

Episode 5

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Build Coworking Space, coworking in small towns, Bo Alexander, community manager, Bellefontaine Ohio, Flying Pepper Cantina, entrepreneurship, remote work, historic building renovation, Marysville expansion, small business startup support, Small Nation, wearing many hats, office design, Opera Block

SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Bo Alexander, Ethan DeLeon

B Bo Alexander 00:00

One of the trends that we've kind of noticed there at Build is that everybody likes to work a little bit differently. So it is, it's about creating those different spaces that not only inspire, but what I like to say is call kick it. So CIC, places where people can collaborate, innovate, and create together.

E Ethan DeLeon 00:23

Hey everyone, my name is Ethan DeLeon and I'm here with our founder and CEO, Jason Duff. Today we have invited Beau Alexander to join us as we talk about creating a first coworking space from a historical downtown building renovation project. We want to welcome you to the 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 to create value for you, the listener, and to create a space to learn, talk about what's trending, and inspire others.

E Ethan DeLeon 00:49

So, Jason, why don't you introduce Beau and set the stage for us?

J Jason Duff 00:53

My pleasure, Ethan. Today we have Beau Alexander. Beau is the community manager of Build Coworking Space. And that definition of community manager means a lot of things. Beau embodies that personal touch and attention to serving our members. He also is a de facto technology guru. All right. One of his many skills, whether it is an Apple Mac, something to do with networking internet, Beau has been like our in-house IT guy. Which you know sometimes is a thankless job until you really are in a crisis and nothing works. I know that because most of the time it's me on the other end asking for help and I would like, I hate the things that I ask you to do, but I need the help, man. Yeah, but no, just Beau, you know, really has been on our team now for over a year and just one of, I think what people say about Beau is like he is like the nicest guy and just embodies this energy to be helpful, to add value. He asks great questions and he's kind of this— he's an individual that always is wanting to learn and grow. So just excited for you to be able to hear from him today. And that's why I have Jason do the intros.

B**Bo Alexander** 02:09

So good at it.

J**Jason Duff** 02:10

Yeah. No, thanks, Bo. Appreciate you being here. So let's just start with your story. I feel like that's something we're doing really well here with this podcast is just getting some of those stories out there. So where are you from? How did you get connected with Small Nation and all the things?

B**Bo Alexander** 02:21

Yeah, absolutely. So I was actually born and raised here in Bellefontaine my whole life. Kind of moved around quite a bit. We've probably seen every part of Bellefontaine. I think we moved a total of around 11 times throughout my childhood through different parts of the city. So it was kind of a cool experience. You know, we owned houses, we lived in apartments. So like I said, I've gotten a multitude of different experiences, but Bellefontaine's been a tremendous town. It's always been one of my favorites. I've never really strayed too far from it. You know, I've had jobs in other cities and things like that, but always called Bellefontaine my home and probably always will.

J**Jason Duff** 02:52

Awesome, man.

B**Bo Alexander** 02:54

Yeah, so just a little bit of backstory. So I've always been kind of very entrepreneurial ever since I was young. My first job was when I was 13. I actually started working for my uncle in his home landscaping business. So nice, made some decent money, especially at 13 years old. That kind of progressed, and when I turned 15, I really wanted to start to do something of my own. And what I really had a passion for was music. So what I decided to do is actually start making my own instrumental tracks, and that kind of led into me creating an online store where I could then sell those instrumental original tracks to music artists, video directors, people who need kind of those fill-in sounds and things like that for their videos. So it was really neat trying to, I guess, come up with some of those different creative ideas at such a young age and how I could make money with being restricted.

J**Jason Duff** 03:39

So that's sweet. Um, you interested in making a new intro for this podcast?

B**Bo Alexander** 03:45

Yeah, absolutely, man.

J**Jason Duff** 03:46

I'm just curious about that. Did I— I didn't know that part of your story. So were you designing it, uh, like as electronic music, or was it actually using real live instruments? So yes, I have no actual musical capabilities.

B**Bo Alexander** 03:57

It was all digital and electronic. With the technology that they have nowadays, I can play a multitude of different instruments from a piano to a guitar all on the computer. So it's really kind of a different system than your traditional instruments. But all in all, like I said, it's just a really cool experience being able to work on different projects, whether it be for, you know, a big screen movie or a company promo video or even just somebody looking to maybe spice up something that they're doing in their personal life, you know. Yeah, so it was just really cool just being able to meet different people as well. Um, like I said, at such a young age, you're only 15 years old, and here I am meeting with people who are 30, 40 years old working in a professional studio. So it's very crazy for me, especially like I said, being at such a young age, but definitely great experience nonetheless.

J**Jason Duff** 04:46

That's awesome. Using GarageBand?

