're doing? You know,



Dave S 20:45

how does yet how does God do it? What are their that on that first bucket of just the stories what they're



Robert 20:50

a boy, that thing that just is mind boggling how good they are as their films, you know? Yeah, that's right. They're their base content. I mean, we have a Yeti store in Charleston now, and it's Like, the one in Austin and the one in Charleston are just like, what a cool place to walk into



Dave S 21:05

row and they're still in their films. Are they kind of more? They have a little bit everything right. But what is the message that they're Do they have a general? Yeah,



Robert 21:14

they're all about I would say that the spirit of that brand is all about built for the wild, you know, which is a statement about I think their products obviously, like these are really well engineered products, but it's also probably even more a statement about their community. You know, like, like, as individuals we are built for the



Dave S 21:30

wild esters, like I've had all of our all of our white on the wet fly swing podcast,



Robert 21:34

Rod. Oliver. Yeah. And just Carter Andrews, you know, bigger than life angler, you know, and so the storytelling that they do in service of those individuals in that community and in those adventures, all around that idea of built for the wild is just like spectacular. And Patagonia is I don't know if you saw recently they did a beautiful film with a fly fishing and

an older angler in



Dave S 21:59

there. heard about it?



Robert 22:01

Oh my God, I've watched that like 15 times kidding,



Dave S 22:03

is it this precious?



Robert 22:05

Oh, it's stunningly beautiful.



Dave S 22:07

Just put a link in the show notes to that.



Robert 22:09

It's master who has gotten so good with just basically a rod and align with no real, you know? Yeah. And it just like it's all in his head. It's all what he knows, you know, in terms of tying applying everything. So like that those of you that meta story, your own materials. So how are you sort of thinking like an editorial brand and publishing across your own channel? So do we need to actually pay to see those stories get more visibility in social media or through Google, you know, or YouTube or whatever the case may be?



Dave S 22:39

That's cool. And what are the chat? What do you think are the main channels obviously, there's the Instagram, Facebook, you know, Twitter, what are the does it vary in the fly fishing space on what what your channel is? Or what would you recommend for somebody that really, if they could pick one to dig into?



Robert 22:55

I would definitely I just think that they the whole business of fishing and much less than Fly Fishing is based on stories, you know, which I think is always sort of fascinating. I mean, like, that's fishing stories are one of the epic stories of life, right? So I think that you have to focus on your own media, you know, and do your own sharing and publishing through your social media through, you know, your website, your blog, and start a podcast. You know, I mean, it's not difficult to do. And I think that a podcast for fly shop, if you find the right person who's, you know, interested in taking on that project is like just nothing but opportunity for local stories about what's happening in that fly fishing scene. That's, that's gold, right? On the flip side of that is they have to ultimately sell product, sell, sell trips, sell guiding services, or whatever to stay in business, and that's increasingly difficult. So they need to get pretty smart, pretty strategic, and pretty effective and paid media, I think. And that's, that's, you know, some some of them can do that internally. Sometimes. I think, to be honest, they're going to have to reach out locally, maybe in their in their community and find someone who is probably more skilled in the online marketing than they might be in the fishing industry in the fishing experience, but trust that you can teach them what you need to about fly fishing, and run with their expertise and passion for online marketing because it's a crazy detailed, you know, analog world and you gotta love stuff and I I have a hard time keeping up with it. I'm not trying to half run a fly shop business.



Dave S 24:25

No, no, that's part of why I'm doing this podcast, right? Yeah, this is Yeah, I'm gonna be the you know, the up to date, kind of right with it as things change on Facebook ads or something like that. I'll bring on a person to talk about but yeah, there's just so much it's overwhelming. Where do you recommend somebody goes, I mean, obviously, you're a great resource. But all the people that are going to listen to this, you know, years to come, you know, you won't be able to serve all of them. So where do you direct somebody locally? You said local. I mean, how do you find a good person in you know, the good versus bad? How do you do it?



