

Transcript: bigQUEST Podcast | S1, Ep 15

Habib Salo on Mastering The Value Add

Andy Murray: [00:00:00] So hi Habib. How are you doing?

[00:00:01] **Habib Salo:** [00:00:01] I'm good. Thank you for having me, Andy. I'm excited to be here.

[00:00:04] **Andy Murray:** [00:00:04] Thanks for joining me. I really have been looking forward to this conversation for some time. You and I had talked a while ago and your story in your company is so interesting to me because I swear from the outside looking in and you guys are some kind of digital pure play with how you have built and done something, a very untraditional space of young nails. So maybe you just give me a bit of the background on young nails and then a little bit about before you became, started in this transformation that you've

[00:00:32] **Habib Salo:** [00:00:32] been through. Sure. Yeah. So we're a professional nail manufacturing company.

[00:00:39] So our model has traditionally, it's been. We manufacture professional nail products. Our end customer was the salon and we would sell through distribution. So always through distributors that's domestically, internationally, and then our distributors would then sell through to salons. Our marketing strategy traditionally has always been.

[00:01:09] Through trade magazines. And also it was through trade shows. So a lot of just meet and greet hardcore in person, work in the floor for four days, straight, 12 hours before the show, after the show meetings connecting with salon owners, even new distributors for, more exposure of our product.

[00:01:32] And that's how we did things. For a good 20 plus years. That was the model. That's how we grew. And until about three and a half years ago. And that's when everything changed for us.

[00:01:46] **Andy Murray:** [00:01:46] Yeah. Take me to that moment when it was clear that you needed to pivot.

[00:01:51] **Habib Salo:** [00:01:51] For me it was, I just continued to hit this wall.



[00:01:57] And I tried, I knew we needed some kind of breakthrough because our growth had stopped. And then I started to see this decline in our revenue. And even though we were investing a lot of money in marketing, being the trade magazines, and also trade shows like our investment was huge. So despite that.

[00:02:25] Our revenue was declining. So I thought we need a difference. We need to change, maybe we need a new marketing manager or I need to hire them. And for me, that was the answer. Because honestly, I didn't know which way to go. I was like, so I did, I hired a marketing manager, it didn't work.

[00:02:49] I worked through too. Different marketing firms that charge me in the leg did not work. Consultants did not work. And it was my brother and I were coming back from a business trip and we're in the airport and we were sitting down and I was on my phone.

[00:03:12] He was on his phone and. I looked up and I saw this older couple probably in there. I don't know, maybe they're in their sixties or seventies and they were on their phones. And that, to me, was the big light bulb moment. I was like, Oh my gosh, what are we doing? I'm running around the world, trade shows, magazines.

[00:03:36] And so that was the moment where I realized we have to be right here. We gotta be digital. We have to be. Somehow get our brand through the phones, on different platforms, social media to communicate to an audience. And that was the change for me. Yeah.

[00:03:53] **Andy Murray:** [00:03:53] What's interesting about that story is that so many companies in your state that have been around a while and growing would tend to look and I can speak from my own experience in retail.

[00:04:02] They look to what competitors are doing. And it versus looking at where's my green, where's my blue ocean with the consumer, the customer. And what kept you from looking at what your competitors were doing? It was at anybody been doing what you've been doing and you're just copying a competitor or is it, was this something new that came from the,

[00:04:19] **Habib Salo:** [00:04:19] so I tried that strategy.

[00:04:22] I tried that strategy of what are my competitors doing? And what might. And it's so funny, you mentioned that because what my competitors were doing is they continue to pound distribution channels. They continue to take up more shelf space. So, my approach was so aggressive for years in getting more distribution, getting more stores, getting more Big box retailers or brand in, and I was successful.



[00:04:54] We actually managed to have these massive chains take our brand and we still weren't growing. That's why, it was like, I was hitting my head against a door and I was like, what is going on? Why can't I manage to grow despite all these efforts. And it was funny because even though we were getting distribution, when you see my brand against my competitors' brand, that has been on the shelves for 20 years.

[00:05:26] And then my read is new on the shelf. What I didn't realize is like the customer comes and they're looking at the shelf. They're going to pick what they've been picking for years, they have more perspectives. They have way more dollars. They have way more power. And I have a small little, a couple shelves.

[00:05:41] It's very difficult to communicate, and compete that way. Tried that method, Andy. And so for me, it was we have to do something and I didn't know what it was until I was in the airport and it hit me and I realized. We can be first. And this is where we were, video making videos.

[00:06:03] We were, we had some idea of how to do it because we were early in YouTube as a company, but make a few videos here and there, it wasn't what we're doing now, but so we had some experience, but For me, it was the only way, like once the light bulb went off, it was, I had that realization.

[00:06:26] It was like, this is the absolute way I had no doubts from that. It was like, Oh my gosh. Oh my, it was like, I saw something so clear and it made so much sense to me. And then that there was nobody doing it. Was even, that was just a huge bonus on hop.

[00:06:44] **Andy Murray:** [00:06:44] Okay. Let's stop here for a second too. You had no doubts, but you also had no data that said it was going to work.