B**Bo Alexander** 04:48

Uh, no, actually. So FL Studio is my kind of preferred software that I use. So it's kind of the standard throughout the music industry.

J**Jason Duff** 04:55

Let me tell you, man, if we went to high school together, we would have been best buds. I'm telling you, Ethan, we Making videos back in the day would have, uh, killed for someone like you. All right, so, uh, that's, that's a little bit of your background. What, what led you into this kind of work? What were you doing before you connected with Jason and, and, and co-working?

B**Bo Alexander** 05:14

Yeah, so I honestly kind of started off in the, the fast food industry. So my first actual legitimate W-2 job was actually working at a Taco Bell when I was only, uh, 17 years old. I was able to get into a school work program that actually allowed me to be released from school at 11 AM every day so I could actually go and work the morning shifts or the afternoon shifts if needed, but still get my credits for school. So I was able to graduate. So Katie Rickner, who runs the marketing and business program there at Bellefontaine High School, she does a tremendous job and continues to improve not only that program, but the DECA crew as well. And they actually go around and compete in different events around the state and even the country, doing different business proposals and site ideas. I mean, you name it, they do all kinds of things within the marketing and business realm.

J**Jason Duff** 06:00

So That's sweet. So fast food, so you started with Taco Bell then?

B**Bo Alexander** 06:04

Yep, uh, started at Taco Bell at 17. Um, really kind of got me used to the, the hospitality industry, working around people. Um, you work around quite a few people who have different attitudes, they come from different places in life, so it's learning how to manage those different attitudes and kind of make it work for everybody. You know, you don't want it to be a toxic work environment by any means, so figuring out the best ways that you can communicate and collaborate with other people really gave me good experience in that, especially having to work like the drive-thru window and kind of being forced into conversations with people at times. So yeah, from there that led into some different managerial positions again at kind of fast food places. Little Caesars, probably one of the more prominent ones. I worked there for a few years as a manager for the store here in Bellefontaine. It unfortunately has closed down now, but it's because you left. It's exactly right.

J**Jason Duff** 06:55

It's because no one likes Little Caesar's Pizza. It's like my wife would beg to differ. Yeah, I know, no, that creates controversy. Yeah, I was gonna say, yeah, I mean, some people will throw fists for that kind of pizza. That's true. Sorry, go ahead.

B**Bo Alexander** 07:06

No, you're fine, man. Um, but yeah, I mean, that was another great experience, um, again in the restaurant industry. So learning to make a variety of different foods. I mean, even now, uh, when we have taco night at home, I still use my Taco Bell skills on how to fold a burrito to teach my kids how to do it as well.

J**Jason Duff** 07:22

I like that.

B**Bo Alexander** 07:23

That's nice. I'm jealous of that. I try to take a little piece of something from every job that I work at with me throughout life that I can kind of carry on and just kind of continue to build out my wheelhouse, if you will. Great.

J**Jason Duff** 07:34

And I think for anyone listening, you know, even if it is not an ideal job, that's something that you can always keep in mind, is there is something here that you can learn and you can grow in and take that with you to the next thing. So that's a good little nugget there.

B**Bo Alexander** 07:46

Yeah, absolutely. Um, but yeah, I came from a rougher background, so I didn't necessarily have a lot of the, the opportunities that some of the other kids around me had. So like you said, Ethan, it was really just kind of making the best of what I had. So I always worked really hard at whatever job I was, whether it was just being a dishwasher, a line cook, a manager. That's really how I worked my way through the ranks, when people would see the initiative that I'm taking and see how much drive I actually have to, to make something of myself regardless of what job I'm doing. So, um, yeah, after that, um, I actually found my way into the family entertainment industry, which was quite interesting. I worked for a local startup company that actually serviced a large brand of trampoline park franchises. Businesses. So we supplied the replacement parts, uh, the actual attractions that go inside of the trampoline park, um, helped with marketing and branding of some of the actual facilities as well. So we did, uh, quite a few different things, but, um, that kind of branched out. Uh, we saw a need for an actual software to help manage a lot of this because a lot of it was done through Excel spreadsheets or pen and paper. There wasn't really an ideal system out there to help, um, a lot of people keep track of their maintenance and Really, when you're in the family entertainment industry, you need that for insurance purposes. Let's say somebody, you know, breaks their leg on a trampoline or something. You need to have it documented as to when the last time that trampoline was serviced, you know, how often is it checked? Do you do daily safety checks and different things of that nature to make sure it's in good condition? So, yeah, we created a software that actually ran off of QR codes that you could just scan. We made it super easy and user-friendly because a lot of the employees that do work in these trampoline parks are younger folks, teenagers, people who are in high school, college. So we try to make it as easy as possible to where you could just scan the QR codes. It would give you the exact part that you needed to get replaced. It would automatically come through to our team. And, uh, it was really neat because we completely custom built the software ourselves. It wasn't a solution that we actually went out and found. So that really, I think, kind of birthed my, uh, my passion for technology, if you will.

