

Episode 4

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Anytime Fitness, Lyle Endsley, fitness entrepreneurship, gym ownership, taking risks, Loco Depot, downtown Bellefontaine, loft apartments, franchise business, career change, Montgomery Ward building, Dash and Joey's, business coaching, getting out of comfort zone, health and wellness

SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Lyle Endsley, Ethan DeLeon

J

Jason Duff 00:00

I think part of the success that we've had really relies heavily on getting the right mindset, the right people. And the other thing is, is if you don't succeed, or maybe your idea doesn't take off, like being able to pivot quickly. Um, and you know, where Lyle has been just such a tremendous resource is that because of his experience, he's very quick to, to pick people up when they need that hand up. But he's also very quick to speak from experience and say, hey, you know, I You need to get back to the gym. You need to get more disciplined about this. And I think those, those fitness analogies are great for life and for business too.

E

Ethan DeLeon 00:39

Hey everyone, my name is Ethan DeLeon and I'm here with our founder and CEO, Jason Duff. Today we have someone who operates as a coach and a consultant to our team and a local entrepreneur, Lyle Ensley. We want to welcome you to the Friday Small Talk podcast where we try to share some of the valuable lessons with what we have learned about entrepreneurship, real estate, economic development, and more. The point of this podcast is really to create value for you, the listener, and to create a space to learn, talk about what's trending, and inspire others. So Jason, would you like to introduce our guest for us?

J

Jason Duff 01:14

Thanks, Ethan. Yeah, I'd love to. Today, excited to have Lyle Inslee on. He is the founder and CEO of Anytime Fitness of Lima, and he'll share more about the journey of selling that, and then Anytime Fitness of Bellefontaine and the Loco Depot. But Lyle's been a friend and just someone I've really admired and as a mentor the past several years, getting to know him, his DNA, his leadership, his just coaching and support is all throughout Small Nation and through downtown Bellefontaine. So it's great to have him on the show today.

L

Lyle Endsley 01:49

Hey, appreciate you having me.

J**Jason Duff** 01:50

Yeah, welcome, Lyle. So as someone who graduated from the Lima area, can you wanna, you wanna break down a little bit where you're from and how you got involved in the community?

L**Lyle Endsley** 01:59

Sure, a little bit of a story, but yeah, Born and raised in Lima, Ohio. Went to Shawnee High School. Nice. Graduated and went to Bowling Green State University. I think just like Adam, my major was communications, radio, television, film. And, you know, I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to do, but I knew I wanted to do something in the media. And about that time, cable was starting to come around, actually. TBS, which started out as Channel 17. You're too young for that, but I figured that's maybe where I wanted to go. And so I started down that path and went, uh, to South Carolina first and worked at some cable companies. And, um, just through some moves and everything else, uh, I ended up at a newspaper in, in Georgia. Um, oh, you moved all over the place. Yeah, I, I counted one time all the times I've moved, and it's a lot. So I've learned to, uh, minimize. Yeah. Uh, you know, my stuff. But, uh, yeah, I started in, in Columbus, Georgia. That was really the beginning of what I'd say my career with newspaper circulation marketing. I was public affairs manager for a couple of years and then was there 5 years, went to Toledo, which got me closer to home. Both our kids were born in Columbus, but I wanted to get closer to Ohio with the grandparents and everything. And so took a job at Toledo Blade from '91 to '98 and worked various positions there, worked my way up from operations manager to assistant circulation director. And then I got contacted by a headhunter to go to the LA Times. Nice. Around '97. And never thought I would go west. And actually, I turned the first offer down. It just— I did the math on what it would— the cost of living and everything else. But 6 months later, they came back around to me again. Didn't quite give me what I wanted, but it was close enough that I made the jump knowing that I couldn't have gone much farther in Toledo, so I knew that the ceiling was a lot higher in LA and loved it. A great time, spent 7 years there and then finished my career in newspapers at the Sacramento Bee. And so that was my last 3 years.

J**Jason Duff** 04:11

So what kind of work did you do while you were out in California with the newspaper?

L**Lyle Endsley** 04:15

A lot of fun stuff, actually. I was always in circulation marketing. I'd say probably my favorite jobs, I took over all of single copy operations. Which are the racks and the papers you buy at stores. So I worked with a lot of retail partners and I hosted a lot of events at the Staples Center, Dodger Stadium. I was able to take batting practice there.

J**Jason Duff** 04:38

Wow.

L

Lyle Endsley 04:38

Um, you know, I hosted a lot of games at the Staples Center. And, um, you know, when you're, when you're doing it, you don't really think that much about it. But when you look back later, you think, hey, that was pretty cool.

J

Jason Duff 04:48

Yeah, I was just going to ask you that. I think I have that teed up as like, what is your— what is one of the craziest stories or coolest experiences you got to like while working?

L

Lyle Endsley 04:55

Well, I'll tell you Well, there's quite a few stories, but this one sticks out that I was, at one time I was overseeing the Orange County edition. It was in Costa Mesa. They had two editions. They had the LA and then they had, there was the Orange County Register out there, which was a competitor. So they actually had a LA edition in Orange County. And so I was overseeing that. And the guy that I worked with got some tickets for the baseball game for the Anaheim Angels. I think they're Los Angeles Angels, but back then they were Anaheim Angels. And he goes, hey, why don't you come to the game with me tonight? So I went home, came back, and, you know, we had like dugout seats. I mean, these were like right behind home plate, you know, and, you know, the suite, the food and all this other stuff. And I come walking up and he goes, where's Chad? That's my son. And he had wanted me to bring him to the game with me. And I didn't realize that. So it was the Mariners. Ken Griffey Jr. was there. They're playing the national anthem. And he kind of nudges me. I look back and Ken Griffey Jr. had come into our suite and was taking some potato chips and stuff. And so I have that memory. He doesn't.