Robert 24:56

Yeah, I mean, to like, look for some resources and some talent to help you



Dave S 25:00

Yeah, just see me. Yeah, exactly. Yeah,



Robert 25:02

you know, I'd start kind of where everyone probably starts and start doing some some fairly obvious searches online, you know, like digital marketing services. I would even now they're more and more like what we've done with our outpost effort to say, Hey, we love the outdoors. And we would really love nothing more than work with a bunch of outdoor brands, there are more and more of those that I see across the country. So that's probably an additional term that I might start putting in there when I am looking for marketing help, you know, whether that's a digital marketing campaign expert, or a photographer, you know, or a writer, you know, and, you know, you mentioned Matt earlier, I love Matt death. He's amazing. And he's an incredible writer, he is in the fishing boat, right. And I one thing I would always tell everybody is don't underestimate the power of writing. You know, people always love to say, Oh, no one reads anymore. Well, that's I don't necessarily believe that. And I think that the gift of a writer to be able to cut through all the noise and write something that moves people, you know, is like super valuable. So if you could find a writer in your community who can write at that degree, and possibly loves fishing or fly fishing, I would say, Get close with them ASAP. You know, that's a great they can make a difference. They can make a difference in your most targeted, specific, you know, story paid storytelling, but they can also help you help you articulate your meta story about your whole business and your brand. You know, and that's what the that's what the mats of the world can do. I wish I could write like that, but that but fine your mat and your Yeah, and and give them some gear and take them out and teach them to fish and and you guys will be successful as a team going forward.



Dave S 26:42

That's really cool. Yeah, I interviewed one



Robert 26:45

last thing I'll say, yeah, everyone laughed at me at work because I tend to always say this because if I had a \$10 budget, many times I'd say like I'd give \$9 to the writer and make everyone else fight for the other dollar, you know, because of a writer can kind of like boil everything down into something insanely moved. and powerful, you know, internally to your team and externally to your community, then everyone else's job is actually pretty easy at that point. No kidding. So, yeah, so I think writers are underappreciated and wildly powerful.



Dave S 27:13

Yeah. That's a great tip. And yeah, just note gonna note, Dominic swin toschi was on in the wet fly swing podcast. He's has the trout bitten blog? and check it out. Yeah, check it out. It's, he's, you know, he's a great writer. Right. And that you're just telling exactly, but he got into it, because he just loved fly fishing. And it he's, he's a writer, right? He brought the two together and in the blog is huge. You know, he has, he's doing a great job with it. And it's just because he's a great writer. I mean, the bottom line is, that's why you write great stuff, people are gonna, you know, Google is gonna find you and people are gonna share it. So



Robert 27:49

Exactly. It's it's both powerful, and beautiful, and it's smart and effective. You know, it's both so yeah, and I love that. That's to me the joy when you can find those two things. Together, it feels good. And it moves you. And it's the smartest way to do your marketing. I love that. Exactly. I



Dave S 28:06

love that tip. How you mentioned about finding somebody because that's one of my struggles too. Not only time is a struggle, but I'm not that great of a writer, right. That's why I do the audio. I love. I love the audio space. But I think finding somebody, it would be a great thing to have, right? Somebody that could write some of these articles up. So okay, cool. Well, this is good. And then anything else we're missing here on channels. Again, we got, you know, I guess you're on Instagram, you spent a lot of time there, but there's Facebook groups, Facebook pages, you know, if somebody had one, you know, one channel to dig into what what would you recommend? Or does it vary in the fly fishing space?



Robert 28:42

Yeah. I wouldn't say like, this is even like that one, but it's one we haven't talked on yet that we continue to think is infinitely powerful and effective. And that's email, you know, good old email. You know, we've always sort of been sort of beaten down in more recent years. Here I go, No one wants email anymore. I'm trying to dump all my emails and listen to me. Part of the part that's true, it just means that you need to have email content that's a value to people.



Dave S 29:05

Who do you use for email marketing, who's your email marketing service.



