

Speaker 1 00:00:05 Welcome to the Clear Impact Podcast brought to you by PGTI University. Thanks for joining us today. My name is Sherri Connor, and I am your host.

Speaker 2 00:00:19 If you look at the processes or even the sheer meetings we go to, do you need to meet weekly or can you meet every other week or once a month? Again, the bigger you are, I guarantee you, the more meetings you're going to have. So you, you literally have to look at time management.

Speaker 1 00:00:32 When it comes to success, we can learn a lot from those at the top. We had a powerful conversation with our CEO, Jeff Jackson, on keys to success, enemies of growth, and why it's important to look back and thank our mentors. You'll enjoy today's episode with Jeff.

Good morning. We are here on the Clear Impact Podcast with our CEO, Jeff Jackson. Hi, Jeff, how are you? I'm doing great. How are you doing today? Doing great. Thanks. Good. I'm so glad you could join us today. We are in the series Running a Successful Business, and this is really to help our dealers who are largely entrepreneurial. A lot of them I understand are mom and pop shops. Maybe not very many employees, maybe they're doing everything themselves. And then there are some who have a larger base where they may be running multiple locations and have a larger workforce. So we want to talk to that group and share some of your wisdom and insight with them. So I have just a few questions today. What would you say are three key things that you attribute to success in business? Sure.

Speaker 2 00:01:35 Great question, Sherri. And you did describe our dealers incredibly well. We have a variety of dealers across the spectrum, the mom and pops to fairly sophisticated multi location dealers with their own distribution systems. So how do you blend advice to those? You know, those different kinds of dealers? You know, what I would look at is to what I attribute success, it's mainly going to be around the people, the people you hire and the people you surround yourself with. Leadership acts like a lid to success. The better leadership you have, the more that lid stays open. And you know, at certain points, leadership can actually get tapped out and that lid can be closed and you can envision, if the lid is open, things are flowing and things are going good and the success is happening. If it's closed, it's not. And it really starts out with leadership.

Speaker 2 00:02:19 And if you look at leadership, you have to look at what kind. And I look at somebody that looks at possibilities and not problems, possibilities. How do we succeed at this? How do we get the customer, this product, even though it's not standard procedures, what are the opportunities to expand into different markets? What are the costs and risk associated with that? I don't look at it as a problem. You know, when COVID came, what were the opportunities? For instance, with COVID? People were going to be staying at home. Oh, wow. Okay. Well, there's a captive audience. That's actually an opportunity to start advertising more to the folks that are staying at home and also the RNR market. If you think about it, right? So that's an opportunity. It was a problem, but it's all how the leader looks at it, looking at it, problems, not opportunities.

Speaker 2 00:03:00 And it's a problem. So if a leader does that, they close that lid. So you have to have leadership that can grow the business that looks at possibilities and not the problems of choices in life. I think the next thing is empowerment and not control. And what I mean by that, some people, and the smaller it is, the easier it is to control, but the larger business gets the harder it is to control it. And you have to look to those leaders around you to empower them. And you got to let them make decisions. And you want to look for leadership that literally runs a business like an owner, and obviously with a small mom and pops, they are owners. So they have to make those tough decisions day in and

day out. So they have empowerment and they have control. The larger that business gets, the more leaders you're going to need, the more team members going to need around you.

Speaker 2 00:03:44 And you have to look for people who want that empowerment and not just look to control their certain areas. They run it like a business, right? And I think next would be what I would call cognitive bandwidth. And that's a big word, right? So I'll explain that. What that means is basically a pyramid management style. If you look at a bottom of a pyramid, envision, all the different departments you can run in your life, accounting, HR, sales, marketing, engineering, operations, supply chain, IT, you can keep going. Those are all at the bottom of that pyramid and make up the company's base, right? The more experience you can get across that pyramid, the higher you can ultimately go within that pyramid and add value. For instance, if you look at it and you know three different functions, now you're good in accounting. So you take on IT and you do good in IT. So you take on some HR work. Well, now you're your base is three basically functions. And you can go up from there. The more of those functions are the more cognitive bandwidth you have, the higher up and the more value you can ultimately add to that company.

Speaker 1 00:04:45 Right? Because then you're not just seeing one little slice. You're seeing the overall picture because everything affects something else.

Speaker 2 00:04:52 That's exactly right. It's all tied together. It's all in that base. So if there's a crack in that base, it affects the whole base.

Speaker 1 00:04:59 Right. And even in our organization, my conversation with Brent Boydston, he was talking about silos and how that's not really allowed here, across those senior vice-president channels, at least, that they have permission and responsibility to speak into other areas as they see something that needs to be dealt with, or an idea or a fix, which is wonderful. I think that's just a really healthy way to run an operation.

Speaker 2 00:05:24 Well you actually have to make that happen. Cause you'd be amazed how that's not intuitive, right? Even at the senior VP level, I have to challenge my team daily at times.

Speaker 1 00:05:33 Well, everybody gets territorial at whether or not we like it. That's kind of human nature. I think. So those are great things. So possibilities, not problems; empowerment, not control; and cognitive bandwidth. So those are three awesome things. My next question is, where do you get your inspiration to keep moving forward?