[00:06:50] And so what you did have is conviction. I, it sounds like, there's this absolute conviction. And did you re, did everyone else have the same epiphany light bulb go on and let's ditch the legacy let's ditch the inertia of whatever we've been doing or,

[00:07:04] **Habib Salo:** [00:07:04] I

[00:07:05] **Andy Murray:** [00:07:05] have to assume. You had to bring some people along on this journey that followed your conviction without data, but no doubts.

[00:07:13] **Habib Salo:** [00:07:13] Yes. Had to go to my partners, which is my mom, my brother, and then I have to hand it to them. They've always trusted me in, in, in really guiding the ship, setting the course for the company and they, whether they agree with me or not, it's one of the positive things that

we've had in our relationship is, excuse me, is they believe in my decision-making, so I did have to convince them, and I did have to share with them like a basic strategy.

[00:07:49] And then also it wasn't so hard to convince them because I could. Present the data that we did have of what's working. So I had that data look, we've tried all of this and the results show. This is not working. So what I do, even though I don't have data on what I want to do.

[00:08:12] **Andy Murray:** [00:08:12] You knew what it wasn't going to be.

[00:08:13] **Habib Salo:** [00:08:13] Yeah, exactly. It was like a process of elimination, like I went through and I've literally tried everything. And so this is the last thing. To give a shot. And so they were on board. It did take convincing. It did take, I had to present my case and I had to let them know. But I, this is, I'm very lucky to be in a family business where my brother and my mom are like, You make that decision and we don't want that.

[00:08:37] We trust you we're behind you.

[00:08:39] **Andy Murray:** [00:08:39] Is that something that's through the culture of your company to the

[00:08:42] **Habib Salo:** [00:08:42] way you guys operate?

[00:08:43] **Andy Murray:** [00:08:43] Is that something that is just part of the core value system of innovation, try things, let's go, let's get behind people.

[00:08:49] **Habib Salo:** [00:08:49] Absolutely. If you ask even our marketing team, if you ask our operations team, One of them, one of the things about our culture is if you have an idea, let's try it.

[00:09:05] Everybody knows, like my answer is yes, like 99% of the time, like you ask, Hey Habib, can I try, if you say, can I try the answer is yes. I don't care what follows.

[00:09:20] **Andy Murray:** [00:09:20] Wow. That's amazing. That's really cool.

[00:09:23] **Habib Salo:** [00:09:23] Yeah. And what's interesting. And is even though. They know that it's still, it, people are still hesitant to try things because they, they're not because of me, but just because of this fear of being wrong or making a mistake.

[00:09:38] And it was that to me has been the most, one of the most interesting things, because it makes me realize if you're in a culture that's not so open. Nobody's going to try anything. First of all, you have the independent fear of that wall that's there. And then on top of that, Maybe the owners are admitted, whatever admin to the company is also .



[00:09:57] It's really hard to get, any type of innovation going in a company. But it is part of our culture. And it's marketing, especially everybody here knows you want to try something on social content, something new, like you don't even have to ask me, just go. Yeah. So it really is.

[00:10:17] **Andy Murray:** [00:10:17] Yeah.

[00:10:17] When you had this idea and you started down that path, as any kind of new idea, you're going to have to slay a lot of dragons. Was there any one big barrier that you can recall that you said, okay, we can solve this and then we can solve that. And that, there's anything come to mind is your biggest challenge that you looked at and said, okay, we

[00:10:32] **Habib Salo:** [00:10:32] gotta slay that dragon for me.

[00:10:35] The biggest challenge was, how am I going to make video content? Plain and simple, it was okay. I know we have to pump out content. How am I going to do that? Because I can't. And I think that this is one of the big challenges I see for a lot of companies is they don't know even how to start making video content or posting more.

[00:11:00] And there's this idea behind it. I ha I'm guilty of this too. There's this idea behind you have to have the perfect camera, the perfect content. It's the old model of. Where photo shoots would take seven, eight hours, 10 hours. A commercial takes three, four days with a budget of \$2 million.

[00:11:22] And changing that into look on social media that you have to give value. It's not, people are not so concerned with how. Perfect. Everything looks like it's more of, they're going to consume it if you are giving value. And that is a, it's so hard to convince anyone of that. And even I had that initially, that was my big barrier of like, how am I going to do this?

[00:11:53] First of all, I don't even know how to make videos. Second of all, is it gonna look good? My gosh, the background was messy or. The nail demonstrations have to be perfect. All of these things that I found don't matter in the end, I'm thankful that I just it's like my back is against the wall.

[00:12:13] I don't have a choice. I got to just

[00:12:14] **Andy Murray:** [00:12:14] start it. What, it's interesting. What's what you didn't say was your biggest barrier, which for many companies it would have been even a bigger barrier than what you just said, which says a lot about how you guys work. And that is okay. You could have said, how am I going to know what our customers want?



[00:12:31] And that wasn't it. It was, how do I make this at a very high level of quality? You perceived, you had a misbelief, it needed to be that high, but it was around the making of it. Not. Am I ever going to be like...do I understand what customers really want? It sounds like you already

[00:12:48] **Habib Salo:** [00:12:48] had a

[00:12:48] **Andy Murray:** [00:12:48] culture or a way of getting close to what your, you knew, what the customers wanted.