J**Jason Duff** 09:44

Yeah. Thus the, uh, IT and hospitality. There you go. So how did you hear about Small Nation or the project that was happening that you got involved with?

B**Bo Alexander** 09:51

So Funny story, actually. Social media nowadays is just such a powerful tool. I actually happened to be scrolling through Facebook one day, and I see a sponsored ad for a place called Build Coworking Space. And I'm like, hmm, this got me curious. So I started doing a little bit of research, I found the website, found that it was kind of a new office space that was coming to Bellefontaine. And I'm like, I want to know more. So I actually applied just to be on the mailing list and saw there was an actual open position for a community manager there at the facility. So I thought it would be a really interesting job. Like I said, with my background in hospitality, I thought it would make a great transference of skills. So I figured, why not throw my, my hat in the ring? And Jason put me through probably 5 rounds of interviews, which is one of the most nerve-wracking processes of my life, but well worth it, to say the least.

J**Jason Duff** 10:40

You want to speak to that from your side? Yeah, no, we at Build Coworking Space created the position community manager, and part of that is you know, to really foster a community, you need someone that can be an excellent communicator. You need someone that can help plan events, help really serve the members. And, you know, the reason why we created Build was to create aspirational offices, coworking, dedicated desk, a place that people have business ideas. They can collaborate with other people that are just like them. And it takes someone that's a good connector to bring those people together and creating the job description. Description, there was a lot of things that we were thinking about, like what— do we want this person to be outgoing? Do we want this person, um, to have skills with being able to talk about money, being able to talk about marketing, being able to talk about how to get introductions to other organizations in our region? And we prioritize some things. And what's always interesting when you do a job search, you get a variety of candidates and you're looking on paper of what they look like, but then also when that first impression, when you first meet someone, Those conversations are equally important as well. What was so fascinating when we saw Beau's resume, you'll hear when he speaks about his life, um, he had a variety of jobs, jobs working in fast food. And then probably the thing that impressed me the most is that he also had interest in entrepreneurship. So he had done, like he mentioned, businesses related to creating music tracks. But he also had skills in graphic design and he was really passionate about graphic design. So he presented me a logo and business card that he generated himself. So all of those things were impressive. But the thing that was most impressive was his most recent job and experience that he had is that he worked in a Waffle House for more than a year and he earned the position of being a manager at a Waffle House. If you've been to Waffle House, what I really admire about workers is that not only are they the cook, the server, like— and, you know, it's a business that has opened up, open, you know, many of them are open 24/7. So it takes a really special person that is hardy, meaning that they're not afraid of some really challenging hard work and they have a lot of grit. And so probably in my interview, I spent the most time asking Beau questions like, what is the craziest thing that you've ever had happen at a Waffle House?

B**Bo Alexander** 13:15

Oh no, we're not going there.

J**Jason Duff** 13:17

Not on this podcast. But I'm just saying, like those What I appreciated was his humility and just his, his being so authentic. Because I imagine if you can be successful in the craziest thing that happens in a Waffle House, in running and building a co-working brand— I mean, starting in one location and then expanding it to others around the state and maybe even around the country— it takes a certain personality to do that. Yeah, that's awesome. So it's really cool to, to hear from the hiring side as well sometimes, just like looking for personality versus qualifications and things like that. So it sounds like you checked the boxes, man, and you've been killing it from what I can see. You know, I'm again newer to the team, so seeing what, you know, a little bit of behind the scenes, it's really cool. So I am currently living in like the Columbus area, and so I'm seeing a lot of these bigger name coworking spaces pop up. And it's something that just as somebody who aspires to start my own business and something, it's super interesting. It just like I feel like there's a natural draw there for anybody. Looking to do their own thing. And so I think that's actually the very first, like, thing of Small Nation that I saw when looking, looking for, you know, looking— actually, I was looking to see if anything like that existed out here because I had a business idea, and that's how I came across Build. So in a small town, you're talking— this is the very first one here in Bellefontaine, a co-working space in a small town. And you just hired your community manager. Can you talk to what— either of you— what problems that you saw that a co-working space in Bellefontaine, Ohio could fix? Yeah, I'll jump in to share. So we, uh, part of Bellefontaine's revitalization has been recruiting new businesses, and you spend time with entrepreneurs. Um, of course you're going to hear a lot of the, the positive, exciting things about starting your business, like whether it's like, oh my gosh, I'm gonna create this with my logo. I'm going to start my online store. I'm going to design this displays or the— get all the menu. Yeah, the merch. Like, I must say, all those are— those are really exciting outcomes and goals. But the, the thing that actually is really scary and intimidating is how do I set my business up? Meaning, what legal documents do I need? Um, how do I, you know, obtain, uh, a tax ID number? And then how do I actually pay my bills? And do I owe tax, or do, do I not own tax? Like, and how can I be smart as I design my to actually achieve the financial goals that I want? And what we found is that a lot of folks don't take the step to start their business because it's a very lonely world and they don't know the advisors and the people. They don't have them on their team to help them take those next steps. So when we were thinking about creating a community and shared office space, conference rooms, and really a network of people that really were there to support, mentor, train, each other. We wanted to be different, and, and we do believe that small towns build great things, and these types of connections, facility needs exist in, in every small town around the country. But there aren't a lot of people that are, you know, taking the risk to build the facilities, you know, commit the investment of the capital, and then build out the network. So, um, one of the first things that we did once Beau came on board was try to be very intentional about What are the types of businesses on, on the ground level do we need that are part of Build Coworking Space? And at the top of the list, we started with getting really smart people with tax, accounting, and bookkeeping. And then the next piece was getting smart attorneys and specializing, specializing in different types of law, whether it's HR, whether it's litigation, whether it's business startup and contracts. And I think that was, you know, some of the early members. But from there, I mean, what's great about it— I want Beau to speak— that the eclectic group of