Robert 29:10

We usually these days when we're doing kind of email campaigns that are in one of two modes, we have a marketing automation program that we work with, with a lot of clients called sharpSpring. And it sort of is a system that's kind of like a HubSpot maybe like a Salesforce Pardot, but it's it's basically a CRM system that allows you to get pretty granular with your customers and your prospects and then even set up sort of more automated forms and marketing that can scale so that you can say like, hey, the first time they come you send them this kind of email, you know, next time they come you send them this or you know, they now they've come back to your site and you know that and they've looked at certain material and you can send them a customized email and do all that at scale. So you're not like packing these things out when it's



Dave S 29:52

done. It's based on like tagging them based on what they've clicked track.



Robert 29:55

Yes, exactly. They get a cookie and now you know now you can be alerted know when they click Come back and it's you know it's it's half creepy half cool you know kind of stuff



Dave S 30:04

that and that's the cool that's the cool thing about is that it's not creepy well if you're serving them right the stuff they want then it's it's not exactly



Robert 30:10

yeah and that goes all the way back to like if you are if you like view this is as a story driven content about basically shared purpose and shared you know passion then it isn't because you're you're helping them achieve that but man if you're just trying to like



Dave S 30:26

nope intended hook them to just get one sale out of them and yeah, you're probably a jerk. Yeah. And I try to avoid that at all costs for the fly fishing industry because it just like poisoning the water. We talked about a little bit about branding a little about storytelling. What else are we missing? I mean, what are the you talked about successful brands

Patagonia, what are some Are there any other brands you would think of? When you think about they're doing a great job out there that we might build a look at either small or large?

R

Robert 30:50

Yeah, I've got one that I that is strictly out of like personal interest and enjoyment. So you know, you're from a Patagonia and a Yeti which are the Brands a third i'd maybe would lump in there that smaller but getting in that direction is power. I love those guys. I love However, there's brand in general. That's right. I've had the opportunity to meet those guys when they came to Charleston, and they are just,



Dave S 31:12

that's awesome. What do they do? Because again, for me, I, I don't know a lot about I haven't read a lot of their stuff, but you for sure they are out there. I mean, they're they're leaning, you could just tell right, well, what are they doing? What are they doing right there. Um,

R

Robert 31:25

so, you know, I think it's part of the the unique sort of cool nature of the two of them.



Dave S 31:31

brimmed hats and stuff like that, right. Yeah,

R

Robert 31:33

they met back in college, they actually met through music, they were in a band together, you know, wrinkled neck noodles, and they literally performed together and then they were going to one was a designer, and he Chase and Chase was designing some shirts for someone that they didn't like the shirts apparently. And so Chase and Andy were like, well screw this, we're going to make our own shirts, you know, and that's how it like got started out of a college relationship through them playing in a band together. And that spirit has you know, and their their lives. of surfing and their levels of fishing what is there does that well it's I would say mostly probably apparel driven I think it's you know 90% apparel driven and accessories but sort of uniquely tuned for that lifestyle for people who love to be you know on the water for fishing yeah fishing and surfing primarily fly fishing and

surfing primarily. And then the, I think the unique sort of like feature of their, their apparel and their accessories are that it has really good design and style and you would wear it on the street, you know, with pride, but it's super technical as well, you know, and so I'm pretty much a pretty big fanboy of their gear because I love the whole sort of funny Western cool, you know, sort of edge of it all but, but I will go run in one of their shirts because, you know, they're, they're literally they perform well, you know, and so I think that's like, the cool thing that they did is they sort of took technical gear for and it made it more appealing and you know, more presentable, basically, they are able to have a core brand idea and a core brand design. But then they have figured out ways to kind of constantly keep it fresh. So if you follow, how're their collections, their lines, their individual hat designs, their shirts, you know, their, their, their, their shorts and pants, they're always doing really cool stuff that keeps the brand super fresh at all times, you know, and you're always wanting like a little bit more. And somehow they manage that chaos of having like a brand that can be a lot of different moods, but it always somehow comes back to being about how we're in that community. And I think that's a really cool thing that they're able to manage. A lot of brands have a hard time with that. Either they get too rigid, and they're boring, or they're just too scattered and you don't know what the hell to make of them.



Dave S 33:43

Yeah, I love that quote the Seth Godin just kind of a better buy. He's, uh, his his quote is don't be boring. I mean, that's like the bottom line. Yes.