[00:12:52] It's just, do I really have the machine and built and perfection and levels to deliver that,

[00:12:57] **Habib Salo:** [00:12:57] which

[00:12:57] **Andy Murray:** [00:12:57] is, I can't tell you how many companies have the bigger barrier, which is they don't have any idea. And so they just put out ads. So they put out new items, and here it is, and there's no customer intimacy.

[00:13:07] If they started on this journey without understanding. You got to get close to understanding what customers want and I'm just taking away from what you just said that it's possible. You are, you did have that piece of some way getting close to customers.

[00:13:19] **Habib Salo:** [00:13:19] Yeah. I like, we've always had the ability to connect with our customers.

[00:13:26] Like in-person. In-person so at trade shows, that's why we've always done so well at trade shows, we always did well at trade shows is because myself, my, our team, we were able to always connect with our customers on that personal level. So for me, I wasn't worried about it, I knew we could reach a level into intimacy through the content and eventually.

[00:13:54] Understand the needs on a much deeper level. Always believe that. So it wasn't so much a concern for me. It was just, and I knew, I believed, I don't want to say I knew, but I very much believed that this is the way to do it. So having that faith in I've got to go digital all in. I will get to a much deeper level.

[00:14:21] Eventually I'm going to figure out like on a much deeper level, what are those needs of the customers? Because that's inherently already like part of the company DNA... whether we do trade shows or we do digital, our focus is always what is it that you want and what you need ultimately.

[00:14:40] So I believe that we're going to get there, even if it didn't get communicated through the digital, in our. Experimental try phase, in that beginning phase eventually we would figure it out and get there.

[00:14:54] **Andy Murray:** [00:14:54] I've just, I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but I am thinking a bit to understand the magic here, because it is quite a story.

[00:15:01] And so many other people have come up against these barriers and haven't really broken through. And you have one of the things I think is so important in trying to go off on a quest like this is, don't think about the objective of how many or whatever, but think about what outcome you want your customer to have.

[00:15:18] As a result of you solving their problems. And it does feel like your content strategy is very much focused on what is the outcome I want them to have. I want to be able to apply nails in a better way. I want to solve some of their challenges, but how much do you think about what's really the outcome I'm after

[00:15:36] **Habib Salo:** [00:15:36] here.

[00:15:38] You no pun intended. You nailed it.

[00:15:44] It's that is our content strategy, Andy. It is too often. I see companies putting out content on social and it's, so it's as if we're going to take it like a commercial that we've done on television. And we're just going to put it on social, right? The con content marketing. For me.

[00:16:09] And what's worked for us is all about solving the customer's problems, problem solving for them. And that's the value proposition that's why they consume our content. I love it. Honestly, that is how you connect on social media, plain and simple if you solve their problem. And then they're going to continue to watch your content and the whole buy my product is it.

[00:16:42] We have a very indirect, I always say we have a very indirect sales approach. It's never a product. First, customers first, we're going to solve your problem. And then if you give us a shot and buy our product later, we believe that you are going to be a very loyal customer because you're not buying based on any trickery or magic or like oohs and aaahs.

[00:17:13] You're buying our product because we helped you solve a problem. And so now there's, we've established trust. And then, so if we establish trust and then you buy our product, the loyalty factor is through the ceiling.

[00:17:27] **Andy Murray:** [00:17:27] I could see. Yeah, I, that is better. So good. And it is a deeper level of customer understanding because a lot of advertising, if once they get past the selling bit you see a lot of influencer marketing where if I was in the nail business and I was doing what you're doing, I might be really tempted to just show them celebrities and influencers with beautiful nails.

[00:17:46] And that's it. And then maybe an ad or two thrown in there. But you don't do that. You do have some of that, but it's much, much more around solving their problem, teaching the customers that you have. And so it is a deeper level and you could see where somebody new on this journey might just start wanting to put out beauty shots.

[00:18:04] Even if it's not selling just to inspire thinking, that's the best

[00:18:07] **Habib Salo:** [00:18:07] way. Yeah. So we. We do have that also, we have an influencer strategy that is part of it. We also do where we're partnered with celebrities and fashion shows high profile that we're part of. We do all the nails for them, these fashion shows that are just they're insane, but that's secondary for us.

[00:18:30] It is. It's the. It's the icing on the cake for us. It's not the cake. The cake for us is value. It is solving their problem. It's almost so simple that it, I guess that's where the frustration can come sometimes where, when I'm trying to talk to another business owner and I'm telling them, they look at me like, come on, there's no way that would be it.

[00:18:56] And it's unlike. If you focus on the customer, if you actually solve their problem and put out consistent daily content where you are offering that, you're going to see results. See

[00:19:12] **Andy Murray:** [00:19:12] That is great. One of the barriers I've heard honestly have heard is that if we open up that channel to say Instagram,

[00:19:20] **Habib Salo:** [00:19:20] Or Facebook, we don't have a way

[00:19:23] **Andy Murray:** [00:19:23] to you spawned the customer.

[00:19:24] We want our customers coming in through the call centers. And if you, cause we can track them, we can log them. We can see if there's follow-up, but if they start putting comments everywhere and we don't respond, that's going to turn to a negative experience for them. So how much did you have to rethink your customer service side too?

[00:19:41] Catch those or do you monitor well, do you monitor those channels for feedback and follow up? If a customer says, Hey, this didn't work. I tried that



[00:19:49] **Habib Salo:** [00:19:49] deal with that. Yeah, that's a, that is a great question. And it's a real it's a real conundrum for a lot of companies. I could see that. And so in order to resolve that problem, we hired a community, man, this community manager, monitors, all comments.

