

Episode 22

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entrepreneurship, Benji Rabhan, mastermind groups, business mindset, personal growth, failure and learning, Impact mastermind, work-life balance, vulnerability in business, leadership, young entrepreneurs, conversion optimization, business identity, emotional support, founder loneliness

SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Benji Rabhan, Ethan DeLeon

B **Benji Rabhan** 00:00

But ultimately it's, uh, it's just, it's impactful to recognize that, you know, everyone around you, whether they work with you as an employee or they work with you as a boss, or they work with you as an investor, or they work with you as a significant other at home or your children, whatever it is, like they are humans and they're just as confused as you, even if they think they're not.

E **Ethan DeLeon** 00:32

Hey everyone, my name is Ethan DeLeon and I'm here with our founder and CEO of Small Nation, Jason Duff. Joining us on the show today from Austin, Texas, we have the CEO of Aboutly and a peer on Genomics, Benji Rabhan. We want to welcome you to the Small Nation podcast where we 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** 00:59

So Jason, can you share how you know Benji and why we're excited to have him here this week?

J **Jason Duff** 01:04

Some of the stories I can share, some of them have to stay in the vault, right, Benji?

B **Benji Rabhan** 01:09

Yes, please.

J**Jason Duff** 01:11

No, it is great to have Benji on the podcast today. Benji and I have had a personal friendship for more than 15 years, um, and little did we know that when we were attending conferences together kind of in our 20s, like really motivated and excited and energized to learn about entrepreneurship and how to learn about marketing, like setting up systems and processes that would help us find new clients. And we found that we were reading a lot of the same books, we were going to the same conferences, we're learning from the same people, but not just the tactical skills and the strategic things we're thinking about. We actually felt on a personal level, we enjoyed hanging out and spending time together.

B**Benji Rabhan** 01:52

Yeah, yeah, for sure. And it was, it was nice to be able to be in a situ— first off, hi everyone who's listening. Um, it was nice to be in a situation where, you know, when you're— especially if you're a younger entrepreneur— where you, you are able to find other people who are like-minded and in ways that you can, you can relate and exchange information and stories about stuff.

J**Jason Duff** 02:11

And I think the diversity of that too. I mean, I grew up in a, a very small town. Um, I was always wanting to explore and understand and meet people that were also different from me, that have different life experiences. And Benji, share a little about like how you got started, where you grew up, your family.

B**Benji Rabhan** 02:30

Yeah, I was originally— I'm from New Orleans, Louisiana, a little suburb called Metairie outside of New Orleans. And then later in high school, I was actually from actual New Orleans. You know, if you knew anything about pre-Katrina New Orleans, it was, it was a bit of a different place. You kind of heard it described more during the original Katrina events that happened. Um, you know, I used to say that, uh, New Orleans is like a third world country in America, only, only rivaled by like Puerto Rico is what it felt like sometimes.

J**Jason Duff** 02:59

Wow.

B**Benji Rabhan** 03:00

Um, but what that meant from an entrepreneurial standpoint was that, you know, Louisiana was on a, you know, Napoleonic Code, and they have all these different rules. Um, and just to establish a business back then, it was You know, the internet existed, but it was— you couldn't even really even fax in your stuff. There was no website to register a business, to start an LLC, none of that. So everything was very slow, slow to move. And you could see that sort of in the way that the city would evolve. And in some ways that's nice because you kind of keep the history of the local area. But also if someone wants to innovate or add a service to the community, it, it was much more effortful. Um, and you know, there were some, some interesting challenges in that area as well at the time. Um, so yeah, but, but overall, um, I actually started as a very young entrepreneur. So my first— I call it now hindsight 20/20— I say it was my first fake business, but it was at the time, it felt very real to me. Um, and I actually called it Silver Wizard Incorporated. It was, uh, I was 11 years old um, and I got my first, you know, clients. And, um, and when I realized that I could basically get the material things that I wanted, which for me were more about things that I could use to learn more things so that I can continue to grow and learn. So it was like, you know, initially it was like a computer for my room, you know, that are parts for computers that I could build. Once I realized that I could also barter for those things, so I could say, hey, I'll make you a website in exchange for a graphics card, you know, taking me to, you know, at the time this place called— I think it was called CompuServe or something like that. But, um, you know, pretty popular. It was like the Best Buy of the day, of that day. Um, but, uh, you know, I got— when I was 13, I got a client to, uh, to actually take me and, and we exchanged these. There's some, some cash in the deal and some of that, and built my first computer and, and really discovered what it was like to, uh, be an entrepreneur. Got some staff members and go around and install networks and build businesses. And, you know, like, run— back then there was no wireless, so run wires in people's elevators and, wow, and attics. Yeah. Um, and, you know, had a team of other people my age that would go into the— I don't know why anyone let us do that, um, but it was, it was a pretty fun business. And it really, it taught me the value of, of, uh, you know, self-made money kind of situation, getting the resources you want and the philosophy of, of, uh, understanding that if you, if you own your own business and you do your own thing, you can actually get the things that you need in order to grow. And if you invest in yourself, then you can grow at a much faster rate. Um, so that was a pretty, pretty fun beginning.

J**Jason Duff** 05:54

Yeah, oftentimes we have entrepreneurs and, um, they, they share how they got started, and I think some people think that your first business you have to spend so much time getting it perfect and getting it right because you're going to be doing that same thing for the rest of your life.

B**Benji Rabhan** 06:09

Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 06:09

And I think many of the guests that we've had previously on the show, and Benji's, you know, story really emphasizes that, is that it's an evolution and a journey. So you're, you're not the Silver Wizard anymore today, or are you still the Silver Wizard?