Robert 33:51

Don't get boring. We can that's that maybe that kept that's that's this whole show. But yeah, please avoid being boring. And then the last one, I I was gonna say which is actually this maybe has a little bit more specific relevance even to like a fly shop is a is a brand called whalebone and whalebone. I don't, you know you and listeners will have to go do some of this homework and put it in the notes but whalebone, I think started as a surf shop in Montauk. But they were also had a sort of a larger idea of the role and what they thought about life and it got to the notion of like surfing as part of a larger lifestyle, appreciation of the outdoors and the water and the culture and all that good stuff. So they started doing events, I think, in New York City, you know, which just waves down from Montauk and then they that spawned more content and other kinds of events. And right now, what I subscribe to is a whalebone magazine which is a really cool fun, high designed, super entertaining read that comes out six times a year. So if you can go and you subscribe to the magazine, and they have really good email as well, but whalebone is so there's there's a shop that has sort of seen their role in their customers. lives as

something larger than just a retail shop. And now they have really become something that is a brand about a certain community of people that is largely surfing based. But now it's sort of gotten a little bit bigger than surfing based. Retail is part of it. A magazine is part of it, events are part of it, you know, and they could probably get into anything they want to after that, because they've cultivated this sort of larger idea of what it what whalebone is all about.



Dave S 35:24

That's cool. That's cool. Yeah, I'll check that one out. For sure. I was kind of thinking about another product that I've been working with or talked to in the past. But before we get to that, it's on kind of the float tube, right, the float tube that's kind of on the total niche down but before we get there, I was thinking about headlines, right? You talked about email marketing, obviously, the first step to get somebody to open is to open your email, right is a good headline. What's your for example on this? we've, we've covered all over the place, right? Obviously we're gonna have to have another show, I think to focus down maybe on some stuff. If you had to think of what headline for this so far what we've done, what could you think of a quick one on the flyer well, and what makes a good headline



Robert 36:01

I don't know, this is a good headline. Yeah, this is at least the headline thought that I think of as it relates to the whole conversation we're having. Yeah. And then I'll try to answer it too with it with it with a headline thought. But the first thought that is a headline for the conversation that we're having it's least it's winning My mind is that really good brands and businesses aren't defined by what they make. They're defined by what they're made of. All right. And so what I mean by that is like, it's not again, it's not about, you know, necessarily the gear that you're selling at that moment, or the services that you're providing that at that moment. It's about, like, Who are these people? And what do they care about? And do I share in those same interests and concerns and values? Right? And if so, I'm gonna be a much deeper long term customer of theirs right then if not, then I am just about buying something from them or possibly getting guided on a trip, you know, and so our recommendation for all the people that we work with and in fact the types of brands that we only want to work with are those that understand it's about what they're made of. It's about their values and their view of the world. And what and again, going back to our start of this conversation, what they're trying to do in people's lives, and if you've done that correctly, then you can build a brand that is as much about your customers as it is about yourself. And I think that is like such a key to success, because now you have kind of CO ownership with your customers, you know, and they see it and

they take it on as their own. So I don't know if that's like a headline, I'd put it ever putting in an ad. Yeah, the whole notion of like, you know, it's about, you know, what you're made of, not what you're made of.



Dave S 37:34

So if I was and I use, I use ConvertKit for my email service, and they're kind of a kind of a solo, you know, kind of a smaller company, I guess, but you know, they're great. And if I think of a headline that I was gonna say the emails going out tomorrow, right, the people who write so my list they're gonna be like, okay, here's the here's the podcast is coming out. So what would it be? Would it be that like you said, but what would you put there to get them to open that Email.