members, members and type of businesses that are part of the Build Coworking Space community are actually quite diverse.

B

Bo Alexander 17:24

Yeah, 100%. Um, like Jason said, we really tried to focus on a core group of industries that we really felt that people in the startup world would need when trying to start their business. So he hit really on the fundamentals, but from there it kind of grew even further and we started onboarding people who were in the graphic design world, the website design world, people who sell insurance. I mean, you name it, there's marketers, salesmen, there's all types of different positions out there that need filled. And a lot of these companies don't necessarily have the resources, they're kind of a one-man army, so they really need a network of support that they can lean on. And that's really what we tried to build with our core membership unit there at Build.

J

Jason Duff 18:03

And this launched in 2018, is that right? Uh, so Bo, you have to help me. That would not be— it'd be after — that'd be 20—

B

Bo Alexander 18:11

I think official— yeah, official launch of Build was in 2020. We acquired the property in 2018 though, so it took about 2-3 years to fully get it renovated and up to speed for our standards.

J**Jason Duff** 18:21

2020, wow. And I think that's— this is going to be an important part that plays into this, but what happened in 2020? That— yeah, I mean, COVID hit. And I think for us at Small Nation, there was a period of time— you have to understand, we, uh, we renovate historic buildings, we lease them to tenants. Many of our tenants are restaurant owners, they're hair salons, they're retail stores, they're gyms and fitness facilities. There was a point in time where every business that— an industry that we had, um, was systematically closed. And questions were, you know, can I pay my rent? How do I serve my customers? How do I, um, how do I survive? And I think I think the thing that we're so thankful now is that by having Build Coworking Space and its members, you know, we were building and designing and creating to build this facility prior to COVID, but I think during COVID we realized even more than ever that this place is really important. It's important to the fabric and the ecosystem and the small business community, and, um, you know, now today uh, the demand for these kinds of spaces and connections and opportunities is, is off the charts. And, and part of the reason is, is you can work from anywhere, and a lot of companies are providing flexible work arrangements. And so while it may sound great to work from home, if you really look at the research and survey folks, there is a large contingent of people that struggle with being able to find that work-life balance. So they need to have a physical space that they can go to and connect. And so, um, you know, membership has really grown, and a big credit to that is, is Beau and Jane and so many other team members at Build Coworking Space. And also, our members are very gracious to refer other people, because if they have a great experience, um, you know, they want others that they're connected with to have a membership do. That's what's been really cool. Um, I've been doing some, some Build member highlights, just doing some video work and, you know, interviewing a lot of— actually several, you know, members. And their membership ranges from, you know, your general membership, which I want to touch on that, as you know, what does it look like today. But general membership to their dedicated offices in there so that they feel like they have almost their own brick and mortar, brick and mortar, you know, in this co-working space is really cool. But talking about about, you know, working from home, and it just doesn't work for some people. You got the dogs and the kids and everybody fighting for your attention and all these different distractions. And myself included, I was— my first office when I was onboarded here was down here in the Small Nation offices, but I found myself just going over there to work out a good amount. And so that's where I'm at today. Do not tell the real estate team that, Ethan. I know, you know, it's kind of an inside joke, you know. We at Small Nation have the real estate team which I'm currently leading the helm of. And then we have our marketing team, and that's Ethan and Bo and some of the others. Um, you guys have these beautiful aspirational offices over at BUILD. And for those folks that maybe have not been to BUILD or taken the virtual tour, um, you know, when you— it's located on West Columbus Avenue. So West Columbus Avenue is this really kind of awesome part of our town where there's many great restaurants and coffee shops in walking distance, a 24-hour fitness gym and facility But right out in front of Build is an outdoor patio, and it's— the building is 8,000 square feet. It's this beautiful red 3-story, kind of just very iconic building that's got great architecture right in the kind of center of West Columbus. But when you walk in the doors, you're— you know, these beautiful crystal chandeliers. We have a reception area where Beau or Jane or someone will greet you or greet your clients, and then there's areas inside that's got very comfortable furniture to be able to connect, whether you're on your laptop or you want to walk up to the