B**Benji Rabhan** 06:23

Sometimes people still say wizard and they call me wizard or something like that. And silver still is my favorite color like it was back then. But, um, no, but you know, it's, uh, you know, when I was 13, I made the name a little more serious and business still exists today. It's, you know, now it's my holding company. But, um, you know, there was, you know, a point in time and where it became, you know, multimillion-dollar something else. But it wasn't the original business model. It transformed many times over time. But I agree with what you're saying there, Jason. I think, you know, what I notice with entrepreneurs across all cities and states and countries, frankly, is that everyone thinks that being an entrepreneur means that you have to do everything right the first time. And that's a very common misunderstanding. I think, you know, I got— I sort of got lucky in that I didn't know that that was the rule, the unspoken rule. So I just started to think of business as like almost like the opposite of a book, you know, it's almost like a painting or a canvas. So, you know, you start a business, um, it's just a matter of paperwork. It's like buying a domain name, but, you know, a few more steps. If, if, if you're gonna commit to a physical location or something like that, obviously there's, there's a little bit more risk in it, but if you're doing something as a way to learn, um, then it really changes the dynamic of and the seriousness of the business. So failing becomes a much more valuable asset in that process, and you can actually learn from that so quickly that you could iterate very quickly. I mean, I think before I was 18, I probably had 10 different businesses, and then— wow— you know, I mean, um, really iterated fast. But That's because each one had a different goal. You know, I want to buy this thing, or I want to learn about this, or be an expert at this, and then would just create another business for that at the time.

J**Jason Duff** 08:08

So, and you know, not only is it the businesses that evolve and change, the way that you, you think evolves and change. And I think, you know, just starting out, I remember, you know, creating my first company, it was just me. And there's a, there's a step in process to when you actually would hire your first employee, um, when you actually start growing a deeper list of stakeholders in your business, which could be your vendors, could be your clients, could be your employees. And what comes with those experiences are it forces you as a leader to think differently. Can you kind of speak, Benji— so once you created that first company, walk us through, you know, some of the others and just ways that as you and I, you know, in our 20s and our 30s, you know, we were growing and changing ourselves as well.

B**Benji Rabhan** 08:57

Totally. I mean, you know, one of the benefits of youth is that you have a lot less to— you have a lot more you can risk. Yeah. Um, and I think that that's— it's less, less conscious for young people. Um, they don't — they just haven't had the perspective yet. They haven't taken on enough responsibilities, you know, that are irreversible to, uh, to recognize that, that it's, um, they're in it in a different place, you know. And I think we were definitely part of that. We, we had some started earlier and had some, you know, some successes, some failures early on enough that we were able to learn. And it sort of created a different relationship with failure even that follows through to today. I would say for us, it's definitely something where, you know, the, the idea of, um, of learning and growing is, is, it is really just part and sort of baked into entrepreneurship in general.

J**Jason Duff** 09:53

You know, Benji and I joined a group called Impact, and Impact was founded by two other entrepreneurs, Michael Simmons and Sheena Lindell. And Michael and Sheena started as business partners, and then that developed more with their relationship into a personal relationship where they fell in love with each other. And so they ended up getting married while also building a startup and a company. And all of us were about similarly aged. We were going through shared experience together, and we decided to kind of self-select and create what is called a mastermind. And we've had other guests on the show that have talked about the idea of finding, um, other minds that have a shared vision and goal. Instead of just one person thinking, you have this group of people to, you know, share vulnerably to talk about what would be your advice. And you can hear and oftentimes get through different various feedback, get a better outcome, better advice, better decision. Um, and then that's really kind of the foundation for the mastermind. So we, we joined in there. I'd probably say at one point out of the group, maybe got up to 8 to 10 people. Some people flexed in at times, some people flexed out, but we committed twice a year to meet up at a physical location, um, and, and stay in the same house.

B**Benji Rabhan** 11:23

Mind you, we're all living in completely different cities across the country, so this is not like a—

J**Jason Duff** 11:29

in different— it's not an easy commitment to make. No, and, and the time also building startups, so like high stress, high anxiety. Yeah. Um, and when we started coming together, it really, uh, a lot of things happened. Like, like You know, I recall one retreat that we had that it was kind of the pivotal time where instead of just talking about, well, this is the best new productivity tool, or this is the, the, the website you can create graphics the best, or like, I remember when, um, Fiverr came out or, or Elance or Freelancer. Like we were all over, like, these are the best vendors and people you want to work with, like sharing all that. But there was one retreat that we went to and one of our members, in their unique share. So they had, you know, time about, you know, 45 minutes to an hour allocated where they could speak about something that was important to them that they wanted to be heard and get feedback from the group. It just happened that that person shared very real and vulnerably something personally that was impacting them, and they were very emotional about it. Um, and the, the tears, the, the, the the realness, the rawness of what they were going through and how it was impacting their life, it started impacting all of us.

B**Benji Rabhan** 12:49

And that's— Absolutely.

J**Jason Duff** 12:50

The next 6 shares out of this group, we all cried during our share. And like, you'd equate it as a spiritual moment, but it's like where you actually felt there was a group of people that were not judging you, that were listening, and also being comfortable enough to share what they were going through. There was a shift at that meeting.

B**Benji Rabhan** 13:13

Yes. From then on, we— I think, you know, what, what I hope would happen more naturally for more people in the world is, you know, we're all humans and, you know, business challenges and tactics and all these things, it's, it's, it's not just a video game, you know. These are, these are real lives that we have. We have real employees. Employees have families. Right. So, you know, to, to think that, you know, having a group of people that are just limited to, you know, what's the best website to use when you wanna hire a copywriter or something like that, it is really missing out on some of the best opportunities to grow as people. Right. Like, I mean, I see it time and time again with the work that we do. Entre— like businesses are really in a lot of ways a representation of the individual and where they are in their own journey. Right. The, the people they hire are, you know, unintentional, you know, um, mirror or, um, you know, or opposite to themselves across the team. And, and so it's really like the organism that is a business ends up being a reflection of the leader or the founder or whatever it is in that case. So to treat the business as if it's like a separate thing, I think it's just doing it a disservice because it really is a part of everyone, no matter how long it's been since we started it or, or what our intention was to begin with. Once you, once you put your feet on the ground and you actually go deep into the business and you care about it, especially when you work with people, um, it becomes, it becomes a part of you.

J**Jason Duff** 14:43

That's awesome. And I think there are probably some people listening to this or, you know, who are starting their own businesses and think that, oh, that sounds great. And, you know, I wish I could find a group like that. What are some like practical tips? Like where do people go to find, uh, other trusted people that they can build this relationship and grow their businesses and grow as people together.