[00:20:09] Across all platforms. So I can say that the majority of, because when you open up all these platforms, that is true. Customer service questions, come through comments, direct messages. They can come through email all of a sudden it's scattered. But what we do is. We set up a community manager that basically creates like a funnel and funnels all the customer service questions from direct messages to comments all the way down into a few emails within customer service so that I can say that 99% of it gets taken care of.

[00:20:51] So we have like customer service through. Our, we have a Facebook community where we see tons of questions come through. We funnel those to an email. We funnel them to, we have what we use on our website. We do customer service there, but all of it gets funneled and it's really important to have a community manager that's tracking comments so that you can pick up.

[00:21:13] Those are customer service issues resolved.

[00:21:17] **Andy Murray:** [00:21:17] That's great. And I'm going to, again, try to put words in your mouth a little bit, but I'd assume that when you started this journey day one on this path, that wasn't necessarily a problem that was going to be top of mind, or you probably didn't have a solution to, but.

[00:21:30] You solved it when you got to it, that's it. And if you were to stack up all the problems, like a typical corporate planning project, you're going to give a three-year planning thing or there's some kind of timeline and you try to get all the waterfall details down and answer all the questions before you get started, but you take them as quick as they come.

[00:21:47] You solve them, you keep going. That's really what agile is about. That's what a quest is you need to get moving. You can't steer a parked car. And so you can't solve these problems all in one go, you've got to give yourself some time to go solve them along the way. So again, that particular problem is a big one, but it doesn't always show up when you get started.

[00:22:05] Cause you don't know.

[00:22:06] **Habib Salo:** [00:22:06] We didn't have that problem. We got started to your point. We didn't hire a community manager until a year and a half ago, coming up on two years. So the first year and a half, we didn't have that issue. And then we were. As we were building, more followers in the comments started coming in more and more in the DMS.



[00:22:30] We knew, okay, we have to hire it. Now. It's how to hire a community manager so that we can make sure that everything is handled. So it is a build as we go. And especially since we didn't have any sort of anyone to follow on this, so right. For us it's we really have to figure this out as we go.

[00:22:50] And we're building structure, we built infrastructure around this now. We have a nice machine that's going and we understand even when new platforms come out Tik TOK. We understand how to okay, this is what we're going to do to set the content strategy. This we're going to handle comments.

[00:23:06] So all of it now gets handled much quicker, but that just comes with with a little bit of experience and then dealing with it as it comes, as you've said,

[00:23:15] **Andy Murray:** [00:23:15] Yeah. What, if you look at trying to do this at scale, like you guys are doing, there's a lot of things that you could be thinking about the actual topics, all of these elements.

[00:23:24] But my experience has been workflow is a secret, like secret weapon, superpower. And if you're not, if you're just a full right brain and Ben don't get mad at me, but if

[00:23:35] **Habib Salo:** [00:23:35] you're a full right brain

[00:23:36] **Andy Murray:** [00:23:36] guy, and don't have any left brain. Ben's got a lot of left brain but if it's the creative community can get a bit frustrated by the By the processes.

[00:23:49] And, but if you don't have a good workflow in this environment to make it work, you'll just get run over. And so how do you harmonize the importance of having a tight workflow that lets you do this at scale? And yet the creative urge to everything is a bit more bespoke or not so much the process part of it.

[00:24:09] **Habib Salo:** [00:24:09] So we have that, that took a little bit of time to figure out. And I want to say first, if you don't have a workflow you, again you're really hitting the head, the nail on the head with this stuff. Andy, you will get consumed with so much chaos if you do not have a workflow, because a lot of people, when they, when you start posting volume, it can feel so overwhelming so fast and you can get lost in where am I posting or what do I do?

[00:24:45] I've got YouTube, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Tik Tok, Instagram stories. What am I doing lives? You have to have logistics. And so we have. Structure. We had to set up structure because as we were growing and starting to post on more platforms, we were getting lost in that truth, because when you start putting out volume without knowing where stuff is going or having a solid workflow, you just get lost in the chaos.



[00:25:13] So the people, the creatives, I will say for the most part. They're focused on being creative and our videography and editing team. They're more, they've got more experience when it comes to workflow and setting that up. And then we have some designers that are just, they do all the overlays on the creative.

[00:25:39] **Andy Murray:** [00:25:39] Yeah. They

[00:25:41] **Habib Salo:** [00:25:41] pretty much stick to the creative. But I'm a student of, I just love logistics. I love how things work. I'm definitely involved in that process, but we had to set that up and it wasn't easy once we set it up. Now you're talking about scaling. It's not an issue at all.

[00:26:02] And on top of that, now that we have our workflow setup, we can. We can pump out 50 to 70 pieces of content a day and I'm not even probably believable. No, I have zero stress because we have the flow. We have those processes dialed in and everybody knows what they're doing. How

[00:26:24] **Andy Murray:** [00:26:24] about, you're a very senior guy at the seal C-suite how much do you know.

[00:26:29] About how to do these steps. Did you delegate at all or, and just stay in a high level leadership or can you actually put your hands on things and get them done if you had to?