shared kitchenette and bar. There's this beautiful quartz countertop. We call it the Innovation Bar, and the reason being is we have a large chunk of a relic from the oldest concrete street in America. And we love to tell the story in Bellefontaine because George Bartholomew, about 120 or so years ago, took sand, clay, and marl and mixed it together and invented concrete. And the local historical society was so awesome to be able to donate this large chunk of concrete that is in this beautiful glass display case right on the bar. And I like that because you can grab a drink or cocktail or a coffee with a friend and talk about, you know, at the time people made fun of George 120 years ago saying this pavement is not going to hold up. It's not going to work. And all the kind of things that sometimes founders, you know, the naysayers plant doubts in your head. But today we celebrate him and I think we're celebrating entrepreneurship and other innovators and people that are like him. But, you know, that's kind of on the first floor. And then there's this overhead door that you can open up that is a shared conference room space that is bookable and rentable, but also flips to this fabulous dining room in the evenings with our onsite restaurant and friends and partners owners called Laura and Humberto at the Flying Pepper Cantina. And really, this amazing authentic Mexican food, full bar. I mean, it's been rated as one of the best foodie restaurants in, in, in our region, if not the state. And so that's there. But you go upstairs and there's dedicated executive suites, larger suites for multiple employees, you know, individual suites for, you know, solopreneurs. And then we've got some more conference rooms, I mean, places to Zoom with gigabit internet from Analytics, which is a local company. And then, you know, we've got dedicated desks. So if you want to move from that coworking to a dedicated desk option, very comfortable furniture. And one of the highlights is their stand-up desk.

B

Bo Alexander 24:36

Yeah, stand-up convertible desk. So you get the VIP treatment while you're here at Build.

J

Jason Duff 24:41

And even if you want to come take a test drive and just go up and down on the desk like that, that's an option there. And, you know, then you get to the third floor— or I'm sorry, I was still on the second floor. We have this awesome walkout patio. So if you think rooftop patio and historic downtown, comfortable outdoor furniture, these solar shades, so you've got some nice shade when it's those really hot summer days. But, you know, part of creating the, the environment is you've got to find that, that balance. And so if you need to go out and get a fresh breath of air and just spend some time outdoors, that's a great space too. And On our third floor, everything from, you know, having areas to do, um, you know, some soundproof podcast work to another, another great conference rooms and just more expanded coworking. But there's tons of places and nooks within the building that you can hide and, uh, and, and do your meetings and Zooms, your creative thinking, or just small group connections. But I think one of the biggest surprises has been Beau. What is the big surprise we've had on the first floor as one of the most popular spaces in the building?

B**Bo Alexander** 25:47

So you cue this up perfect. I was just getting ready to tee it up for you as well. So yeah, one of the, the funny things is, um, we thought people may need a spot to maybe host a private phone call or something without having to use their actual credits to reserve an entire room just to do a quick 10-15 minute phone call. You don't necessarily want people out in the communal areas, you know, flapping their jaws and talking and disturbing other members while they're trying to do work. So we created this kind of phone booth area that's fully soundproof. It's got ports for your laptop and phone charger, fresh intake air, lighting. So the whole nine yards is essentially your own little mobile office pod, if you will. We honestly didn't think it was going to get much use at first. We thought it would be a cool point that we could point out on tours and just kind of talk about and use as a feature. But in reality, I have people who sit in that thing 6 to 8 hours a day as their as if it's their own personal work pod. And like I said, one of the trends that we've kind of noticed there at Build is that everybody likes to work a little bit differently. So it is, it's about creating those different spaces that not only inspire, but what I like to say is call kick it. So CIC, places where people can collaborate, innovate, and create together.

J**Jason Duff** 26:52

That's nice. Ooh, I'm impressed with that. Didn't know, come in and kick it here. I like it, okay. And that doesn't surprise me, people work out of there for the full day. That is a really nice feature. But again, I thought that was kind of quirky when I saw that at first too. But man, it's— that's if I have a phone call that I know I'm going to be on for a while or, you know, it's a little bit more private, that's the place to go.