B**Benji Rabhan** 15:03

Well, I'll tell you how I found the MPAC people. Back then, um, I was, I was so focused on business that I, I didn't have any time or interest in social media. But one day I said, you know what, I'm going to give myself just like a couple weeks and I'm going to go into these, like, you know, join a couple Facebook groups or see what Facebook groups I already joined that I didn't know I joined. I wasn't really paying attention. Um, and I'm just going to spend a couple weeks and give myself an hour a day and not make it about, you know, the feed or whatever the things are that people normally do. But I'm gonna— I'm just gonna give actual value back to some people in the communities where there's answers. Where previously I was just like, you know, I would— a silent observer— be like, oh, I don't want to tell them something that's obvious or whatever. That might— yeah, I had my own internal story for why that was, was that way. And then I went in and saw something that— from Michael, the founder of Impact, one of the founders of Impact— and I, I— and I— he asked a question and a bunch of people were giving answers, and I was like, oh no, I've been here 10 times. This is not the direction.

J**Jason Duff** 16:03

This is a trap. They're gonna sell me something.

B**Benji Rabhan** 16:05

This is— well, no, I'm— no, I'm literally reading the, the advice from the people, and I'm thinking, man, they're all sending each other in bad directions. I, I've already gone down each of those paths, you know, in different businesses, and they all end up in, in, you know, a lot of failure or subtle trauma of some kind. So I was like, this is a good example of one where I should say something even if I come off weird or something, I'll go ahead and tell them. And then I answered it, and then Michael was— reached out and, you know, directly to me, and, and, um, and, and then just started with a phone call. Take it offline, you know, um, and, and really create a relationship and focus around adding value to others. Mastermind doesn't have to be, you know, it often— in my experience, it starts with just two, you know. It's— you get on a call with someone, and, you know, most of these calls, it's like some sometimes feels like someone's trying to get something from you. You might feel that if you're having this experience. But at the point at which you call it a mastermind, it, it's like, oh yeah, let's have a little short mastermind together. What do you think about maybe doing these calls more often and having a little mastermind? This kind of stuff can happen organically. And then you invite a third, you invite a fourth, and then you sort of can curate a group of people. What I found was interesting about our Impact Group was that not only were we from different states, but we were in very different lines of business. We, we had come from very different backgrounds. Um, but we, we had kind of, I would say, more of a value alignment was the biggest, you know, common ground between us. But from the tactical, like, you just sort of look at us from an outside, you'd be like, wait, why do you guys know each other? What is this about? You know, but that actually made the group extremely interesting. You know, we, we had advice for each other. I remember going through some difficult times, um, you know, a number of times. But I remember going through some difficult times, but, you know, we were trying to have kids, me and my wife, and it was really causing a lot of, you know, trouble, you know, trouble internally for each of us separately and then together in the marriage. And I brought that up in the, in the session, and, you know, we were young enough, there wasn't a lot of children in the, in the group yet. Yeah. Um, but it was not really about the children, it was just about the relationships. And when I brought that up, everybody was really supportive. And, and, you know, I got to hear stories of, of different people, different circumstances like that, and that was really helpful. And what I didn't know at the time was that, well, one, it would lead to the business I do today, but two, that it was actually going to free up my mind more for the work that was important, you know. And, and that's the— that's a big component of you know, really bridging the gap between humans, the human element of relationships, and the work, you know, the business, the entrepreneurship side of things as well.

J**Jason Duff** 18:50

You know, the other thing I think that was interesting, that we're all on a different journey at, you know, different level of this, but for, for a lot of entrepreneurs, their identity is their business.

B**Benji Rabhan** 19:01

Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 19:02

And so what you do, it is what you do. It's what you wake up in the morning. It's when you go to bed at night. It is what you You know, it's like a child, like you care so much because you know where it started and you've nurtured it and you've grown it. And there are times, I mean, business— businesses succeed and businesses fail. And because that identity is so tied, like, it can do a number on you. Yeah. Um, and I think that part of us in this group was realizing that we are more than just our business and that, um, that, that, that yes, it is a reflection of us, but it is going to evolve like we are going to evolve. And so I think part of it is, is finding a group of people. There's a few keys that, that you need, and it is finding people that will be real and honest with you. They have the— you've got a relationship that they can be direct with you. They can confront you. They can support you. They can love you. But And you have to be receptive of all those things. That's like the other half. You really do. And I think that's going to go in— Benji is going to share a little more about the work that his company is doing today. But we as humans, we've shared this word before too. We're messy. Yeah. I mean, we're— there's, there's highs and lows and we're complex beings. But I think when you start to understand and just own that and accept that you, you are not perfect, and, and, you know, other people you work with are not perfect, but, but there's beauty in that. Like, there's purpose in that.

B**Benji Rabhan** 20:38

Yeah, it's funny, you know, the idea of perfection in general is something we all— we have all strived for at some point.

J**Jason Duff** 20:47

Yeah.

B**Benji Rabhan** 20:47

And, uh, the lucky ones of us have realized that it is a fool's errand. Yeah. Uh, you know, the idea that we can, you know, we can always improve— that's, that's, that's true. We can always work to improve ourselves, work to improve our relationships, our family relationships, our work relationships. Um, but the idea that it'll just be fixed or that it'll be, you know, solved or that it'll be, you know, perfect beforehand or whatever the case—

J**Jason Duff** 21:14

everything's going to be going well, everything's going to be going well indefinitely—

B**Benji Rabhan** 21:18

that's just not possible. You know, we often— and some of my group of friends will often say things like, well, I'm in a really wonderful, uh, calm expansion period right now. It's sort of like the, the alternative way to say like, things are great. But I recognize that they won't be always great, and there will always be challenges along the way. Um, but when you have a good system of, of support, um, and not just emotional support, you know, the word support often comes with like, you know, traditional therapy or something like that, but, or family support. It's more like entrepreneur, like entrepreneur support, people who really get the complexities of what it's like to own your own business and have employees who depend on you and You know, we often talk about things like, you know, this feeling, what it feels like to be lonely at the top. You know, what is— what does that mean? And why do we feel that way? And do we have to feel that way? Right? These kinds of things. So, you know, spoiler alert, the answer is no, you do not have to feel that way at all.

J**Jason Duff** 22:15

But it's free. That's free advice.