J

Jason Duff 06:00

Did you break the heart of your son when he told—



Lyle Endsley 06:02

I did tell him. I made it up in other areas with him. You know, we went, you know, the Staples and saw Lakers game and all that kind of stuff. But it was a lot of fun. But as most people know, newspapers about that time around 2000, early 2000s, the internet just really wreaked havoc with, uh, you know, the paper industry. And I, I knew that, uh, I was either gonna have to, you know, suck it up and just say, you know, this is a dying industry, and, you know, I could probably hang around for 15 years and count my days of the calendar and, and survive. Yeah. Or, you know, I was gonna have to do something else, and, uh I went to Sacramento. I was probably about ready to, to leave the industry anyways, but my former boss had moved up there and sweet-talked me into, hey, come join me. And I did for 3 years, and it was good. It gave me time to kind of, you know, look back and, and think what I wanted to do. And yeah, he was very supportive. And, uh, and that's when I made the change in my career. I finally decided it was time for something different. I, you know, when you're 45, 46 and suddenly you're looking to make a career change, um, you have to really kind of take that leap. And, and it's all I knew, but through the course of managing divisions, people, you know, you can duplicate that in, in a lot of different fields. And I'd, I'd started working out probably 30 years prior, and I always said I loved going to the gym. And I figured, gosh, if I could just go to the gym, take a shower, and be at work, man, I'd be a happy guy. So I started pursuing, you know, the fitness world. And, and I was out, you know, in California, and 24 Hour Fitness was big, and they had their headquarters out there. So I thought, maybe I'll, you know, run one of their big facilities, or maybe I'll try and get a job at corporate. And it was my son who was going to Fresno State, and he was getting his degree in exercise science, and he's the one that said, you know, why don't you just think smaller, Dad? Why don't you look at maybe having your own gym? But you don't need a Gold's Gym or something large where you have to have a huge net worth. And that's when I, I discovered Anytime Fitness. So this was about 2008. Anytime Fitness started in 2002, so they were still fairly new. And I visited a couple places. I was impressed with their model. I started doing research. They had where you could call in and they'd give you information. And I actually purchased a territory in the Sacramento area, one of the suburbs. But it wasn't too long after that that I found out my dad, who was still back here in Ohio, developed Alzheimer's. And it was one of those life-changing moments that I said, you know, I could do this probably in Lima. I knew I needed to get closer to home because my sister was in Georgia and she was going to be coming back. And, you know, I knew that my mom would need my support. And so, so yeah, I changed it. And, and I knew, you know, I'd always come back to Lima to visit the family. They had no facility like that. They had no 24-hour facility. And I made that leap, uh, right at the end of 2008 when everything was crashing. The real estate, it was just, it was bad times. And a lot of people, you know, you look back and you say, oh my gosh, I can't believe you did that. Um, and I had family members at the time that would come up to me and say, you know, Lyle, I know, I know you're, you're pretty smart, but man, I hope you know what you're doing. Yeah. And, but when you get in— yeah, when you, when you get in that mode, and, and again, I, I never thought having my own business or anything. It never crossed my mind. But once you get to that point and you're all in, especially if it's something you're passionate about— and my son ended up coming with me. He was graduating and said he'd give me 2 years. And I remember telling him, I said, hey, Chad, failure is not an option. You know, we're going to be successful. We're going to do whatever it takes. And so, you know, we moved into, you know, my in-laws' old house that was vacant. It was like probably 1,000 square feet, had a basement. He lived in the

basement. We— but we worked all the time. I was in there early, he was there late, and we built it from the ground up. And, you know, you learn a lot about yourself, and you, you know, you just— it's the grind, and, and you just learn as you go. And, and it— I think that's probably what has helped me over the years now of, of opening other businesses, expanding the gym, and also talking with other small business owners that get the itch. And typically what I'll tell them is, if you're going to go into business, make sure it's something that you're passionate about. If you choose a business just because you think, well, I think I could make a lot of money doing this, yeah, it's probably not going to work very well.

J

Jason Duff 10:49

Yeah, that's good.

L

Lyle Endsley 10:50

Um, you know, pick something you enjoy, pick your passion, and then the money will come. It may not make you rich, but it's going to make you happy because you're going to put in a lot of hours. And, and I'd have people all the time stop in the gym in Lima when I was first starting, and I'd be there on a Sunday and I'd be catching up doing work and stuff, and they'd say, God, do you ever, do you ever go home? Or do you, you know, I said, honestly, I said, I worked over 20 years. This isn't work. To me. This was something I loved doing, and, and I enjoyed the interaction with people. I loved seeing, making positive changes in their lifestyle. And, uh, you know, I'm fortunate I'm in that position, and I still am today, where, you know, I don't feel like I'm going to work. I love what I do. I love what I do at the gym. I love what I do, you know, here with Small Nation and, and working with the team and coaching and consulting. Um, yeah, it's fun. It's a kick.

J

Jason Duff 11:42

Nice. So you mentioned that kind of leading that up as well. Like, how did, how did you come, how did you two meet, interact, and how did this partnership happen?

L

Lyle Endsley 11:50

Well, I, I had a life change. Um, I went through a divorce and, um, you know, something you never plan. And I was originally from Lima and I'd moved back to Lima. And, um, Lima is larger than Bellefontaine, but it's still a small town. Yeah. And I had an opportunity when I had a manager change here in Bellefontaine. I'd opened up in 2011, had the same manager all that time she decided she was going to do something else, and I had an opportunity. I said, you know what, maybe I'll just go run that for a little while. I had a very good team in Lima that I'd spent most of my time with, and, uh, so I, I started looking, and that's when I discovered the lofts that were just being built above 600.

J

Jason Duff 12:31

And I— wow, so as a, like, just a place to live?