B**Bo Alexander** 27:13

Yeah, it works great. And I mean, just to speak to a little bit more what Jason said about the Flying Pepper Cantina. So one of the integral parts of the actual coworking space is the restaurant itself. So it really lends credence to the fact that we're more the more professional side of the space, whereas Flying Pepper Cantina has a lot more energy, a lot more foot traffic. So it allows us to educate people on what coworking actually is. Being in a smaller town community, a lot of people don't actually know what coworking is. So having people there at the restaurant who know what we do at Build can bring people over for tours, kind of explain the concept and show them around the facility. It really helps kind of our mission in educating the community on what coworking is and why it's valuable.

J

Jason Duff 27:56

Nice. And if— I mean, we're doing— you guys have done a great job of laying out the space, you know, over the microphone. But if you're interested, you can go to the Build website and there is a virtual tour, just like you would if you're checking out residential space or anything. I encourage you to go check that out. It was— it's a super sharp space. And if you are able to come check it out in person, you know, we have free day passes and stuff like that, or come get a tour, check it out for yourself. It's really sharp, and I feel like a lot of people— it catches a lot of people off guard by having this in the downtown of a small town in Ohio. Well, and I think that was part of it too. We partnered up with architects and designers and really spent time of how to make it comfortable for people to work. And furniture is a part of that, lighting's a part of that, acoustics are all, all really important things that sometimes you don't think about until you spend a lot of time in the office. And research shows, you know, we spend more time in the office than we do oftentimes in our own homes. And so, you know, really designing a space— and that's why it really matters, the kind of chair that you sit in, you know, the kind of computers that you work on, how fast your internet is— those little tiny tweaks and dials can make a huge difference in your performance and also your happiness. And so those are things that really went into the design and the creativity behind making it such an impactful space. That's awesome. I love that you guys, you know, brought in the restaurant as a cornerstone restaurant to be in there. Is that something that if and when you expand, is that something you'd like to at least incorporate a piece of that into like other expansions? Yeah, we're really excited about our growth and expansion plans. Um, our Marysville location is currently under construction and renovation right now. We're going to be opening right in uptown Marysville, right on Main Street, and it's in the uptown in walking distance right across the street from Coffee Hall, which is a great local coffee shop. There's restaurants like Leon's Garage and several others that we, you know, just are really excited to be a part of the Union County and Marysville community. What's special, and I think each space we want to have different qualities and aspirational feels, and I think what came out there is there's a great new brewery in Marysville called Walking Distance, and it literally is in walking distance of Build Cowork Marysville. But we're planning to have some taps from the local brewery of beer that's actually brewed right in Marysville, and many of the, the hops and the things that are going to make it are all Union County products. So super excited about that. And then the events component is really important to, to Build as well. So we host a lot of events, whether it is for members or members, um, you know, they can come in and book many of our rooms and spaces for their parties, for their meetups, for family gatherings. All those things are part of that. And Marysville is going to have an incredible event space in the lower level and basement of the building. Um, the property was a former restaurant called the Lamplighter Restaurant, and the restaurant's been closed for many years, but a lot of the infrastructure lends itself well for events and also having catering on site. Site. So I think that's something that we're excited about. And as we think of future build locations, food and beverage are always a great reason to connect and convene. Yeah. So if we're not in walking distance of other great restaurant establishments, I think it definitely makes sense to have that brewery restaurant component be a part of the space. That's cool. And I'll mention coffee. I mean, the coffee is really important to you. It just happens that the Marysville location is right across the street from an awesome downtown coffee shop. That's cool.

B**Bo Alexander** 31:44

Yeah, so kind of a neat trend that we're starting to see with these coworking spaces. The one here in Bellefontaine actually most recently was the House of Shazwan, which was a Chinese restaurant. I actually used to come there as a kid, so it's really crazy to see the transformation that the space has undergone. But like Jason said, really the layouts of some of these older historic buildings that have been used as restaurants in the past, they really do have the perfect layout for event spaces and some of those larger gatherings that we need to facilitate.

J**Jason Duff** 32:10

Yeah, that's awesome. So if you're in the area and you are looking for a space, do you guys work with non-members?

B**Bo Alexander** 32:16

Yeah, absolutely. We take bookings from anybody. You can come in off the street and walk in and get a tour. You can schedule through our website. Tons of different options. As you mentioned, we have free day passes, so no commitment required. You can literally come in, kick the tires, and just hang out with us for the day.