Speaker 2 00:05:52 You know, I think I like to view us as building something that lasts, not something this is going to be here and gone overnight. So every decision I personally make, I view it as one day, I'm not going to be here and whatever decisions I'm making will be. And so you have to view it in essence, my inspiration is we're going to, the decisions we make today is going to build tomorrow's future for the folks that are going to be here.

Speaker 1 00:06:16 Be sure to tune in for upcoming episodes to help you understand the fenestration industry, what you need to know when buying windows and doors and other related topics, you can find out more about us at pgtiuniversity.com. You can also find us on Facebook and LinkedIn.

Speaker 2 00:06:35 Uh, I think next would be the impact of that vision, that it has on our team members. You know, now we're up to with acquisition of Eco, we're up to over 3,500 team members,

and we need another, you know, four or 500, to be honest with you, we're hiring big time right now. So as we hire more team members that just creates more responsibility in a sense, to make sure your vision you've cast, the actions you take, are all aligned to something that's going to last because you have 3,500 folks. Well, they have spouses, they have families. So you gotta multiply that 3,500 by three or four. So you really, this company really impacts 12,000 plus individuals. And so the leadership team, the leaders in their roles, different departments, they impact a lot. And so that weighs heavy. And so that's inspirational to make sure you're constantly thinking about what decisions you make and how that's building something that's going to be here tomorrow. Not just for today.

Speaker 1 00:07:26 That's a big load,

Speaker 2 00:07:29 It can be. But is fun. Okay.

Speaker 1 00:07:30 What advice could you give to our dealer audience to help them continue succeeding?

Speaker 2 00:07:35 So I would say above all things, you have to defeat what I'll call the four enemies of growth. Okay. Growth does not come natural, change does, not growth. If you think what can stop growth. I like to look at four things, unnecessary complexity, unscalable processes, unhealthy mindsets, and call it undeveloped leaders, those four areas. And there's tons up underneath those four areas we can talk about, all are, what I would call the enemies of growth. And I think our dealers, our own team, we as a company, we, as an entity, a brand, we have to constantly fight those four items to make sure we're always questioning. Makes sure we're always challenging. For instance, unnecessary complexity. That can mean a variety of things as you grow. It never gets easier. If you think about it. In 2013, we were 280 million in sales. In 2021, we're 1 billion at 1.1 billion in sales, we're tracking to.

Speaker 2 00:08:31 It didn't get easier. It got more complex. The bigger we got, the more complex it got, the more processes that come into play. The more meetings you have, the more organizational structures you have and all that doesn't help growth, that actually stalls it. Right? And so you have to constantly be looking at that and challenging that organization, that structure to, I would say dummy down, push down that organization, make sure you don't get too big of a structure in place that really stalls growth. As an example, if you look at the processes, or even the sheer meetings we go to, do you need to meet weekly? Or can you meet every other week or once a month? Again, the bigger you are, I guarantee you, the more meetings you're going to have. So you get, you literally have to look at time management differently. I would say constantly be aware that growth doesn't occur naturally, change does, growth has to be sought after, and planned for, and pursued.

Speaker 1 00:09:26 That's good advice. What is the best piece of advice you've ever received, or maybe among the best pieces of advice you've ever received.

Speaker 2 00:09:34 I've received a lot of great advice, uh, from a lot of different mentors. You know, I'd recommend anybody who's at an impact in your life. Never forget them. Always look back, always reach back and just give a hello every now and then you'd be amazed at what I think that does to folks. The best piece of advice, or one of the best pieces of advice came from an old controller I had back when I was, you know, I was an accountant and I was a controller and he was my assistant controller. But, uh, he is at the end of his career, he had already been a controller and, you know, he was kind of

winding down and I'll never forget. He calls me in his office and he says, Jeff, I had a buddy, a president one day, tell me, you know, Bob, you can have all the sales you want, I just want the cash.

Speaker 2 00:10:13 I stopped, and I thought about that for a second, I guess he's right. Sales, aren't cash. So you can have a ton of sales, but ultimately it has to boil down to collecting that cash. That cash is what drives the results. And so it just made me think a lot of people focus on sales, sales, sales, you know? Okay. Just to make sure I get that cash, which is more important than the sale. Cash management, I know you probably going to have a series over that, is going to be good. Cause I've been called the Cash Flow CEO, which is again, probably more from my CFO background, but cash has been important. Uh, during the downturn, for instance, we preserve cash. We took out costs. We preserved cash, we maintain positive EBITDA. We kept the banks out, cause we made all our bank covenants because we had cash. You know, cash management is key, both in business and in personal life, right.

Speaker 1 00:10:58 A bird in the hand is better than two in the bush. That awesome. Well, I really appreciate your time today, Jeff. I think we could probably do a whole series around those four things and, or maybe at least another episode.

Speaker 2 00:11:11 We definitely could look at doing that. All right.

Speaker 1 00:11:13 Sounds great. Awesome. Thanks Jeff. Have a great day. Thanks

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