B**Benji Rabhan** 22:17

There you go. But, but ultimately, it's, it's just, it's impactful to recognize that, you know, everyone around you, whether they work with you, as an employee, or they work with you as a boss, or they work with you as an investor, or they work with you as a significant other at home, or your children, whatever it is, like, they are humans and they are just as confused as you, even if they think they're not. Yeah, we are all just confused. We are all, we are all just walking around thinking that we, we're all just walking around trying to figure out what's going on, and then just when we get close Well, you know, life has the— has its exact opposite, right? But, but that's the fun of life, right? That's the, that's the journey, at least in my opinion, is that we're always walking around looking for, um, something to, you know, answer our questions, whatever they are, about ourselves, about other people. It's pretty fun.

J**Jason Duff** 23:11

That's awesome. You had mentioned, you know, how a mindset changes from your 20s to, you know, 30s, um, and, you know, your business changes as you change. Can you talk about— I think hearing from both of you would be great, um what that journey looked like for you, you know, individually. Like, what were your goals back then and how are they different now? And how is that seen in your business? Benji shared that in your 20s, that's this whole concept that your risk tolerance is much higher. I mean, you come right out of school with this passion, this drive, or this frustration that you're like, I just graduated with this education and I'm— I don't know what I'm gonna do with it. Um, but I think that that risk tolerance is much higher, and I encourage people because you can fail hard and fail fast and you get this huge pass. Um, and you know, there's, there's not a lot of, uh, things that you have to lose of being able to test a lot of different things, meet a lot of different people, try a lot of different business concepts. But that evolution, and I think for me it was travel, like I traveled to every conference, every event. Um, you know, I, I didn't really need much sleep. I didn't probably take care of my body very well, didn't eat well, um, because like you could just power through it. And that's what like everyone shoulder to shoulder around me was thinking, feeling, doing those same things. There are shifts though, and, and part of it is the thinking of how when you're just a small company with 1 or 2 or 3 or 5 people. And then when you do start to find a business model, you work really hard to optimize those things. You start to grow, and growth is this thing that you— we all desire. But there are these new pain points and problems that come that require you to grow differently as well. What do you think about when you think about your 20s and building your business, Benji?

B**Benji Rabhan** 25:09

I think about it a lot as like a, a really safe experimental era, you know. It was— and I— and a part of me knew that at the time, that it was— it's like, this is my chance to learn what I need to learn before it's extremely serious, you know. And I think that that perspective, um, did, did provide some advantages later in the journey because there are, um, there's a lot of fear of failure out there, right? I'm sure that, you know, any people listening can relate, you know. There's still parts of me that's afraid to fail.

J**Jason Duff** 25:40

I was going to say, your 20-year-olds are not feeling that, you know, that it's safe to fail right now. Analysis paralysis and all this other—

B**Benji Rabhan** 25:48

Exactly, exactly. And, you know, I met plenty of people who said they're not afraid of failure, and, and they mean that philosophically. I don't think they mean it as literally, um, or if they do, they just haven't figured that part of themselves out 100% yet. But, but, you know, the, the idea of, of going through and trying out what a bunch of things to really learn what it is that you really want to do and learn how to do it. I mean, my, my first book was titled Failure Is Obsolete, and it was meant to be ironic because obviously failure is not obsolete. But the idea that you could fail small, um, and then after you fail small, you can learn from that and you can sort of, you know, derive information, conclusions that make your bigger risk things a little bit softer landings if they do fail, and ideally more successful in general. And you could apply that to everything. And that was kind of the original idea of the book, which, you know, I— even that book, I, I picked it up recently and read it, and I started laughing because it was written by a version of me over 10 years ago at this point. And I was in my 20s, you know, early 20s at that point, and I was, I was just very rushed I was in a rush to make everything happen. I hadn't realized yet that 20 is only 20 of 80, or 20 of 100, or 20 of 120, and that I had plenty of time, right? And, you know, one of the things that's interesting about that, my new perspective, is actually that we have a lot of time, especially if we focus on our health. We actually— we have a lot of time. And, you know, the feeling of rush is, is just that— it's a feeling. It's not actually real because things, you know, there's occasionally occasions where it's real. Of course, if you have an actual deadline to submit paperwork or something like that, but you know, like, you know, don't apply this to the IRS, but, um, you know, but, but overall it's, it's a feeling. Um, and, and you don't have to always feel like it's time to, like, you have to do this now. So the chip on the shoulder of 20-year-olds, I feel like I still see it today with a 20-year-old. It's like, it's like, oh, I got it. I got to move up the chain, the next to the next step. I gotta get this thing, I gotta do this. It's like, well, you have time. I mean, we literally, I work with people who are in their 80s, 90s who are starting their first business, you know, people who are, you know, were obese their whole life and then, you know, now in their late 70s, they're losing all their weight and reversing all their things and learning to work out for the first time. And to me, there's a little bit of a difference between them and a 30-year-old, right? Um, uh, mostly physiologically, but you know, it's really a state of mind. Um, that 20-year-old period, it's a state of mind.

J**Jason Duff** 28:37

I think going into your 30s, the theme became for me relationships, because in the 20s, like, for a lot of us, we didn't have time to date. Like, it was really, you know, you're working in your business, you're, you know, you have that low-level anxiety all the time that your competitors are going to outpace to do, but it was kind of taking a little bit of a breather and say, well, you know, if, if I'm going to be successful in life, I need to find other people around me that I can actually share and enjoy time for what I'm building. Um, and for a lot of us that kind of moved into this mastermind, it really was talking more about dating and relationships and finding people that appreciated how uniquely weird we were. Yeah, because, you know, again, it is finding that person that's going to support you, but also have the confidence because a lot of us, we're very strong personality. Like, we don't hear no very much in our life from anyone. And if we do, we're probably going to challenge the no. So we needed— we need to give that permission to, to someone that we cared about to, to have those boundaries and those lines. And so I think the 30s was a big theme on that. And then the other thing was Dealing with, uh, parents that were aging was a big theme. Yeah, because you always think that your parents, they're always going to be around, you know, grandparents are always going to be around, that support system that got you to where you are is always there. And I think you start to get that, that sense of fragility.

B**Benji Rabhan** 30:09

Yeah, yeah, you start, you start to realize that life is complicated. Um, you know, and not, not necessarily infinite, at least in this reality. Um, and, uh, you know, it's really, you know, and then, you know, kids might even start in, in that same timing. So you both, both realize that you're now the parent of your parents and your kids in some way, shape, or form.