L

Lyle Endsley 12:34

Yeah, yeah. I, I, I saw the op— and I thought, man, this looks pretty cool, because, you know, when, when I, you know, I, I, I had a small little place, and I, you know, it's like I didn't have much of my own stuff, and, and I was just— another change in life. And, uh, I just saw the opportunity, and, and it looked exciting, and, and I thought, you know, this is going to be that, that new change, not knowing that I would get to know Jason, um, and become a friend and, and get to know his team. And yeah, um, just all the exciting things going on. I mean, when I moved or I opened Anytime Fitness here in Bellefontaine in 2011, I would never have bought a place downtown to live. It just wasn't that place. But in the time I'd been here—

J

Jason Duff 13:18

I think you're being kind.

L

Lyle Endsley 13:20

I wouldn't have recommended it for even my enemies. I don't know if there was a place to stay downtown. Yeah, um, but it's just one of those things. I, I'm a big believer in things happen for a reason. Yeah. And, uh, you know, I was the first person, or one of the first people, and it wasn't going to be ready for a couple months. But, you know, I was, I was ready to go, moved in, and, uh, you know, it was great. I loved it. And, and the, the really cool part of that story is that, um, I, I met my wife because I moved to Bellefontaine. Um, you know, I was on like an online dating, and it goes, you know, by how many miles you are from where you are. But from Lima, I never would have met— she's, she was in Columbus, in Hilliard. And so I was able to—

J

Jason Duff 14:06

because your address was in Belfast.

L

Lyle Endsley 14:07

Yeah, I was just probably within her range. Fortunately, she just clicked in just enough for me to get in. Wow, that's awesome.

J

Jason Duff 14:15

And are you sure it wasn't the pizza downstairs of your loft at 600 Downtown that sold you? No, that may have been part of it.



Lyle Endsley 14:21

I will say, and, you know, Shelley, you know, if she listens to this, she'll, you know, say, confirm this, but correct me if I'm wrong. The first time that she came to visit me, because I had always said, you know, that, hey, I'm a minimalist now and I've just got this place. I mean, I live above a pizza place. She wasn't sure what she was going to walk into, you know. She thought, does this guy have like an inflatable mattress in the living room and, and lawn furniture? And, and, uh, you know, I, I went to Tanger's Furniture and, uh, I knew, I knew Mandy and Brian and, and they hooked me up. Yeah. And it was all brand new. And I mean, she walked in and I think that probably sealed the deal, you know.

J**Jason Duff** 15:00

And then this is the thing that, uh, we, we had never had or done any loft apartments in downtown. Yeah. And so, um, when you think of small towns having, you know, really beautiful, uh, exposed brick walls, kitchens that, you know, have great floor plans opening up into the loft, and then just these inspiring views looking down into streetscape with walkable amenities. I mean, we've heard on the, on the show before, we had people like Brittany Saxton and Adam Rammel that have opened up restaurants in our town, but when you create residential places, uh, around those like that That was a really big step for us to take. And many people, when we built these loft apartments, our first project was only 6 units at Lofts 110. We had some, some 1-bedrooms and some 2-bedrooms, but the price points, you know, because of the type of renovations and amenities, you know, washer and dryer in every unit, just really beautiful, you know, 120-year-old hardwood floors. I mean, it's almost hard to describe, um, because they're just gorgeous. But the price points were one bedrooms were anywhere around \$1,000 a month and two bedrooms were about \$1,450. And at the time, that would be a premium loft price experience. Yeah. Um, and everyone said way too expensive, will not work. Really? There's no parking. I mean, the, the nastiness and the negativity around seeing that project come from the naysayers was significant. Yeah. But I think what really impressed us is that when we partnered up with local companies that would provide the furniture, help with the design, pick the paint colors, that made it easier for someone like Lyle to say, hey, I think I can be here and there's great people to help me finish out and do and, you know, make this my home. That's really cool. So did that come with the purchase of the building of 600, or when did that happen? So when we bought the 600 building there, and it's like many downtowns, there are upper floors, but it takes a lot of work to be able to bring them back online. Many times those upper floors have been vacant for 30, 40, 50+ years, and we had seen how other communities and towns had used the upper floors in the building for residential. And it takes, you know, finding an architect and a design professional to help you navigate the building codes, and then you've got to get the financing from a bank to be able to support the project. And I'm not going to say that was easy. It really took getting the right partners around the table that could help us visualize what that pro forma, what the plans and drawings and what the end product needed to be. But once we got there, I think another creative idea is we worked with our local United Way and we did a loft and hidden spaces tour. So we sold tickets to the community and advertised an event to be some of the first people to see the completed lofts. And that raised money for the United Way. It got, um, you know, a couple hundred people through the building to see and take pictures and share with their friends and family on social media about how great and aspirational and gorgeous these lofts were. And it wasn't after that tour, maybe just a few weeks, that every single one of them was rented. And today, you know, we're now up to 34 loft apartments in downtown Bellefontaine. And this project in 2017 was by Heritage Ohio, which is a state preservation organization, was deemed the best upper floor development. So it's earned lots of accolades and awards. But I think the thing, you know, my CPA will tell this story and he, you know, having CPAs and Lyle knows this, we've talked about this, they're very left-brain kind of thing, like thinkers. And you need those people in your life because they are very, they're fact-finders. They ask the tough questions. They look at Lots of numbers. My CPA said this is probably one of the dumbest moves that I've ever made because the cost to do these 6 units was significant. I mean, nearly, um, 7 figures. And, and that's a lot of money to make that kind of investment, um, when no one had ever done anything like that. But the thing

that, that I am, you know, and I'll share, it's probably one of the smartest moves we've ever made because using your right brain the kind of people that moved into these lofts became part of the downtown ecosystem, and many of them are investors and business owners today. Lyle's a prime example of that.