Robert 38:02

whalebone does this so well, they're there. But yeah, if you and anyone want to go, I think see some a great writing an action. Yep, sign up and subscribe to their emails, you'll you'll get the same vibe from their website and you'll get the same vibe from their, from their magazine. So I have some humor. Yeah, say, you know, like, I think they're sending out emails right now that are all about here's your daily afternoon delight, you know, and it's a crazy kind of headline, you know, with all sorts of funny connotations, but it's like immediately it's like, you're right in the whalebone mode. You're laughing or smiling, right? Yeah, as



Dave S 38:42

opposed like COVID and everything else. Yeah,



Robert 38:44

exactly. And so you've got like, we were living. It's like such heavy times right now. So from that to come every afternoon from there sending one every afternoon, and I get that it's like a little break every



Dave S 38:56

No kidding. So you're not ever thinking God You know, another email every day you're like, I love



Robert 39:02

these emails. I'm violent about getting emails that I don't want, you know, like, I blow up and same thing if like someone calls me, you know, I like I'm probably the rudest person in the world yet I'm willing to get that once a day from whalebone, at least during the workweek. Because their their tone and their voice is so like delightful that it makes me laugh and gives me a little, little moment after afternoon delay. I



Dave S 39:24

love that I. So I'm thinking about marketing. So again, so opening what is a good, what's a good open rate a good click through rate on Save with what you see in outdoor email marketing. And I think I've just generally I always think of general this is more broader online marketing private, you know, 20% you know,



Robert 39:42

I was gonna say same somewhere between 20 and 40. You know, 20 was like, okay, that's that 20 it's like that's acceptable, but man, we'd really like to see the lift those things and be sending more valuable content for the smaller list of people who really, really want



Dave S 39:55

what it is because, yep,



Robert 39:58

I'm willing to bet that elbow is Seeing higher than then, you know, 20, more like 30, maybe more like 40? Because I think they have a very good sense of themselves and a very good sense of their community. And I would get, I would bet that gets you up to 40, if not even 50. You know, but you're right.



Dave S 40:13

I'll bet you right. Cool. We'll have to maybe get those guys on or get the crew outage. Yeah. But down the line. Yeah. Okay. So. So yeah, I feel pretty good about, you know, what we've covered here. There's, I mean, again, you know, story, storytelling, branding. What else? Anything else we want to throw out here before we start to Yeah, but here.



Robert 40:34

The last thing I'll say on this sort of whole, like, if we just think of this as a system that what we've been talking about today, and it is, you know, again, at least it's not the only way to obviously go about this work that we all do. But it's the way that we think about it, it blew on and it outposts and that this is all basically a story system. And you've got that macro story about Who are you and what is your brand about and really think deeply about that. And then you're channeling stories through your own media and your earned media and then paid media and that's kind of what I've been Talking about and just thinking of that whole list is a system really works. So last piece, we don't have to go into it in detail. But the last piece that is just as important as every other one of those pieces is the measurement, the tracking. And that is, that's the beauty of this discipline, right? I mean, to some degrees, we can almost measure too much we kill things that probably are important just because we don't like the return they got that day, you know, but that whole ecosystem of storytelling, we measure like crazy, you know, and we track it, we measure it, we tweak it, we test it, we run two or three versions of something to see which of those emails pulls hardest, or which of those, you know, which of those landing pages work better, you know, and then we build on the one that one and we start tweaking that, you know, and it's this like this little bit of constant improvement, you know, there's nothing that is going to skyrocket you from A to Z. It's like how do we grind our way to b and then to see and then to D and then you know, and that's that's the beauty of this discipline is we can we can justify almost everything we do. I almost think to a fault sometimes because we kill things that we should allow them more more time to mature. And take all that makes sense.



Dave S 42:02

And what are some of the key? I mean, this is kind of a broad brush question, but the kind of key performing, you know, index or whatever, you know, KPI KPIs are, what should people be looking at, you know, for tracking?



Robert 42:14

Yeah. Well, I'll speak on just real sort of based on a basic level, we primarily use Google Analytics for all our for all our campaigns, and then that that CRM marketing automation program also has really interesting analytics that we kind of tie in there. There's basically two buckets of data that we're tend to look at one is like materials performance, like site performance work, you know, how, what is the traffic on our site? Where are they coming from? What are they doing when they get to the site? Are they performing the things that we want them to do? So when we build sites for people, we don't think about a site that