J**Jason Duff** 30:33

It's tough raising your parents.

B**Benji Rabhan** 30:35

It's, it's, it's a different— it's a whole different thing, you know. And, uh, you know, especially with the world the way it moves, there's so much more internet, there's so much more access to information now on the internet that that, you know, the way that we, um, you know, anyone really that's— that has parents that they're taking care of or that they're supporting, you know, um, and, and kids, it's— it's— it — there's so much more information. So it's a different— it is very different from the past, um, in that if you want to know how to be better, you can find it. And so if you don't look, well, that's a whole thing as well, right? And, and that just changes perspectives across the board on what, what to do.

J**Jason Duff** 31:16

The other pillar became health. I mentioned in the 20s that you could eat whatever you wanted to eat. You could, you know, sacrifice and not sleep for days and still be fine. Um, but in your 30s, there's this shift in energy that you, you just don't have that unlimited reservoir of superpower. Yeah. And certain things that have never hurt start to hurt. And, um, also as your company is growing and the complexities are growing, you don't absorb stress and anxiety the same way that you did in your 20s.

B**Benji Rabhan** 31:49

That's very true. I, um, you know, you guys can't see me probably, but you know, I was, I was a pretty big person in my 20s. Um, and in the early phase of that, I, I was pretty happy about it because it didn't really — I didn't notice it. And it was a consequence of, you know, realizing that I could just stay up all night, two nights in a row, and, you know, get so much done.

J**Jason Duff** 32:11

So much time.

B**Benji Rabhan** 32:12

As long as I had an entire cut, you know, of you know, refrigerator full of tea or coffee or Red Bull. Um, yeah, I couldn't do this, uh, the bubbles. But, um, you know, I, I mean, you could literally keep going and going and going, and then I would just crash after I turned in whatever the thing was that I was supposed to deliver to the person. And, um, it was impressive looking from the outside because, like, wow, you did so much in 4 days compared to, you know, this would have taken weeks or months. And, you know, now it does take weeks or months, but But the sacrifice I was— I didn't realize I was making was to my psychological health, my physical health. You know, the— and then as a consequence of that, the relationships in the business, relationships at home, relationships with family. It really— it creeps up on you because it happens slowly.

J**Jason Duff** 33:03

You know, it's expensive in other ways.

B**Benji Rabhan** 33:05

It's expensive in other ways. And, you know, even before the back pain started and, you know, and you guys are sounding old, honestly, it'll hit you. It's very present. Because the last 2 months I've been in and out of back, you know, my back went out multiple times in the last 2 months. Wow. Um, just because I got out of my own habit, my own health habits during COVID So, but, um, you know, there really is a shift where you realize that, that the best time to get in into those good— that good shape is the younger you can do it. Um, but at the same time, it's never too late. It's never too late.

J**Jason Duff** 33:39

The seasoning of life is— and I think the aging process, like, I I don't fight it. I actually like it because it gives you these perspectives. And the other thing to be thinking about is finding people in your life that have went through what you're probably going to go through and hearing their stories. So we have had a previous guest, Lyle Inslee from Anytime Fitness. Lyle is in his 60s and serves kind of as a coach and advisor to our team. I hope I look as good as him when I'm 60. I hope we all do. You know, the secret, Idris, go start a gym. Yeah, like that's one way to do it, I guess. But, you know, just hearing from him, he provides that grounding and that perspective because he's been through it. Yeah. And, and I think that's what's kind of neat where different ages, generations, like we still need the 20-year-olds to give us that fire and passion to let's go win. Um, but the seasoning of life, and I think that's where you get more things that you risk that you could lose. So you've worked hard to build something And then you become more risk-averse to say, I value this, my time, my relationship, my business so much, I'm going to have to say no. And you know, in my early years I would never say no. Like it was always like if someone asked me, will you do lunch? You know, can I interview for this? Can I pick your brain? It would always be yes, yes, yes, yes. But you have to develop that discernment to protect, yourself.

B**Benji Rabhan** 35:12

Absolutely. I mean, and the thing is, it's not really protecting yourself. You're actually protecting the organism of your company, the organism of your family, the individual people within those organisms, their families. I mean, it's, it's, it's, it's a— it can be a challenge to realize that you are in some way responsible for all these things, but when you're an entrepreneur, you, you are. And so your own health is actually an important part of the health of everyone and the health of the organism in general, because, you know, you— you know, I'm sure everyone can relate to this. And when you're having a bad day, somehow it looks like everyone's having a bad day. Yeah. Um, you know, even if— even if you're not the boss, you know, it's one person in the—

J**Jason Duff** 35:55

it's infectious.

B**Benji Rabhan** 35:56

And it's infectious. And so if you're not getting good sleep, or if you're not eating well, or you're not you know, getting exercise or, you know, taking care of yourself in general, your mental health especially, um, then it can really wear on everyone and everything. And it may take you a little longer to notice that that's what's happening, but, you know, it definitely happens.

J**Jason Duff** 36:16

That's awesome. And I think that's a great segue into some of the work that you're doing now. So if you want to share with us a little bit about your company and the work and what, what we're doing even later this afternoon.

B**Benji Rabhan** 36:27

Yeah, yeah, for sure. So, so I'll kind of bring it back since we were start— I hadn't, hadn't used this example before, but I was thinking about this of, you know, when I remember vividly in first grade looking into, you know, going into the recess and, uh, they had one of those jungle gym things and there was all the like Star Trek, you know, nerd kids all playing.

J**Jason Duff** 36:48

I was one of those playing there, right?

B**Benji Rabhan** 36:51

And they were all a little bit odd, you know, everyone was a little bit odd and but different kinds of odd. And then there was all the kids that were like, you know, playing soccer, the athletes, you know, sort of athletes. And there's the, you know, I forget the name of the game, but it was like, it was a ball and a string on a stick and you'd hit it around and around.

J**Jason Duff** 37:07

I forget the name.

B**Benji Rabhan** 37:08

Tetherball. Tetherball, thank you. Um, there's people waiting in line to play tetherball, you know, and, um, you know, some people playing hopscotch kind of stuff. Um, and I remember going around and being like, man, I really, I, I like all these things, and also I don't know if I fit into any of these things. I relate to that so much, right? And I feel like in a lot of ways we all do, we all relate to that in some way, shape, or form. I think, you know, I remember sitting down watching the— sitting down in a chair, an actual— someone brought a chair out and left it there. You know, they always have that random chair in the recess. It's like someone—

J**Jason Duff** 37:42

was it the trouble chair?