[00:26:41] **Habib Salo:** [00:26:41] I had, I did the majority of it in the beginning. I had my hands directly involved and the reason is First of all, there was nobody else to do it in the beginning.

[00:26:53] So I didn't have a choice I had. Yeah.

[00:26:59] But even as we started growing, I waited just a little bit before bringing people in because I wanted to, this was, again, this is all new. It's this there's no. There was nobody to follow that had already done it. In my industry, so for me, it was, I have to learn this and then once we start getting it down, I can train, I'll know how to hire, I'll know how to bring people in.

[00:27:24] I know what I'm looking for. So I had, I had to get my hands dirty. So for the first two years, I literally was doing the shooting, the editing. Instagram stories. I had one other person help me with Instagram posts, but her and I were doing all of it as we started to scale. At that point I knew what I needed in terms of, okay, I'm going to offload just the videography portion, I'll do the editing.

[00:27:54] And then once we got there it was funny when we brought in the editor. On her first day, she was like, so you want to give me direction? And I was like, you know what? No, just do it. And this is how

we're going to learn. Like you just do it. And in my head, I was thinking, even if I'm not a hundred percent like that, I like it.

[00:28:16] We're still going to post it. And then I'll tell her, Hey, this is great. But. If we could just dial this in a little bit more this a little bit more, but you keep doing it. And my gosh, not only did she like pick it up like that, first of all, she's a pro, so she's way better than me. She has taken it to a whole nother level and now she's got total independence and complete control and I trust her a thousand percent.

[00:28:40] So it pulled me completely out of it. And

[00:28:43] **Andy Murray:** [00:28:43] the other thing you just said there, that I've noticed on people taking on these kinds of big quest and doing things is having people come in and not necessarily just cooperate or participate, but co-create, and you let her co-create, which people will commit to what they co-create.

[00:29:01] I don't know if you thought that through, but at the time, but it's if she does it the way you did it, it's personal for her. She's not just doing what Habib says and if it was bad then that's what he told me to do. Versus her investing herself in it was that part of the magic in your head?

[00:29:16] **Habib Salo:** [00:29:16] It in my head, it was part, it was because I've had experience historically, I'm a micromanager, I'm guilty of it historically, and it hasn't worked. Always had trouble scaling or bringing people in because it's exactly what you said when they made a mistake. They don't take up that they didn't have ownership of it.

[00:29:39] So it's not my fault. That's right. So probably around five or six years ago, I started letting go, like letting things go and allowing people to make mistakes and develop. So I had the benefit of seeing that work. So when we brought her in, her name is Victoria. The first day, it was just like, you take it, it's yours, you do it.

[00:30:04] And then we'll talk about it after and together. And we'll look at how we can improve and make it better. And she had total ownership of it. It was like you said, it was, she was doing the video. She was editing. It was hers. And now she has, it's an unbeliever. Now, if

[00:30:20] **Andy Murray:** [00:30:20] you go in there and touch it, she's going to say it's mine.

[00:30:23] **Habib Salo:** [00:30:23] Yeah, exactly. And I don't, I stay out of it. And what does that do for me? Obviously the loss to scale I can, like now I'm looking into Twitch space, I'm looking in the gaming space and how can we incorporate art found in gaming? And so I can focus on what I'm supposed to as a CEO, which is.



[00:30:42] Setting the vision for the company growing the company in this digital space, this world, so now we're entering different zones and it's getting really interesting.

[00:30:52] **Andy Murray:** [00:30:52] Congratulations on that. I tell you, leaders that have been born to micromanage it is so hard to change that habit, to let go and knowing that letting go means it may not be the quality you wanted.

[00:31:04] And you're in this death spiral you're pulling out of and you're coming up and you want to keep that momentum going and yeah, it's just a whole mentality around it's okay. To make mistakes, fail fast. And learning fast. That's just a powerful idea. One of the things that I think happens when you go on a big venture, like what you're doing is that it's not necessarily what you find on the outside, on the other side of it, that is so interesting and new and concrete growth, but it's what it does to you.

[00:31:31] As a leader, how it changes you and that's and the team, and it changes a team. And the mindset on that. What, if you look back at the kind of leader you were before you started this journey and where you are now, what are some of the things it's like this journey has changed me.

[00:31:46] **Habib Salo:** [00:31:46] Oh my gosh. I mean talk about I'm like a loss for words, because. Before this journey started. I am not only a different leader, I was a different person and I didn't, I still had some of that micromanaging in me. I thought my way here, my way is the best. And number two, you should be working as hard as me, even though I'm the owner.

[00:32:20] And, you're an employee. And like you should be putting in the 15 hours a day that I'm putting in, into this business. I had these really very interesting ideas of what a business owner and as a person too, and through this journey, As, understanding how to scale the business has meant.

[00:32:43] It's all about people. It's all about. First of all, I have to let go. I can't scale the business micromanaging. I can't focus on the vision and the journey and where young males are going to go and setting the course. If I'm so busy on how, someone is editing. Like two seconds of a video, I'm not happy about it.

[00:33:04] And I want you to go back and recut it and change it. Letting go trust, like really trusting people. And also, I used to be somebody that would lead with more, just, I would get mad at things and show disappointment versus encouraging and saying it don't worry, make like now I understand.