L

Lyle Endsley 19:31

Yeah, one of the pioneers. Um, yeah, it, it's— I, I think we still have the photos of, of my place in, in the hallway up there. I mean, just, just beautiful, beautiful units and, uh, great experience. I wouldn't have changed it for the world.

J

Jason Duff 19:45

Wow. So how did that— go ahead. Well, I just gonna say, I, I think just having Lyle walking the streets, like seeing him at the coffee shop, um, one thing that, you know, through our friendship and connection, like I, um, really never had anyone in my life— I didn't— I wasn't involved in athletics in, in high school, um, and, you know, health and fitness was always something that's pretty intimidating to me. Where I run into a lot of folks that say the same thing about owning a business or becoming an entrepreneur, and for me, like my natural background is I grew up with that and I have a lot of experience with that. And I like teaching and coaching others that have that same dream and passion, ambition too. So I think some of our conversations were just about those things, like Lyle thinking about how next steps of how he would want to grow and, you know, his investments and, and also ways that he could expand and improve his business. And so if things started out casually, and I would say the same thing, like, wow, like, you know, I'm I'm getting older and like my body's starting to hurt and I'm noticing that my metabolism is starting to die. And like, what would your advice be? And, and I think that's the thing about what I love about small towns and just those random connections is that you build these intimate relationships with people. And I think, you know, that conversation led to, hey, you know, my lease renewal is up and what— how are you thinking about the town and where it's growing? And I think that's where we started a conversation about what you should do, right?

L**Lyle Endsley** 21:13

Yeah, I— it, it actually dovetailed with what we did in Lima a few years earlier, um, because when we started out in like 2008, 2009, at that time the typical Anytime Fitness was only about 4,000 square feet, which is pretty small. Um, when we opened in Lima, the first one was 4,800 square feet. Bell Fountain, when Kroger Plaza, we were at 5,600. But it's like anything else, once you open and you kind of learn and see the patterns and see what's working, what isn't working. And you have— I had a 5-year lease in Lima. I knew after a few years that I wanted to get larger. I didn't have enough space. And one thing about Anytime Fitness that I really enjoy is they give you a lot of freedom. I mean, you have rules you're supposed to follow and everything else, but they do give a lot of leeway. And, uh, I, I knew I needed a larger space, so I started looking and took a couple years, but I found an old carpet warehouse building. It's about 9,000 square feet, which at that time— this is 2014, 2013— they were a little bit like, why, you sure you want to go that large? Yeah. And I'm like, yeah, and I need this much for my free weight and all this. And made it happen. It wasn't, it wasn't easy. We had to look at a lot of different places, but, uh, you know, created the, the dream gym that I wanted. And, uh, it became very successful, and, and it's where I hired Alexa Miller, who eventually— she bought the gym from me in 2018. And, uh, but we grew this. And so, you know, as the— my lease was coming up here in Bellefontaine, I had a 7-year lease. And again, I moved here, got to know Jason, we started talking. He, you know, I wanted the same thing. I knew that we needed to be larger. And so that's when we started talking. And, and, you know, he he'd run across something and he'd kind of show it to me.

J**Jason Duff** 23:04

And, and I took him on a walk. We walked down West Columbus Avenue. Yeah, window dressing, window shopping, you know. Um, and on this walk, you have to understand, at the time West Columbus Avenue was really kind of going through a revitalization. Um, the— this part of our town was probably one of the most distressed in terms of windows were boarded up or broken.

L**Lyle Endsley** 23:28

In other words, it was pretty rough.

J**Jason Duff** 23:29

Yeah, I mean, um, many of the facades, bricks were falling off into the sidewalk. And one particular building was located on West Columbus. It was a Montgomery Ward department store and big building, 21,000 square feet. The problem is with this building is that in 2005, our part of the state saw one of the worst ice storms that we've seen in 100 years. So the roof collapsed in on the building, causing it to not be inhabitable.. And when you'd walk into the building, you would see daylight.

L**Lyle Endsley** 24:03

And for those folks, those weren't skylights.

J**Jason Duff** 24:05

Not yet, but we, we brought the skylights back. But like, you know, the problem is that there wasn't money in the city coffers to tear it down. So it just was a big drag on economic development, big drag on the psychology of people that, you know, would be at that part of town driving by it.

L**Lyle Endsley** 24:24

Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 24:25

And, and so, you know, going into it, the thing that had going for it was its size. It, you know, was in a part of our downtown that we strategically wanted to work with our neighbors to make it better. And so I took Lyle and I said, I think this could be a great place for your gym. What were your initial thoughts?

L**Lyle Endsley** 24:42

Well, you know, it was large, and, uh, you know, that I'd been through it a little bit. Now, if this would have been my first venture, you know, back when I— yeah, probably California, a little more intimidated. But since I'd been through it a few years before in, in Lima with the carpet warehouse building, because it wasn't in, it wasn't in that bad a shape, but again, it needed to be totally reworked. It was probably, I think, you need— we purchased it for maybe \$500,000 and probably had to put another \$500,000, \$600,000 into it. So, you know, it was like a million-dollar building. Yeah. So I've seen the transformation can happen from something like that. Now this one, I even looked at the upstairs. The upstairs, I believe, is about 8,000 square feet. And that's about what I was thinking maybe the gym size would be. And I had just recently been to Vancouver, visited Anytime Fitness, was actually on the second floor. So I knew it could happen. But the more I looked at it and everything else, I thought, no, downstairs would probably be more doable. And, you know, I just started seeing that we could have two entrances. It's, it's pretty narrow, I guess, but goes deep. And you've got just under 14,000 square feet there. So a little bit, you know, larger, 50% larger than really what we did in Lima. Um, and, uh, I remember I took one of my buddies from Columbus. He came down and we were kind of walking after we, we started, and we're going through and he goes, he goes, man, he said, he's like, wow, this is pretty big. And I said, yeah, it is. Um, but the thing is, um, you, you don't have all your growth right away. You've got to look at, you know, I, I, it's like anything else. If you want to— what size I should go— go a little larger, because if you go smaller and then you grow, then you're going to say, I wish I'd had more room. So I'd rather have a little more room to start with. And, uh, you know, it's— we've been there now a little over 3 years, and, uh, you know, I'm, I'm glad we have the size we do. We— there's times that we're using every square inch of that place.. And so it's been, it's been wildly successful. But one of the stories, you know, we like to tell people when they take a tour and Jason talks about, you know, the ceiling back in 2005 and all this other stuff that being a franchise, I had to get permission from Anytime Fitness. Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 27:05

It's not like you were just operating on your own.