B**Benji Rabhan** 37:43

I don't know, it's just like, it's like the rusted chair that someone left out there once and then they never, you know, something.

J**Jason Duff** 37:48

It sounds like a safe play environment.

B**Benji Rabhan** 37:50

Yeah, listen, it was New Orleans. And, um, you know, and I'm sitting in this chair and I'm just watching everyone and I'm just like, man, which is my group? You know, where do I go? And, um, you know, it's like, oh, I kind of want to be a cool kid, but it's like, but I don't know anything about Star Trek because I just hadn't been exposed to that before. So I was like, um, they seem really into this thing, like, I don't really know what, what I want to do. And, um, you know, fast forward, I think, you know, that, that's the sort of the story of my life prior to a couple years ago where, you know, I always felt strongly misunderstood. Um, I've had these conversations and it's really important to me to be a good influence for people and to kind of lift them up and support them and help them grow. So much to— so much so that it was like, uh, I probably put that as a priority even higher than my own, my businesses. You know, I used to say personal development over profit. Um, now I say they're even, you know, because I think they're more equal. Yeah. But, but ultimately, um, you know, getting to interact with people and then finding out or realizing that my own skills or my own abilities in language or my own understanding of how to communicate with them. It's like, man, I just don't know what to say. I just say this a lot: I don't know what to say that would help me get across what I'm thinking in my head in a way that would be received in the way that I want it to be received, right? Or that I'm intending for it to be received. And, you know, most people listening, I'm sure you guys can relate to this, that there's, uh, you say something to someone and then, you know, they misunderstand you, and then you kind of go back and forth and back and forth, and you start repeating yourselves, each other, right? And then you're just like, man, what is, what is happening here? And then you start to— what we start to naturally do, and this is what we do in the company about, right? You start to— we study this stuff, so you start to naturally like make judgments about the other person. Yeah, right. Um, in my case, because of part of the way my brain works, that's mostly judging myself, but but you start to make judgments about the other person. And, you know, you can call this labeling or identifying, but say like, oh, this person just doesn't like me, or they're dumb, or they're smarter than me, or they're, um, and, you know, can I curse on this? Yeah, they're an asshole, right? Or they're, um, they're just so nice, but, you know, they just don't get me. Or there's all these different ways that you can put this, these labels on it.

J**Jason Duff** 40:15

Yeah.

B**Benji Rabhan** 40:16

And I just found that so fascinating over time that that was that was consistent from early, you know, early age development in my life all the way until my 30s, right? And it's like, why is it that I still haven't figured this out 100%? I put so much time into learning and podcasts, books, um, all the personality assessments, like, oh, everyone that's out there. I literally— I mean, I think I had a group of like a few hundred people that were in my life over the time, and then I had them take multiple personalities. I paid for all of them and I memorized all their scores, and that still wasn't doing it, you know, it still wasn't working. And, um, you know, I think I had a pretty high standard. It's kind of like the perfection comment we were talking about earlier. I had a very high standard for what level of understanding we would have between each other. I wanted to understand them better, and I wanted them to understand me better, um, and mostly for the goal of connecting, you know. At least that was my personal motivation, was creating deeper connections. Um, and, and so in a, in Aboutly, what, where Aboutly came from is that, you know, after a number of failures in partnerships, um, you know, I mean, I have a great relationship with my wife now, but there was times where, you know, we were clearly miscommunicating at a level that was pretty risky for the relationship. Um, you know, circumstances would happen that would, would make things challenging, and then communication's everything, and we, you know, it wasn't working as well as I wanted it to, and as well as she wanted it to. And, and then, you know, employees, same thing. I mean, the amount of employees or team members over the years that, you know, I would have— that they would, they would end up leaving, or vice versa, I'd have to make them leave, you know, because of simple communication challenges, you know. And that's just so, so common. And so I was like, this— there has to be an answer for this. And then I realized some very simple things. Well, you know, a mentor of mine from about, uh, 10+ years ago had told— had kind of warned me once. She said— she said— I called her for advice and she said, you know, Benji, um, I think this thing that you're looking for, this— in this other person that's working with you, I don't think they're gonna ever change in this way. And I said, impossible, I disagree with that. Of course they're gonna change. I will figure it out. It's a very bold 20-year-old thing to say, right? I am going— a challenge accepted. I'm willing to fail, but I'm not going to give up, right? Um, you know, it turns out—

J**Jason Duff** 42:37

because we— you're a fixer, right?

B**Benji Rabhan** 42:38

Because, because—

J**Jason Duff** 42:39

and I'm the same way, like profile-wise we're similar in that we're fixers. We can fix anything, right?

B**Benji Rabhan** 42:43

We can see that. We will analyze it to death until we figure out the, the way to solve the problem, even if it seems impossible. Like, one of the best ways to challenge me is when I was younger, and probably even now, would be to just say like, Benji, this is impossible. There's no way in hell I will let that go. That's right. Um, I'll have to make very strategic conscious decision to let it go, and then it still won't be let go. Yeah, come back later. Um, you know, and so the fact that she said it was impossible, or most likely impossible, I was like, no way. So I put up many years into, you know, figuring out all the things, and, and in the end I realized it's— it was, um, it was a combination of, of two major differences. You know, one, um, my— like, the way our brains work. You know, if you've heard of the term neurodiversity before, um, it's usually talked about with people who are are, um, you know, different from the, you know, quote-unquote normal people of society. But, but what we've actually found from the science and from all of our applied application of the science is that everyone's brain works differently. Everyone's brain. And the neurodiverse people just happen to have a set of brain traits that are, um, you know, it's like we call it firmware, but sort of the way their firmware works, it's like the software behind the the software that connect— that's connected directly to the hardware. It's kind of attached to the hardware. That's what firmware is. Um, so the firmware of the mind is really, um, pretty consistent across all humans. You know, we've got some— you got some exceptions with, you know, severe genetic differences, you know. But, but ultimately, we're all very similar. You know, we have a similar hardware. And so the firmware is, is, um a sort of a— it's a complex system. So what we do now is we actually look at currently 19 different components of the firmware, and everyone has— everyone is somewhere on each of those spectrums, and they may not know where they are. And in most cases, they don't even know that those spectrums exist. We're just walking around, you know, thinking— I mean, I can't even help myself in this podcast hearing the two of you, you know, you're—

J**Jason Duff** 44:50

we did Benji's assessment Yeah. And so you know our profiles.