just covers a lot of content, we think about what do we want this page to do? And what's its intent and what is the goal, and then we're going to measure that goal and see if we're being successful or not, and if we're not, we're going to make that page different and see if we can make it more successful. You know, so That's all site behavior. But equally important, maybe even more important is like campaign behavior. So that's great. But I want to know about the ads that we're running in Facebook, it gets you to even think about going to fly fishing in the first place. And how did that ad pull someone back to the website, to then subscribe to an email so that we can email them and then they went to our social media? And then lo and behold, they came into our online store and bought something. Yeah, so the larger macro sort of like campaign measurement and tracking is as if not more important than what is my website doing today. And, you know, fortunately, we've got a gang of hardcore analytics, you know, jobs, who love to get in there and map out both implement those systems, and then spend all day looking at them. And the last little story that I'll leave you with is like, our goal is to not look at that as data, but to look at all that those results as stories, what are the stories in the marketing that we're doing that are working and what is the story of the recommendations and the changes we need to make in our marketing going forward?



Dave S 43:58

You know, yeah, that's pretty



R Robert 44:00

So it's those those two broad buckets, what is your website and your sort of platforms doing? But more importantly, how is this sort of this this little campaign system working for you? Yeah, and tracking people understanding that no one thing is going to be successful in itself. When we look at like attribute tracking, we find that someone who purchased a product in a store has actually gone through seven different steps. They've gotten emails from you, they've gone, they've done an organic search for your brand name, you know, they've seen one of your paid ads, and it took some crazy number of touchpoints for them to get to the thing that you wanted them to. But you only give credit to the last touch point when it actually took six steps before that to even get them to the last touch point, you know, that's right. So that's part of what I was talking about is like sometimes we kill things that are actually really important, because we're over focused on the measurement of the last thing that they did before they bought from you. Exactly. And that goes



Dave S 44:50

back to that time where I asked you, you know, how long and you know, some of these people yeah, that might take them years being in getting to know like, and trust you right before they actually Pull out a credit card. Yeah, yeah.

R

Robert 45:03

Yeah, think about I mean, think about our personal behavior in all sorts of forms of life It doesn't happen ever really aren't just like one, one flash one lightning bolt. It's like, you know, you're doing research or thinking about it, you know, think about when you go out and your next cool adventure trip somewhere to go fish, you know, that's like a, there's a long period of different sources of input for you to get to that point to pull the trigger.



Dave S 45:23

Yeah, perfect. Perfect. And what about just quickly on social media, any Do you want to throw out a tip or two? I'm not sure. Do you do the social media? What is your daily, you know, weekly kind of activities that you're doing?

R

Robert 45:36

Yeah, I mean, me personally, I do I participate in our social media work for for outposts. So



Dave S 45:44

your is that your hub? I mean, is are you kind of leading that the outpost?

R

Robert 45:48

There's a, there's a team of us at that. It's definitely where I've spent up, you know, 99% of my time these days. I mean, I'm still a partner in Blue Lion. And so there's business issues and your long term plan. lat good stuff. But the exciting part of my day is all that I get to do thinking about outposts, the work that we're doing for clients, and the programs that, you know, we've launched a beer with some friends at a brewery, or kind of trying to launch our own programs to get people outdoors. So that's where I spend a lot of my time, you know, and focus a lot of that. And there's a team of four others directly who were very involved in that. And then a lot of the blue line people will participate now post projects as they come in the door and all that. I see. I just, I just went into all that. But you asked a question, and oh, yeah,



Dave S 46:32

yeah, so the question was on so just maybe on social media, a couple of quick tips if somebody again, you know, think of that solo person out there that just wants to take home a tip to use? Yeah.



Robert 46:43

So I here's a tip that's maybe more opinion than fact, but it's something that we feel strongly about, and it comes back to being authentic and genuine. Some of the concerns we have about the whole world of like, you know, brand ambassadors and influencers is that if some at some point, there's some something that sort of gets fake and breaks down in there were those those people who are you've gotten to somehow pitch for you out there and social media obviously don't know what the hell they're doing and we've seen some there's some pretty funny sites about you know, the fly fishing world I think there's some I know there's some in the skateboarding world and in the scheme world there's a lot of people out



Dave S 47:20

people that don't know how to flash but they're they're liking it.