J**Jason Duff** 32:32

That's great. Thanks for sharing your experience and, and just, you know, with some of the vision going forward. If you could— and sounds like you, you know, with the expanding and stuff— if you could do something differently, what would it be? I think one of our big differentiators that we would double down and do more— while having the open shared office areas has certainly been desirable and is important, having lockable private offices but offices that also feel open. So when you come to Build, you'll see that there's many glass walls, and glass walls that provide area where there's natural light. So we have skylights in the building as well. And sometimes you want that private area that you can just close the door and, you know, connect and, you know, make those calls or meet with a team member or a client. There's been a lot of research and you'll see over the last 80 years how office design has changed. They, you know, for many years it was those individual corner offices in every building and then it moved to this open office concept. We don't believe in lockable private offices. And I think what's great about Build Coworking Space and kind of what we are looking at for it, you kind of need a hybrid of all of those things and, and really anchoring it also with health and wellness. So a big thing about your work environment is how, how are you feeling creative today? If you're drained from making so many micro decisions throughout the day, what is that thing that's going to fill you up? And, and so sometimes even just having in the kitchen area, like Bo and Jane also make sure there's some snacks. I mean, things that Jane is— don't I know it— she is an amazing baker, by the way. And, you know, she'll have, you know, days she'll make cookies. Or Beau, with his Waffle House breakfast skills, he— we've had a fun, informative session doing breakfast with Beau. And not only is there kind of some informal networking that goes on, but, you know, there's, there's great omelets and breakfast foods that are coming out of the kitchen. I will share also, we, we did have some pizza that was left over, and one member, we won't name him because, you know, he's kind of new at the whole cooking game, but He put the pizza box and turned the oven on at 350 degrees, and I walked into the space and I went to Beau, I'm like, Beau, what smells like toasted marshmallows? It's amazing. Are we doing s'mores today? And then also we run over to the oven, Beau like flings the oven open and there's a little bit of smoke, but you don't want to take leftover pizza and turn the oven on at 350 in a cardboard box. We did learn that together.

B**Bo Alexander** 35:26

Yeah, did we not? Just an FYI for all those those listeners out there.

J**Jason Duff** 35:29

The unexpected learning that you get. But the smell it did make was like toasted marshmallows. There you go.

B**Bo Alexander** 35:35

So deceiving.

J**Jason Duff** 35:37

You might have a pleasant smell when walking into the coworking space. So I mean, I know that this main, you know, podcast is geared towards coworking and stuff, but I also feel like we wouldn't be doing it due justice if we didn't say, you know, some of the other roles and stuff that you serve for the Small Nation team. So if we can just touch on that real quick, what other What other things are you up to with Small Nation?

B**Bo Alexander** 35:57

Yeah, so they keep me pretty busy around here. As Jason said, I'm kind of the resident IT guru. So anytime somebody has email issues or anything that goes wrong, I'm usually the 911 emergency call for technology-related issues. Beyond that, I work as our project manager and business development associate for the Small Nation team, just helping grow and develop our opportunities beyond Bellefontaine and internally in our own community. And also am part-time billboard salesman for ComStore Outdoor, which is actually our marketing arm where we do outdoor advertising through billboards. And we actually just recently, a few years ago, started in the digital billboard industry.

J**Jason Duff** 36:33

So very cool. Yeah, thanks. I just wanted to take a second and just say, you know, thank you. Appreciate for all your hard work. You, uh, ever since I've been here, you've been slaving away at, you know, get— getting a lot of things done in a lot of different areas too. And so it takes a certain type of person, so kudos to you, man. Man, thanks, Ethan. And I'll just comment on that too. I, I think that if you can wear a lot of different hats and do them well, that is a— that takes a special gift to do that. Um, and, and part of it in when you work in an entrepreneurial organization, one of the things is just being open and being flexible to pivot and try different things. And I think that's one of the things that we in leadership try to do is sometimes you don't know, especially when you're younger, like what it is that you love to do and maybe even naturally what you're good at. And so what's been great about Beau being willing to serve in these different roles is there's certain things that bubble up in our conversations that's like, Beau, like you're naturally really good at this and you're adding a lot of value by doing those skills. But, you know, when we talk to other Small Nation team members, there is a lot of hats. And I think in a small business, you know, that as you're looking for careers and jobs, if you want to go into a large company and have a very defined specific job description, for some personalities they're like, oh my gosh, this feels so good. And then for other folks, and I think that's kind of more the people that we've been attracting, it's like, no, I want to feel challenged, I want to feel, um, pushed, I want to feel like I have a lot of different ways that I can make an impact. And it's kind of like a Swiss Army knife. Like, I use the example that if you have a lot of experience a lot of different areas, there's a lot of ways that you can help solve problems and add value. And as we were talking about earlier with different jobs, you know, there's always something you can learn. Now if you're, you know, trying a bunch of different things in an organization like this, then how much opportunity does that present to learn something new? Like, I'm sure you've probably learned out of— because you either wanted to or had to, you know, a lot of different things.