B**Benji Rabhan** 44:55

I do, but I don't— I'm not even thinking about it. But as you talk, you know, so much of what we do is based on, you know, our, our, our mind, our, our, our subconscious mind. If you— if your audience knows the difference in conscious and subconscious, sort of the, the part of you that does stuff for you. And then, you know, it's the part of you that drives the car when you're on the phone. Yeah, it's that, that part of you. Um, it's the one that's usually talking. So, you know, when you, when you speak out loud you're thinking about the idea of what you want to say, but what you're actually saying and what words are coming out of your mouth are produced by the language centers of your brain, and that is a part of your subconscious, and it's shared with a lot of other parts of your mind. So when you're talking, it's revealing a lot about how your brain actually works, with which everyone here who's starting to feel any remotely skeptical about this, just think about it. If you walk up to someone that you've never met before, how long does it take you to realize whether or not you're going to get along with them?

J**Jason Duff** 45:53

Happens pretty quickly.

B**Benji Rabhan** 45:54

I mean, seconds. They don't even have to talk, right? I mean, our intuition, our subconscious mind's intuition, develops a sort of pattern recognition, connects a lot of dots for this stuff. But we don't really know what is in the pattern consciously. So what we do in Aboutly is we actually break down what are these different components that make up the way that we think and the way that we perceive reality, um, and the way that even whether it's through our eyes or through hearing people talk. And what we found is that there are some very clear differences between just normal everyday people, which if anyone on the podcast is here is listening and they are married, this is most often where, you know, or they have kids, this is where most often people are like, oh yeah, we're different, you know, it's immediately right, there's something different. And it's mostly genetic, you know. Our, my other company is a genetics company, so we're sort of the two sides of the same coin. The physiological, the body, mind, the vessel, and then, and then the, the actual software and firmware of that, right? And so, so when you look at all this stuff together, it's, um, our language is the way that we talk. It's like we all think we're speaking English, but the reality is there's like a lot of different versions of English, and what we are describing is a representation of what's in our mind. And sometimes we can see that you know, if you're, you know, if you actually like close your eyes and think of an elephant, if you're participating, close your eyes and think of an elephant. Even you may not even need to close your eyes to see the elephant, right? There are some people out there, as an example, that literally don't have a mind's eye. It's like a 2 or 3% of the population. They can't see the elephant, they just see the back of their eyelids, but their mind can see it, but they can't see it in their mind, right? And this is just one example of an extreme, but Everyone has a different vividness of what they see in their mind. And all we're doing when we're talking is our subconscious mind is trying to explain what we see or what we feel, and it's organizing the words and our body language in a certain way to express that thought. But our brains, our software and our firmware is different enough from a very early age when we learn language, it forms around these different firmware components. So our words, like when you learn the word balloon or you learn the word exciting or you start to put sentences together, those are wrapping around that part of your mind that is already there. Yeah. And so as you experience, we're literally just like, uh, if anyone knows the term automatons, but we're basically, you know, if we put spirituality and religion and, you know, all this stuff aside for the context of this, you know, discussion our physical form is like, um, you know, we are, we are literally just walking around trying to figure out ourselves all the time. I mean, you can see it more in kids, but as adults we're doing the same thing. We're just walking around, you know, maybe listening to podcasts, just trying to figure out a little bit more about how do we think, you know. How do you know if you like a banana? Well, you try it. Yeah. Or you decide before trying it that you just probably won't like it. Yeah, right. Either way you're bouncing up against things that are in the physical world, and then you're experiencing them, and then you make some sort of a judgment call. So with people, we do that mostly in judgments that are either positive— oh wow, he is so nice— or negative judgments. It's like, man, what a selfish asshole, right?

J**Jason Duff** 49:17

Or that person is so nice, that's not legitimate or authentic.

B**Benji Rabhan** 49:22

He's got to be fake. Oh man, that person, right? That's, that's one of my favorites, right? Because almost always that when someone says that, it's actually just because they can't relate. Their brain is just different enough they can't relate to that person's brain. Yeah, you know, everyone can relate to this when we talk about or think about politicians, you know, like the extreme— especially in the groups that you don't agree with, right? It's, it's like, man, they're just slinging bull, right? But a lot of the time their brains are actually built to, to perceive reality in a certain way, and they're just trying to express it. And then, you know, yes, they're trained by coaches eventually to keep talking that way, but But ultimately it's a, we all have different ways of communicating English or whatever language it is. And we just don't necessarily have the receptors to receive the other person's unless we have the same type.

J**Jason Duff** 50:09

Yeah, that's crazy. And we are about to go on this journey together as a team later today. So I'm very curious to see how this all plays out. Well, and truthfully, we're so happy to have Benji from Austin here is that he is, building an international company and using us as a test pilot to, you know, really understand how these profiles can help a company and individuals work together and work together more effective. And, you know, so far in our drive-in this morning, you know, you, you've recognized that the group— you've— how many profiles have you looked at? You're— are you in the thousand mark?

B**Benji Rabhan** 50:47

I think, yeah, I think we just passed the thousand mark of our profiles type.

J**Jason Duff** 50:51

Without kind of sharing all the details that you're going to share, but, but you said what we have here amongst the team is kind of unusual.