[00:33:25] How important is to make all these errors and let them own the mistakes. Because, and then really being the encouraging one, Hey, don't worry about it. We're going to do this. I'm here to support

you, what you need from me. And I just, as a person, I can bring that up too. Like that, that works in life, not just in my blood.

[00:33:53] I've completely changed. It has. Yeah. It's had a huge impact on me, Andy.

[00:33:57] **Andy Murray:** [00:33:57] That's great. You can still have ways to provide quality feedback. I know we were doing when I was at ASTO probably I think about 12,000 pieces of creative a year. You think about a big retailer and I couldn't. Look at the word.

[00:34:09] There's no way, but what I did was every month or so we do one wall, we'd walk the wall and we just put up everything we did or for a month or something like that. And then just take a look at it retrospectively and say, do we see any trends here of how we, how's our copy doing?

[00:34:25] How's the design, are we feeling good about it but not trying to do it in flow. Where you're approving and sending things back and saying what's wrong with you. This is, you just can't or you become a monster, you become a monster because of the pressure in this pace and the trying to do it.

[00:34:40] But you still see, can send signals about quality and what you care about, but do it retrospectively and just pick it up on the next round, going forward is the

[00:34:48] **Habib Salo:** [00:34:48] way I do it. So

[00:34:49] **Andy Murray:** [00:34:49] Do you do any kind of walks, reviews and such?

[00:34:52] **Habib Salo:** [00:34:52] Yes. So all like I watch, I try to consume. As much of our content as possible. It's hard to consume all of it cause we put out so much but as I patch stuff, as I see stuff and catch something, I'll bring it back to the team and just say, Hey, on this, just moving forward.

[00:35:09] It's exactly what you said.

[00:35:10] **Andy Murray:** [00:35:10] Moving forward.

[00:35:11] **Habib Salo:** [00:35:11] I don't care. Like it posted. Fine. I don't, I honestly, it doesn't bother me at all. Moving forward. Let's do this for the new style or whatever it is we're doing, but it's always moving forward.

[00:35:24] **Andy Murray:** [00:35:24] Okay. Do you have a story on one that you've posted that you were like,

[00:35:27] **Habib Salo:** [00:35:27] Oh, I can't believe we did that many.

[00:35:31] **Andy Murray:** [00:35:31] Tell us

[00:35:32] **Habib Salo:** [00:35:32] one, please. So there were, okay. So I didn't actually post it, but. This is a story I always tell at the time Tracy, she's our general manager. And at the time back, three and a half years ago, she was posting on Instagram and she was posting these pictures of nails. And I opened my phone and I was like, What are you posting?

[00:35:53] Like the quality of the pictures were awful. They were dark. Like you couldn't see the nails, you couldn't see the hand. I was terrified. I called her and I said, you cannot post these pictures. This is terrible. And I want you to remove them. And her answer to me, this is one of those moments where it was a light bulb moment.

[00:36:12] Also. She said, Habib. Did you, have you looked at the pictures and seen how they've done? No, I don't care how they did it. They're terrible pickers. People like them. So I started going through, on the phone with her and I was like, Oh my gosh, there's like tons of comments and so much engagement in likes.

[00:36:31] And she'd go look at the ones that are perfect. And so I went to the Photoshop nails and they did not perform well. And I was like, Oh my gosh. I actually know. I thought I knew I actually don't know what does well, the market is telling me the market is the ultimate judge and jury they're saying they like, they want real nails.

[00:36:57] They want, they don't want the Photoshop stuff. They want real salon nails. And it, again, that was another moment where my perspective was shifted and I was like, Wow. I actually don't know what's good or not. I can have an opinion, but I got a post-it to see the market. I have to post to get a feel for where the market is.

[00:37:24] I can't assume. I know. And that's how we started on the path of like volume content in was by

[00:37:30] **Andy Murray:** [00:37:30] that's brilliant. That's a total Gary V response to the content. We'll get you quality. It's not better than content and it's just such a mind bender for so many people.

[00:37:41] **Habib Salo:** [00:37:41] It is.

[00:37:42] It's very, and it was for me too, honestly. Like I understand how it's very difficult to understand that, but you have to put it out. To see what is the market vibing on? And then you get your feedback and then you just start to dial it in. You dial the quality and, Oh, I see. They like this style of nails right now.



[00:38:02] Boom boom. We start dialing it in. We start just tweaking the content a little more narrow towards what the market wants but you have to put it out to see it's exactly right.

[00:38:12] **Andy Murray:** [00:38:12] Was there any discussion as you guys were going through this strategy on what should go out as under Habib or under young nails?

[00:38:20] Like how did you land on this approach? That you're going to be pretty much a brand voice than necessarily an individual.

[00:38:29] **Habib Salo:** [00:38:29] We did have that conversation and the brand had a lot more it was much more known. It was well established already. So building on the brand seemed like the most logical thing to do.

[00:38:47] And I put ideally, it'd be great to do both to build my personal brand. And also the young yells brand. I work on my personal brand. I have my Instagram, my LinkedIn, I do that. But for me, honestly, the. The young nails brand is at the forefront. As time has opened up I've been able to work on my personal brand a little bit more, and I want to start developing that a little bit more because I want to start potentially getting into.