B**Bo Alexander** 38:33

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, kind of like we spoke about earlier, uh, with my Waffle House experience, like Jason mentioned, I have to be the cook, I have to be the waitress, I have to be the manager, I have to be the guy doing inventory. I'm the guy doing customer service. You know, you're doing all these things at once and over time it just becomes your almost norm, if you will. So truthfully, kind of juggling all these balls and making sure everything stays in the air has really just kind of turned into one of my specialties.

J**Jason Duff** 38:57

So yeah, that's awesome. Um, so I know we have Build Marysville. What are some of the other exciting things happening as we think about the future of Build?

B**Bo Alexander** 39:05

Yeah, so, um, an actual, uh, local expansion that we're planning. So our first location has been so successful that we've actually had a need for additional private office spaces and communal areas. So, um, one of our recent acquisitions, which is the Opera Block, uh, it's over 40,000 square feet here in downtown Bellefontaine, Ohio, right next to our courthouse. Uh, we're actually gonna be taking over one of the second floors and turning those into some private lockable suites, as Jason had mentioned. Uh, we'll have some bookable conference rooms that people have access to, um, a nice outdoor backyard patio setup as well that lines the back of the building. So there's gonna be some really cool features that we're excited for. Um, like I said, the demand has been through the roof. Roof recently for these kind of professional spaces that people can access 24/7. That's one of the, the main drivers of really BILT's membership is having that 24/7 access. You know, people really like to work different ways, like we mentioned before. So there's people who maybe have kids that like to get out while they're at— the kids are sleeping, you know, they're night owls. Or maybe you're an early riser and you like to get up at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning and work then. But um, just gives people the flexibility to work whenever they need to, really.

J**Jason Duff** 40:14

Yeah, I love that, that you guys did that because, you know, that becomes another, like, you know, not— I don't say safe spot, but like another touch point in the downtown of like, oh, like if we have to kill a few hours in between spots, we can go here regardless of what time it is. I know, like, for the Christmas parade, it was really cold outside, you know, um, when I was, you know, doing some photos and videos of that. And then I was able just to go inside, you know, and this is at 8 o'clock, you know, at night and, uh, just, you know, shelter a little bit from the cold. So I, I love that and giving people the opportunity, um, just like they would be able to work anywhere from home, to have that, or any time at home, because some positions it doesn't matter, you know, the hours that you work, that you have that flexibility to do it there as well.

B**Bo Alexander** 40:56

Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 40:57

Um, all right, I hope you're ready for this. Uh, hit us with one golden nugget from either today's episode or just something that you've been investing or learning about yourself? I think in being able to hear from Beau today is being open to the unexpected. And the thing that on paper, you know, looking for a community manager, it's very easy in terms of pedigree to say that this person has to have this degree or this year's professional experience. But I, I think what has been the biggest surprise is that there have been people in my life that have taken a risk on me, um, and I hope that they would say that that was a good risk. But it's— I think finding what, what, what is such been a joy of getting to know Beau is seeing how well he has flourished, taking all of the things that he has had from his background and using him— using them as his strengths. And, and I think that's a— there's a, there's a great nugget and lesson in there for all of us, because sometimes Sometimes I'm even in circles where I don't feel that I should be in. And but it's me kind of recognizing, no, like I have these skill sets. I've worked really hard. There's a lot of value I can add to these relationships and, and I'm worth it. And, and I'm going to do really good things and I'm going to have the attitude that I always want to be better too. And, you know, I think that's what Beau does and that's what we want to strive to do as a company. And what I try to do as a leader. Yeah, honestly said, appreciate that. Um, so thanks, Beau. Appreciate you having you on today. Thanks, Beau. Yeah, um, if you are interested in checking out coworking, um, here in the downtown, or maybe if you're listening and you're considering bringing coworking to your, uh, your city, I would encourage you to go check out Build, um, on social media. There's Facebook, Instagram, I believe we're on LinkedIn as well. Build buildcowork.com. There you go. The full name is Build Coworking Space, right? Correct. Yeah, but the website, the website is just buildcowork.com. There you go. So easy to remember there for you. But with that, um,

E**Ethan DeLeon** 43:10

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 of the value from that conversation, and we hope to see you in the one. If you haven't subscribed already and are looking for more of this kind of content, be sure to check out the Friday Smalltalk newsletter that goes out every week. Stay tuned to Small Nation on social media to keep up with everything that is happening here. As you, as you just heard, there are lots of exciting projects in the works. And until next time, this is Smalltalk with Jason Duff signing off.