L**Lyle Endsley** 27:06

Right. Yeah. And so I told them what I planned to do and of course then they pulled up Google Maps or photos from who knows when they were from. But it was back when it looked pretty bad. And they, uh, they, they again, they kind of like, do you, do you really know what you're doing? Because this doesn't look good, you know, because you're, you're next to a Kroger. They like a big anchor store like that. That's typically what most of them are. And, uh, but I had good track record with them, and so I got the green light, fortunately. And, uh, you know, now they'd be probably the first to, to tell you that, hey, what a great move that was. And, and it has been.

J**Jason Duff** 27:40

And just to comment about that, so when you first made the announcement to your members that you were moving from the shopping center right next to Kroger where there's huge parking lots and, you know, they've been used to going to that location, tell me about some of the comments.

L**Lyle Endsley** 27:59

Well, I'd say most of the comments were they were worried about parking, and that was pretty universal. And you have to realize that kind of spoiled, you know, you're there in a big you know, parking lot, and they could park right by the door, and they didn't— yeah, and they didn't have to walk very far. Um, what — what— and I always kind of kidded— I, I'd gone to other gyms, and when I was in California, and large gyms, and you're going to a gym, so— but I'd still be behind a car with its blinker on because it wanted a parking space nearby, and I thought, come on, really, people? Um, so, so I, I knew that there'd be that perception, that concern, but, but I, I knew that people, when they, when they go to, say, a Walmart or something, if they actually track how far they had to walk to the entrance, they'd realize walking into the gym from where we are downtown is, is a walk in the park compared to that. And, uh, and also just the, the times of the day. In other words, we're, we're busy in the morning, early morning, we're busy later in the afternoon and evening. The 9 to 5, when, you know, most the people, businesses and everything, that's, that's really not our busy time. So it's never really been an issue.

J**Jason Duff** 29:10

So that's been a pleasant surprise for people hearing, hearing the two of you talk about, you know, you're both your sides of it and stuff. Like, I was thinking about all these episodes, like, the common theme is like reoccurring to me is like just how much risk there was with like the lofts and with, and with, you know, the gym and even changing the gym and changing careers. Like all of this was actually like— show or speaks to both of your comfortability, you know, with risk and things like that. And I think people listening to this podcast, you know, we're talking entrepreneurship, economic development, and things like that. There's going to be a lot of people who, you know, are, are weighing risks of their own. So do you think maybe, you know, both of you could take a turn like speaking to that a little bit? When, when you were coming across this, what, what was it for you that you thought I know this sounds like a bad idea from the outside, whether, you know, talking about the lofts or talking about the gym or even moving the gym.

L**Lyle Endsley** 30:04

Well, I'll talk— this came up recently, um, we're talking coaching people about, you know, risk and, and kind of putting yourself out there and confidence and whatever you want to call it. But I'll go back to my newspaper days when, when I was in Toledo and the general manager there— I actually had a previous job offer before LA with San Francisco. And he, he'd come from San Francisco, and we were at a holiday party or whatever, and he put his arm around me, and he didn't want me to go. And, and he said, he said, Lyle, he says, you know, you can go, and, and, and you could do really well. Um, but he says, you know, there's only about 20% of people will make a move. The other 80% play it safe. They're comfortable. They don't want to take the risk. But the other 20% will take a risk. And the more you do it and then you succeed, I think it's, it's a confidence factor. Yeah. And I was talking with somebody the other day, and, and I was coaching about, you know, taking a risk, getting out of your comfort zone. And I think the first time I was up for a promotion, or they wanted me to, to pursue a job, my first thought was, I don't know how to do that. And, you know, and, and I think my, my boss at the time said, you know more than you think you know, because you never go into a job knowing everything. You— at that time I was younger, I thought I need to know everything. Well, you know, you fake it till you make it a little bit. I mean, that's, that's reality, but you have the basics. Um, and so, you know, the taking the risk moving from Georgia to, you know, Toledo, Toledo to LA, LA to Sacramento, and then taking a leap you know, to start a new business.

J**Jason Duff** 31:43

Yeah, had plenty of practice. Yeah.