Robert 47:22

Yes, sir. Like the reels upside down. Oh, wow. Yeah. See, now it's like crazy, crazy stuff like that. I think that one is fly pricks isn't it is a really good graphic. Oh, my God, it'll like you'll be roaring crying loud, cool, whatever they post and they call out all the BS in the industry, and they have a blast and everybody's following and laughing. So being genuine and authentic, I think is maybe our number one tip and that's true for us as outpost, so I'm really not a big fan of like calling out random stuff because I think the whole world is going to be hashtagging that today, you know, and instead we want to use social media as an Some ways a bit of a journal about what we're doing in our lives to spend more time outdoors, whether that's fishing, mountain biking, running, gardening, or whatever, you know, because that's our journey. And our mission is to help people reconnect to the outdoors through our work with clients who are outdoor brands, or through our own efforts. And we want our social media and our content and our podcasts to really be actually inspirational and a bit of like, here's what we're doing and connecting with on others. So the genuine factor and the authentic factor is probably the number one factor and number one through 10 factor for us.



Dave S 48:34

Yeah, gotcha. Okay. And what about a Do you have a tool, anything you would recommend that maybe would help for? I don't know, something you use for social or anything? Yeah.



Robert 48:43

Yeah. Um, it's a cool question. Um, as I may this comes back at full into podcasting, and you're probably much more you're way ahead of me on thinking about tools and techniques for podcasting because ours is fledgling small little podcast, but the tool that I love most about the podcasting effort is those the portable field recorders, a little Zoom tool, use one as h4 ends. That is amazing. Amazing. And so the way we do it, we don't we only wanted to do our podcasts in person. So we wanted to sit across, you know, a table or a bench, you know, or sit on two rocks out in a stream or whatever, and have a conversation in person with people. And so to have that little zoom, and I plugged it into a little power brick, yep. And then that hours to high quality mics, you know, we pop filters on it. So we could have a podcast interview anywhere, right off the grid, on the top of a mountain, you know, on a stream, whatever. Yeah, and I love that. And then on the side, what we do sometimes is like I just take that zoom recorder when I'm out fishing on a you know, in a little headwaters Creek somewhere and I sit down for five minutes, totally silent and turn it on to record and just capture those things. It'll be called sound Cass but it's insane what that little zoom recorder can pick up in the deep and you know deep in the western North Carolina mountains it's just stunning the beauty of what you hear of five minutes of silence other than those birds in the stream and the wind and all that cool stuff. So that little tool I don't know that's the kind of tool you were talking about. Yeah, those little field recorders I think are cool whether you're into podcasting or not



Dave S 50:25

for sure for sure. Yeah. And I have a couple of zooms I have the the h6 which is equivalent and it's Yeah, it's a little bigger Well, I guess it's it's similar to the h4 and but you know, the amazing thing is the quality is as good as some of the just the studio mix. You know, I mean, matters it's very high quality.



Robert 50:44

I love it. You know, no one's really a big fan of their voice and I'm certainly not of mine. But then you know, Nick who has done some of our, you know, engineering and editing work for us, guys, like always laugh he makes me sound like you know, like, like Morgan

Freeman. You can like my voice just that just the h4 And alone just bring so much more like range and depth to my voice. I wish I could talk to that all the time.



Dave S 51:04

That's right. That's right. That's cool. Cool. Robert. Well, there's a ton of work. You know, I think we were not going to be able to get into here. But yeah, I think we dug into some good stuff. What would you say, you know, we mentioned this before, but again, like a takeaway, we're talking headlines, but what would be a takeaway, one thing that somebody could take away right now today from this conversation that they can maybe implement or just remember,



Robert 51:25

I really believe in this whole premise is like if you can get the core set and sound you know of why you're in business and what you're trying to do and the impact you're trying to have in your customers lives. If you can focus on that take take a day or two You know, when you're not inundated with everything else and focus on and ask those those three simple but really hard questions to answer. What do we do you know, how do we go about that work? Do we do it? You know, with a sense of humor? Are we the most cutting edge? Are we the most adventurous Are we the most friendly to new anglers you know, but most importantly, ask yourself Why? And write answers to those that are motivating and genuine. And if you can kind of go through that basic exercise of answering those three questions, Simon Sinek, you know, written beautiful books about that and made a whole industry out of it. But if you can go through that exercise and lock that down, and then we go, like we said, Go get go find Matt or go find your writer and help someone get find someone who can help you bring that to life. I think that is like, the number one thing you can do before you start wrestling with all the other thousands of opportunities you have, you know, that's awesome. Yes.