B**Benji Rabhan** 50:59

It, it is, it is atypical for the sort of growing startup type group. Um, you know, there's, there are some commonalities in that it's a lot of things are sort of representation or reflection of the, the owner, founder, boss, etc. But the way that your group has manifested is is, is unique, is very unique. Um, and, um, it doesn't make it any less predictable once you, once you see that everyone's brains, you know, brain—we call them nodes, their brain nodes on a, on a physical page represented in numbers. But, um, but it is, it is unique because, you know, you're doing something special and, and you're doing something different and you're, you know, a different kind of leader. Um, and so, you know, each person in the team is is unique to sort of the flow. What we do see commonly across teams is, is that there's a misrepresentation of human, right? So there's a, there's a lean too much in one direction, right? Because you communicate better with people that are like you. So when you're interviewing for jobs, right, you are repelled by people sometimes that are the opposite of you, even if that brain type might be the best for the job, because you're like, I can't even imagine talking to this person, or I don't, I don't think they understand. Yeah, I don't think they get it. Get it, right? And so you end up not hiring them, and then you hire someone who does get it, but then you ultimately complain about whether or not— or that you say, oh well, like, they, they get it, but like, I'm really struggling with the fact that they're not producing the way that I want. And it's like, it's kind of like feels like you have to have one or the other. And the answer is no, you don't. You actually can have both. You can, because everyone can be trained to understand this stuff at its core. And once you understand it, you're able to understand each other. So you can, you can translate. It's kind of like if you were to go to a random, you know, if I were to say, okay, let's all go to South America together, let's go, let's go to, you know, Venezuela, and let's go to a random city where there's no English, right? And, and I'm assuming in this context that, you know, you— we all speak like 25 words of Spanish, um, and, uh, the other person, you know, speaks, um, 3 words of, of English. Well, which language are we going to be speaking in? When we go there?

J**Jason Duff** 53:15

Spanish.

B**Benji Rabhan** 53:16

Spanish. Because 25 is better than 3. Yeah, that's right. Right. So with the knowledge of this kind of stuff, we have the opportunity to hear— even if we don't feel comfortable speaking, we can kind of— sometimes you can hear in that example, right? You'll be able to pick up on things better than they can because you're trained, right? You're experienced. So once you learn this stuff, you realize, wow, that thing that I used to judge positively or negatively— but most of the time people remember the negative ones— That's what was happening this whole time? That's crazy. Yeah, I'm hearing that. My mind is blown. At every session we have at least one mind-blown comment, right? Because, because they— we spend our whole life judging each other and just bouncing up against each other, and, and it feels like if we don't judge the other person, then we have to judge ourselves. But the answer is we don't have to judge either, you know? We just have to recognize what's actually happening.

J**Jason Duff** 54:07

Yeah, crazy stuff. That's the golden nugget. I don't even need to say it. What he just said there, and I think that through the theme is the shift that you see in your 20s and 30s and the seasoning of life. You start to appreciate people that are far different from you, and it also forces you to reflect on yourself. And it is the, the idea that to build a successful relationship, friendship, company that you need to understand the way people think and, and use that to your greatest advantage. And I'll say, when you look at your balance sheet, for those numbers-focused, um, people, assets could be buildings and fixtures and equipment, but the most important asset a company can have is their people and how that company invests in their people. Absolutely.

B**Benji Rabhan** 54:57

I mean, you could literally build the biggest, most beautiful invention ever, but if you don't have the right team, it's not going to make a difference. No one's going to show up, or if they do show up, it's all— they're all going to be— it's going to get a bad review, you know, whatever, whatever the case is. I mean, that's— and that's, I would say, the common trend is, you know, after many businesses over the years and, you know, many hundreds of employees across them, um, and thousands and thousands of candidates you know, the, the largest challenge is the human element. And also the most important part of every business is the human element, even in software. Yeah, even in software, because someone has to be behind the scenes in software building the software, keeping up with the software, and helping people when they have trouble with the software. And, you know, the— and marketing this out. I mean, the human part is just so important. And if we don't take care of of each other and, and our cultures within our organizations, um, and recognize that it is literally an organism. That's why I use the term organism for the— for a company, as opposed to like an, you know, organization or a company. I like to say organism because it's— we are— when we look at our brain profiles, we actually are a— basically the combination, the organism of the company is pretty predictable. I mean, I can walk in when— if I have the entire teams' profiles, I can look at them, I can basically smush them together in our software, and then it tells me where— what the lean is, right? Where is the company, as, as if the company was one person, where is that lean? And I could say, well, the superpowers of this company is this, and the kryptonites of this company is this, as if it's a singular individual. And everyone's like, wow, how did you know that? It's like, oh, it looks like here you have this, which means that you most likely will have this happen or have already had that happen in your business multiple times and you don't know what to do, don't know what to do about it. It's, oh my gosh, you are like predicting the future. And I'm like, I am not predicting the future or the past. I'm literally just saying that we are an organism. Yeah. That is made up of the sum of its parts. Yeah. And those are constantly interacting with each other.

J**Jason Duff** 57:10

Can't wait to unpack that and see what that is for us, um, here internally. Uh, Benji, what are some of the professional development resources such as books, podcasts, professional groups that helped you along your journey?

B**Benji Rabhan** 57:20

So many. You know what stands out to me the most, the book I probably recommend the most over time, is, um, a book called Influence. Um, I think it was by Robert Cialdini. It was— it's relatively old now because I read it when I was younger, but, um, someone just— one of my team members just picked it up finally and took my advice. And they're like, you know, that's like— it's a— it was an every meeting conversation because it is— some of the foundations of what we do is based on really breaking down how people's brains work. And that was one of the earlier books that did a great job of explaining that stuff, not just from a lens of influence, but from a lens of relationships as well.

J**Jason Duff** 57:57

Yeah, very cool. Second question is, where can people follow you, keep up with like what's happening with you and your business?

B**Benji Rabhan** 58:03

Um, mostly off of social media outside of LinkedIn. So follow me on LinkedIn, Benji Rabhand, and, uh, I'll be participating on there a lot more often.

J**Jason Duff** 58:12

Awesome. Well, thanks for joining us on today. Pleasure to have you.

B**Benji Rabhan** 58:15

It's been—

J**Jason Duff** 58:15

thank you so much for the rest of the day here. But

E**Ethan DeLeon** 58:18

thank you everyone for tuning in and checking out the Small Nation Podcast. You can find us anywhere that you listen to your podcasts, including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and even the Small Nation YouTube channel. I hope you're able to pull some value from that conversation. We hope to see you in the next one. If you enjoyed it, be sure to leave a like, comment, or a 5-star review to help more people to discover this podcast. Stay tuned to Small Nation on social media to keep up with all the cool projects that are happening here. Until next time, this is Ethan with the Small Nation Podcast signing off.

B**Benji Rabhan** 58:46

Thanks, guys. Thanks.