Lyle Endsley 31:45

And, and it doesn't mean it's— but it's, it, it, it gets your juice going. Yeah. It, to me, it's, you know, it's like sharpening the saw, you know. Stephen Covey, I think that was one of his things, is a challenging— you like, you don't get bored, you know. It's good for you. And, uh, and when you are successful, it doesn't mean everything works, but you learn. And, and I'm still learning. Today, um, you know, with, with different things you do, what's going to work. Um, the biggest thing is, is people and, and being able to work with people and knowing people and motivating people and having goals. And, and, uh, I think all of us are probably a little competitive, you know. I, I think that drives us too. Um, and yeah, it's, it's— you do have to be a risk taker. I mean, you want to be smart. But, uh, you know, there's risk in not taking risk. Yeah. Um, you know, I, I like that. Yeah, it's, you know, I, I always talk about sometimes paralysis analysis or analysis paralysis where you just like, I don't know, I don't know. And, uh, sometimes if you wait for all the ducks to be in a row, it's too late. Yeah, that opportunity has passed. And so I think at some point you have to do a ready, fire, aim. And I've done that. And, uh, You know, but I think it is, it's just experience, life experience. And the more you do it and you come through it, not everything works, but you learn from it and grow. And, you know, don't be too hard on yourself. You're going to make some mistakes, but don't continue to make mistakes. Learn from them. And, and that's, I think, one of the things I bring to the Small Nation team that I don't have all the answers, um, you know, I could just speak from what's worked for me, experiences. But we have a lot of talent, and maybe people haven't been exposed to things, or we have somebody new coming in that have this idea and they want to start a new business. Um, just some basics that, you know, maybe I didn't have somebody telling me about, that, that, hey, make sure you're looking at this, make sure you have enough money in the bank, you know, to last for 6 months or a year. You're not going to turn a profit from day one. There's all these basic things you, you, you learn. But, uh, but yeah, you got to have a little risk. Yeah. Um, because the rewards are good too.

J**Jason Duff** 34:05

Yeah. I think what I love that we've created in this culture and ecosystem, and this is some Small Nation values, is that we have a group of people that are really hard workers. They're, they usually have got this unique skill, um, and you know, there's kind of two paths that I see with people, is that we found a lot of personalities that either are entrepreneurs, meaning that they, they are comfortable with that risk, they're comfortable with the idea that, you know, that they may fail, but they want that, that, that path or that energy or that possibility. And then this is another term that I got introduced to a few years ago, and I really like it. It's called being an intrapreneur. So you're working in a company that has entrepreneurial values but you don't have to stomach the risk, but you can think independently. You can run your business unit. You can run your day. And I think being in a small company, one of the big perks are is that we kind of joke and call it, come here and create your own adventure. So there are goals and responsibilities and duties that we have to support the brand and the business, but if there's something that you want to create and own, you deserve to benefit in those rewards of, of what you're creating for the company. And, and I've seen, you know, we've got many of our team members that have taken those direct paths. And, and I think the other thing is like wanting to know how you're valued, how you're appreciated. And, and those are in your accomplishments, those are in compensation, those are in, um, you know, rewards. Like all of those things I think matter and, and support that healthy culture. But, uh, yeah, I, I, I think part of the success that we've had really relies heavily on getting the right mindset, the right people. And the other thing is, is if you don't succeed, or maybe your idea doesn't take off, like, being able to pivot quickly. Um, and, you know, where Lyle has been just such a tremendous resource is that because of his experience He's very quick to, to pick people up when they need that hand up. But he's also very quick to speak from experience and say, hey, you know, I— you need to get back to the gym. You need to get more disciplined about this. And I think those, those fitness analogies are great for life and for business too. Yeah, that's really cool. And I, I think honestly, you know, if I were to be honest, that that was one of the things that drew me to Small Nation myself was because I was interested in entrepreneurship. I have business ideas that I want to, you know, carry out in the future. But seeing like a group of people who were like that and wanted to do that together and, you know, we're starting to gain some traction, that was like, well, yeah, I want to be a part of that, you know. So that's really cool. Very cool. So talk to us about Dash Joey's and Loco Depot. Well, sorry, before you do that, before you segue, first off, sorry, I gotta work on my transitions. But no, no, so Lyle How, you know, the, the just the measures of success with the fitness. Do you mind just giving us some metrics of when you made that move and you opened up this new business? Um, how's it doing?

L**Lyle Endsley** 37:14

It's, it's gone really well. Um, you know, the— I— it's, it doesn't happen overnight, and I think that comes from experience too, knowing that, um, you know, you can have the best idea in the world, but you've got to market it, you've got to get it out there, and there is no secret ingredient. You know, you've got to use different forms of, of advertising. Word of mouth is still king. So, you know, you've got to kill them with customer service. And I go back to what I really learned in, in newspapers from circulation, and that is circulation was all about selling subscribers, getting new readers, giving them great service, and then retaining them, giving them great service, retaining them. That, that's a cycle, and it's really the same with the gym. You know, we market to get new members. We want to keep them, so we give them excellent service, uh, whether, you know, be just to the office, through it be training, whatever, give them a great experience. And then we, we want to keep them because it's far less expensive to keep a customer, to retain. Yeah, right, than trying to get new ones. So it works in both principles. But, but yeah, it's, uh, um, it, it's grown, I think, beyond even what I thought it would. I know that when we first moved downtown here that, uh, I think in the first 6 months we saw probably a 35-40% jump in our membership just by moving downtown. Yeah, yeah, it's, uh, you know, just, you know, the, the newness, everything else, you're going to get that bump. But I think what's really told the story is now it's, you know, 3 years later, a little over 3 years, and we're probably almost double what we were.

J**Jason Duff** 38:50

What was Anytime Fitness's response to that kind of like seeing that success?

L**Lyle Endsley** 38:56

Well, I mean, right there. Yeah, yeah, yeah. They— well, I mean, we, we've had, like I say, a good track record. We actually won a national award in Lima for our community involvement. We won that in 2016. And then here, um, I just looked at, you know, our numbers. I think I shared with Jason last month. They, they rank over like 5 categories of all of the Anytime Fitnesses nationally, and, uh, we ranked, uh, like in the top 4%. Now, when we were at the old location, we were probably around 50. We were about right in the middle. So I mean, just, you know, it didn't happen overnight, um, and, and we moved to a big facility, which doesn't guarantee you success, but what we've been able to do and the new members and the traffic and the amenities now that we're able to provide, a lot more training a lot more area for training. Um, you know, we've started selling supplements, we've got, you know, um, food service, you name it, we've added additional revenue.