Dave S 52:31

Start with ya. I'll put a link to that book in the show. Yes,



Robert 52:34

that's it. That's That's it. Yeah. And all in all honor and appreciation of Simon for articulating that because he did such a beautiful job of kind of laying that out.



52:44

Yeah, for sure. For sure. Cool.



Dave S 52:45

And in the next few months, anything new coming up for you, you know, the business personally blue ion or outpost?



Robert 52:52

Yeah, there's two cool things. You know, once one's just like one of these side projects I was talking about that we're kind of launching and helping launch on our own It's this thing. It's a running collective called incognita. And it's done with a good friend in Charleston. And it's like an attempt to say how could we take the world of sort of outdoor trail running long form, you know, long distance running, but find a little more meaning in it and utility in it. So instead of just running to like, for time, running for distance running for competition, it's like, let's go learn about the places we're running through whether those are outdoor places, or places actually, you know, deep in neighborhoods of Charleston. And we've started that right now we're running something to run every single Street in downtown Charleston, which is about 111 miles of streets, plus all the repeats which will probably make it more like 150 miles by the time we're done. And in doing that, we're trying to learn about the flooding in Charleston and how that's affecting communities. It's only going to get worse and it's pretty intense in Charleston so that that project incognita is a really fun thing, that outpost is sort of behind and supporting, and I'm actively involved in so that's super fun. We want to do more kind of fun projects, like That are aside from our marketing work. And then too, we're super excited about a new project that we're just getting started with up in western North Carolina where I am today, and where I spend a lot of my time in a little town called Braveheart, outside of Asheville. And we're working with them to help them think through and basically raise the profile of this incredible 24 counties in western North Carolina as an outdoor destination, not just for people to come visit and play, but actually for the businesses who are here and doing insanely well in the outdoor economy. But for all the other businesses that could also come and be part of this larger community. Because it's just an epic, you know, if you're in an epic place, yeah, this is an epic place and there's just so much more opportunity for people to come and be part of what's happening in western North Carolina. So I'm super thrilled. We're super thrilled about working on this project. I'm really really happy. So that that's gonna, that's gonna be a lot of my focus in the in the months if not years ahead.



Dave S 54:56

Awesome. Well, I'll put links to all that the everything we talked about today in the show notes and Yeah, Robert, just want to thank you for coming on. It's been a fun chat here. We've dug into a little bit and I think scratched the surface on something. So yeah, maybe we'll, we'll keep in touch and get you on down the line. But yeah, I just appreciate you coming on and sharing your wisdom here.



Robert 55:13

Hey, man, I loved it. It's a blast talking to you. I feel like we could talk. You know, we could do like 10 more hours of talking Exactly. And barely get through any of it. So thank you so much. It's been it's been a joy.



Dave S 55:23

All right. We'll talk to you soon.



Robert 55:24

All right, man. Take care.



Dave S 55:26

Thanks for joining us today and for your support of the marketing podcast. If you found this podcast helpful, please share it with one other person and leave a rating and review on Apple podcasts or wherever you listen to the show. Today's takeaway time to ask yourself and your brand. Why? Why is your business important to your tribe? And what is the bigger reason that your company exists? That's a good start for anybody plenty of resources in this one that we cover. So hope you enjoyed it. It would be amazing if you could ask it Question for our next guest on the show, head over to [outdoors online.co](https://outdoorsonline.co) slash Facebook that's outdoors with an S outdoors online.co slash facebook and join the private Facebook group. Be great to connect with you there and say hi in person or I guess kind of in person can't wait to connect with you on the next show. Have an amazing day and I will see you soon.