[00:39:19] Maybe different things down the road. And that would give me the opportunity to so well,

[00:39:23] **Andy Murray:** [00:39:23] you've got a great story to tell that goes beyond, in addition to young nails, in terms of how to teach and help people think through these concepts that are bigger than I want to say bigger, but it's a different audience per se, than the audience through young nails might reach on an everyday basis.

[00:39:39] I follow what you're doing. To decipher because I think you ship your organization. And so when I see your organization at those speeds I'm counting, I'm looking through your feeds. I'm counting how many Instagram posts are doing this versus what I'm categorizing, I'm saying, cause he knows something here.

[00:39:55] And how many times there's the sales and it might be one in seven. Or so might be, here's a new item or whatever, that's a salesy thing. And then the rest are value add. And I think there's something to be learned by, looking at what people are talking about and trying to reverse engineer that.

[00:40:12] **Habib Salo:** [00:40:12] Yeah. No, I'm I, and I love talking about that and I love teaching or showing. And sharing our experience to anybody that is open to bringing that into the organization. And



that, that would be the reason I'm, I am interested in kind of building a personal brand. there is a different audience for that, workers and business people.

[00:40:34] And I'm very excited to start sharing that knowledge, that I can, because. I just can't it's even today, it's I see my mom and I see my brother and we still would just go, this is insane. What is happening with our company, the growth, and like just the growth of our company.

[00:40:56] It's. It's beyond our wildest dreams. That's crazy.

[00:41:04] **Andy Murray:** [00:41:04] That's why I like your story because not a lot of people have heard of it in the business community in terms of what you've done. And it's a great example of a traditional company going through a digital transformation and coming out the other side and actually getting growth.

[00:41:17] That's like crazy unexpected growth.

[00:41:21] **Habib Salo:** [00:41:21] Craze now and expected. Yes.

[00:41:23] **Andy Murray:** [00:41:23] Yeah. So people that if I was young enough to come work for you and

[00:41:27] **Habib Salo:** [00:41:27] join your team,

[00:41:29] **Andy Murray:** [00:41:29] What skills would I, how would you evaluate, and does Andy have what it takes to be on my team?

[00:41:35] **Habib Salo:** [00:41:35] Yeah. But as you're looking at people that's another great question.

[00:41:38] So for us it's not so much about what skills you have, that's very secondary. It's communication. It is we really try to get to know, it's hard to get to know somebody after two interviews in our job, but our focus is the person, who are you as a human being.

[00:41:59] And if you have the drive and desire to learn then I believe you can learn anything, more important than the skill. If you have basic funds, if we're hiring, let's say for, in, in editing and let's say you had just basic editing skills. And then there was another person that came in that special effects and can do set up sets and understands lighting.

[00:42:25] But the person that had just the basics, if you were like that very little experience, but had basic knowledge, but you, I was like, you know what, Andy is. He's an amazing guy. I love him. I love his



vibe and his energy. I'm hiring Andy a hundred percent of the time. It's not even a, it's not even a question for me.

[00:42:44] And because the vibe and the culture when someone is inspired, even if they have a basic fundamental, just. In an area. If they're inspired they're gonna learn, they're gonna figure out and learn. But where we see long-term success in, in, hiring our team, it's focusing on the person on, on, just very basics of who you are as a human being.

[00:43:13] And that's what I want to know. And that's how I help.

[00:43:16] **Andy Murray:** [00:43:16] That's great, man. That is super, super inspiring. Ben, you're a creative guy. YNR is a creative director and how's all this striking you. I'd love to hear your thoughts.

[00:43:26] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:43:26] I'm actually curious about the impact this has had on your brand identity.

[00:43:31] I wonder if you think of yourself as a product company? And it sounds almost like you're a marketing company now that happens to have a product to fulfill. What impact has the translation as transition had on you?

[00:43:44] **Habib Salo:** [00:43:44] That is a great question. We identified today as almost two companies in one where we identify as a marketing company that sells nail products today.

[00:43:57] And you could literally drop, any pro we're actually looking at, Young males, cough. Like I'm very passionate about coffee. We're actually looking at bringing in a coffee brand like young male coffee

[00:44:08] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:44:08] beans.

[00:44:09] **Habib Salo:** [00:44:09] Yeah, absolutely. Exactly. We have the structure there, but it's because we do identify that way now a marketing firm that just happens to sell

[00:44:19] **Andy Murray:** [00:44:19] my product.

[00:44:20] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:44:20] So if I could borrow some of. The big quest language. It's like your biggest problem that you're trying to solve for the customer or your biggest outcome. There was a tectonic shift there in terms of how you looked at the company. So that's very interesting. I would like to hear what you've talked about at night and day shift how do you quantify that?

[00:44:40] What is the, what are some of the things that you look at when you say, Oh my gosh, I can't believe we're this.



[00:44:47] **Habib Salo:** [00:44:47] So when I go out in the warehouse and I see that the entire logistics of our operations has changed from. Palletizing too. We have seven different pack-out stations now, four, and then we have a full pick pack and ship area for individual orders.

[00:45:13] It, and I see racks coming in, picking, and then it goes through that machine and we're continuing to develop that. That's one thing that's Oh my gosh look at us now. Like we're a. We're a direct to consumer company. Even in our operations, obviously when I look at the growth, that's the obvious one is the growth in revenue.