J**Jason Duff** 40:00

And not just to comment, so the other thing is, um, a few years ago Lyle said, hey, I, I, you know, I want to set up a program for you for success. I know health is important to you, you know, you, you live a pretty high-paced, high-stress life, like this is the time to dial some things in. So he set me up with a program that I do group training small group training with trainers and professionals from his gym. And, and I've been doing that now for a little over a year, and I'm probably the strongest that I've been in my entire life. And, and part of that is, is by working with people that I'm excited to go and be around with, where they're coaching and mentoring and give me advice on how to lift, how to train, how to exercise. The other big thing that I learned going through some of his programs, it's not just the exercise, it's what you eat. And nutrition and sleep, and there's all these other factors that contribute to your overall health. And so, um, you know, one of the food programs they have is that I have fresh salads and meals that show up in the fridge at Anytime Fitness. So on Monday morning, I pick up my meal plan for my lunches, uh, throughout the, the week. And for someone that's really busy and, and has a very demanding lifestyle, knowing that I've got a healthy option in the fridge here at the office, that has been immensely valuable to improving the quality of my life. That's great. So some additional, like more than just the Anytime Fitness, do you call it a franchise?

L**Lyle Endsley** 41:33

Is that? It is a franchise. Okay. You know, I've owned it since October 2008. Okay. And so, like I say, I sold Lima in 2018. May 9th will be our 11th year here in Bellefontaine. And yeah, we've continued to grow, evolve. And I think that's a thing I enjoy too. And we talked about being able to make changes quickly. And I always talk about larger businesses or corporations that have to go through layers of like boards. And if they want to make a change, it's got to be voted on. And again, maybe that opportunity gets missed. Missed because you have to wait so long. With us, you know, we could meet today and say, hey, we're going to change this tomorrow, and we just do it. Yeah, that gives us a huge advantage. You know, we're not like a big, you know, ocean liner. We're like a speedboat, man. We make quick turns, and, uh, yeah, and, and that makes a lot of fun.

J**Jason Duff** 42:27

That's cool. So now can you tell us a little bit about Loco Depot?

L**Lyle Endsley** 42:30

And Loco Depot is our training arm of the gym. It's where we do our group training. We do some of the small group training there too. We have, uh, community workouts, free community workouts on Saturdays at 8 Ethan, I haven't seen you at the Saturday workout. Way to call me out, Jason.

J**Jason Duff** 42:47

I appreciate that. Now everyone knows.

L

Lyle Endsley 42:50

But it's, it's, it's really been the catalyst for us, uh, growing that part of the business, the training. Uh, we used to, in the early days here, we probably had maybe 2% of our members doing some sort of training. Now it's probably close to 12 to 15%, um, and it continues to grow. We didn't have that small group training that Jason's talking about, uh, until we moved downtown and had the room to do that. So we have large group, we have small group, we have spin class now, we have, uh, Strikoboxing. Uh, you know, we've got all these different things that you'd see in maybe a larger city, like these boutique gyms. We've tried to bring that all into one area, kind of a one-stop shop. There's— you— we've got all these different options for exercise. We've got obviously a 24-hour gym, but we've got all these other activities and training sessions you can do. He mentioned the food service that we have available. We've got supplements that we sell. We have apparel. And then you wanted me to talk about the Dash and Joey's. That's kind of the, the third thing that was brought in, and that actually was created by my son, who, you know, came with me from California, said he'd give us 2 years, and guess what? He's still here. He's still in Lima. He did not leave. And, uh, He, uh, he decided he wanted to go do his own thing. Yeah. And, uh, he came up with the idea. And again, being in California, we were used to smoothies and a lot of healthy options. And moved to Lima, and I think he was at Subway every, every day for a while, but he missed that. And so he looked at some franchises, and then he just decided, I'm going to create my own, and did the movie themes, create all the recipes himself. Started that in 2017. And, uh, you know, he's coming up on his 5-year anniversary, uh, here pretty soon, which is pretty exciting.

J

Jason Duff 44:39

And so, uh, and you've expanded that business to other markets.

L

Lyle Endsley 44:42

Yeah. Yeah. He, he started a second location in Wapak, um, probably a little over a year and a half ago. And then, uh, a year ago we were able to bring it into Bellefontaine because I had a lot of people saying, when are you going to bring a Dash and Joey's here?

J

Jason Duff 44:54

And yeah.

L**Lyle Endsley** 44:55

And I knew the only way we're going to be able to do it was to have it be almost like a franchise that he was not going to be able to run that, uh, from Lima. And so I did some research for him and talked with the local attorney and talked about a franchise and was warned how expensive that is. And so we talked about operating license agreements. We created that. I contacted some people that were members of the gym, and I knew they were from the food service and thought they might like the opportunity. And so they did. So they actually are the first operating franchise license of Dash and Joey's here in Bellefontaine. It's wedged between the gyms and it's open to the public. You don't have to be a member. Like I say, they're coming up on their 1-year anniversary this month and it continues to grow. And, and now the exciting thing is in Piqua, they are going to be opening up a Dash and Joey's, another operating license agreement, later this summer. And then we've had— he's had some other requests too. So I just think it's a brand that people love and it's growing and it's healthy. And, you know, I'm excited we're able to do that.

J**Jason Duff** 46:05

Another great service to downtown area. Real quick, I don't think I've told either of you this, but in college I had a class where we had a professor dedicate like half the class to just like, okay, so there's a lot of you who want to start your own businesses in here. So let's like start one together collectively as a class and let's learn how to do a business plan. It's cool. I really appreciated that class. But the class, what we learned together was like a, was like a smoothie and meal replacement shake kind of thing inside of a gym kind of thing. And yeah, we're all pumped about it, you know, feeling like, oh, that's a cool idea, whatever. I come here, I'm like, oh, not as creative as I thought it was.

L**Lyle Endsley** 46:38

But it's a great idea.

J**Jason Duff** 46:40

Yeah, yeah, we're all making fun of our professor thinking he was going to steal it. Here's the thing, there, there are food deserts in a lot of the towns that we are working with in right now, and lacking health and fresh, fresh options. Um, and I think Dash and Joey's has been so important for our downtown ecosystem and, and the other towns and communities that it's in. Yeah, and even just like, you know, you want a smoothie or something, you know, when I first— when I came to visit, um, in my onboarding process, I think that was the first thing we did is go and get, you know, a fresh smoothie in the morning. So that was pretty cool. Um, kind of, kind of closing in on our time here, but, um What are some, some cool things that are happening? I guess you kind of touched on that a little bit, uh, right now for the gym. Um, also, I know we didn't touch on Town Money Saver Kit, but can you maybe mention that real quick and explain what that is a little bit?

L

Lyle Endsley 47:27

Um, that's my newspaper experience, probably helped me with that a little bit. Uh, but I'd gotten the gyms going, and, and being from Lima, Greg Stolle owned a few Town Money Savers, and one was the one in Bellefontaine. He contacted me a couple years ago, and I thought he was going to ask me if I would help sell some ads for him. And instead he says, I know, I'd like you to purchase it from me. And so, so I did.

J

Jason Duff 47:53

And, uh, what is the Town Money Saver?

L

Lyle Endsley 47:55

It is, uh, it's an advertising mailer. There's no articles, it's just advertising. Uh, it's color, uh, it's home delivered, uh, to area residents. It comes once a month, usually mid-month, and, uh, it goes to about 8,000-9,000 households here in Bellefontaine. And, uh, so yeah, I started that and, uh, grew that. And actually in 2021, it was— we got an award for the most improved market, uh, in, in the pipeline. So that was pretty cool. And then, uh, work with Jason and, and Adam and Small Nation team, we were talking, gee, wouldn't it be nice if, if maybe we had one in Urbana? Um, it, it's really the only city, if you look at around us, that doesn't have a Town Money Saver. And they have all the demographics, the size. And so we built it from scratch and started that in March. And so we just had our second edition come out. So pretty exciting.

J**Jason Duff** 48:49

Yeah, very cool. Becomes a really cool, you know, advertising method that, you know, we can make small businesses aware of and things like that, or trying to get the word out. All right, so I forgot this last, last episode, so that's on me. So I'm going to make you give two today. But what is your golden nugget, Lyle, for you? This is something I just started doing every episode, um, just, you know, as we're going through all this. I know today we talked a little bit about risk and some other things, but leave us with two golden nuggets, if you would, Jason. So I think the big one, and what I've seen with Lyle, is being able to have courage. And there's a big difference between, you know, courage— we talk about this, I, I, you know, I was talking about with, with one of our team members the other day, is that there's a difference between confidence and arrogance. Um, and so, you know, I, I think it takes a lot of, um, confidence, you know, in, in surrounding yourself with a team to have the courage to make big bold moves. And, uh, you know, with Anytime Fitness, you know, there's a lot of pride, and I I, I think that Lyle has this too, that when we walk into that building and see the, the number of people working out, the smiles on the face, people working on their health, both mind and body, grabbing a healthy juice, and just how it's impacted the downtown ecosystem— those all things started with, with a conversation. Yeah. Um, and I think the other thing, you know, knowing that people go through life changes, being there to listen and help and support and provide solutions That's another big theme. Um, I think many of our entrepreneurs really didn't identify being an entrepreneur, um, when they first started out. It was they took the steps to have, you know, the courage to say, no, I want to do this. And they surrounded themselves with people, um, that through that life change, you know, help them, help them win. And, and that could be, you know, just like the analogy of me sharing I want to work more on my health and fitness, or vice versa, like Lyle saying, hey, I want to learn more about Bellefontaine and the real estate opportunities here. Those synergies, like, we are better because of those conversations and those life changes that happened. Awesome, very cool. Um, yeah, thanks for sharing that, Lyle. Um, if people want to find you, uh, or Anytime Fitness or anything, Town Money Saver, where do they find you?

L**Lyle Endsley** 51:00

Find me in Buff Fountain. Good answer.

J**Jason Duff** 51:04

Yeah, I, uh, you'll see him at the gym.

L**Lyle Endsley** 51:06

Yeah, I'm at the gym a lot, you know, usually every morning I start my day out there. But, uh, but yeah, our website, you know, go anytimefitness.com.

J**Jason Duff** 51:13

You guys have social media and all that? Absolutely.

L**Lyle Endsley** 51:15

Instagram. I always like it.

J**Jason Duff** 51:17

I had— I followed some people who say, you know, if you care, you'll find it. Like, you know, people know how to navigate that now. So if there's this thing called Google— yeah, so, but yeah, go ahead and check them out. They're doing some really cool things, whether it's Dash and Joey's Town Money Saver, uh, Loco Depot, Anytime Fitness. I mean, the other thing is, is on the smallnationstrong.com website on the success tab, we have listed the Anytime Fitness Loco Depot case study. In that case study, it shows the before and after pictures, it has Lyle's kind of background and story, and then of the financial metrics and details of why it's successful today. Yep, there you go. So if you're interested in that, that's for you. All right, well,

E**Ethan DeLeon** 51:55

thank you everyone for tuning in and checking out the Small Talk podcast with Jason Duff. You can find us anywhere that you listen to your podcast, including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and even the Small Nation YouTube channel. I hope you were able to pull some value out of that conversation. We hope to see you in the next one. And if you haven't subscribed already and are looking for more of this kind of content, be sure to check out the Small Talk newsletter that goes out every week. Stay tuned to Small Nation social media and keep up with everything that is happening here. There are lots of exciting projects in the works. So until next time, this is Small Talk with Jason Duff signing off.