[00:45:31] When I look at like, when we do a sale now, like a black Friday sale and it's what we used to do an entire year. We're doing it for a week. That is it's hard to, I'll tell you, not even an entire week. What we did in the first hour of the black Friday sale is what we did in an entire year, three years ago.

[00:45:54] That's where you see, I actually did a screenshot of it because I couldn't believe it. I had my wife. I said, I was like, honey, come here, watch this, just watch this. And then the clock hit nine from nine to 10. We did more in an hour than we did an entire year, three years ago. And her jaw dropped and I took, I couldn't believe it.

[00:46:13] I took a screenshot of it because. Those are the things that tell me. Okay. W we're a different company and this stuff works. It really works.

[00:46:22] **Andy Murray:** [00:46:22] You, this is also a big shift from B2B, not from B2B, but to ad B2C because you still have the big business on the distribution side. But then, from a marketer's perspective, that's a whole different kettle of fish.

[00:46:34] And have you applied some of that same innovative thinking to customer emails or. Cause now you, you didn't really have a business in email marketing or, cause a lot of people are chasing this and feel like the end game there is personalization one-to-one but that adds a lot of complexity.

[00:46:49] Maybe that is the end game. I don't know. But how do you think about where marketing is going to go for you in terms of personalization and now building this new muscle of direct to consumer connection where you don't even have to use

[00:47:02] **Habib Salo:** [00:47:02] the platforms

[00:47:02] **Andy Murray:** [00:47:02] because you can usually, you can connect them with email.

[00:47:04] **Habib Salo:** [00:47:04] Yeah. We've had to really invest in integrating so that our communications can happen in the most efficient way. So basically like from our Shopify all the way into



our ERP system, it's all integrated. So that way we have complete visibility on. People that are on an email list, but they're not a customer yet people that have purchased in the last 30 days, 60 days, 180 days, people that have added product to cart, but have not purchased.

[00:47:43] We have visibility that you've ordered this color nail Polish and 90% of the time people usually buy this, but you didn't. We have so that when we do communicate with you, it's, it is going to be more on a personal level because we have the data and the understanding, and then we even carry that out into our social media marketing, because we have it set up that, we can see when somebody visits a product, we can see.

[00:48:14] You purchased, you added to cart, but didn't buy, or maybe you haven't purchased the last six months, but we can even communicate through advertising in social media, not even through email, Hey, we'd love to see you back. Here's a, here's a temper, we could do that as a 10% coupon.

[00:48:29] We usually don't do that. So because we've had to really invest in the technology in our community, on. How is the information organized that allows us to communicate with, do you on a more personal level, like what are you really looking for? What are your wants? You bought this, do you know that we have this, or we see that maybe you're not pairing certain products correctly, let us send out to this group and see, make their salon experience better because we know this product goes really well with this.

[00:49:03] We can start to customize that. And we are doing that. We're, we just keep adding we just have a lot of visibility into our data.

[00:49:11] **Andy Murray:** [00:49:11] That's great. That's great. And I like the fact you use groups and grouping and clustering to be able to trigger those and go after it, and then necessarily everything trying to get to one-to-one.

[00:49:20] That's a whole nother beast, but you probably could get there. I don't know.

[00:49:24] **Habib Salo:** [00:49:24] And we, even though we do communicate in groups and clusters like that, the one-on-one we still keep that. Open. So DM people directly. If I see a customer service issue, if they complain on one of our platforms, all DM I'm on Facebook and say, Hey, it's a beep.

[00:49:39] Reach out to our customer service. They're going to take care of you. And that's all I got to say. And they're just like, Oh my gosh, the owner actually DM. And I do that. Greg does that. We still add that personal touch in there so that. Because I never want to lose that. I

[00:49:53] **Andy Murray:** [00:49:53] never know. It's probably got a word of mouth effect too.



[00:49:56] That's pretty powerful way beyond that. Not that you do it for that reason, but I, you could see the knock on effect of that

[00:50:02] **Habib Salo:** [00:50:02] for sure. For sure.

[00:50:04] **Andy Murray:** [00:50:04] Wow. Was there anything else that you'd like to share? This has been a masterclass actually in how to get close to a customer and take on a big quest.

[00:50:12] I just can't, I can't say enough of how impressed I've been with what you're doing.

[00:50:16] **Habib Salo:** [00:50:16] Thank you so much, Andy. No, I'm just I hope I hope other companies are inspired to do the same. It, there's nothing that makes me happier than to see then would be to see somebody take this on and see results for themselves.

[00:50:30] So I just hope that, if there's one person that listens to this and they take on the journey and see results, that would make me so happy.

[00:50:38] **Andy Murray:** [00:50:38] When there might be a few university students that will be looking for a job the way you described that, it said it's a pretty compelling place to work.

[00:50:47] I can tell you that much.

[00:50:48] **Habib Salo:** [00:50:48] No, I'd love to talk to anybody about that. So be happy to do

[00:50:52] **Andy Murray:** [00:50:52] Excellent. Thank you very much. A B this has been an amazing program. I really appreciate your thoughts and good luck to you as you continue the journey and let us know how we can help share the word of what you're doing and what you're learning, because it's, there's a lot there to benefit from.

[00:51:05] So thank you.

[00:51:05] **Habib Salo:** [00:51:05] Thank you so much.