

Episode 27

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Cintas, B2B sales, facility services, Curt Wisecup, continuous improvement, outsourcing services, customer perception, uniform and mat services, referrals, word-of-mouth marketing, consultative selling, company culture, small business value, Bellefontaine, career progression

SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Curt Wisecup, Ethan DeLeon

C Curt Wisecup 00:00

You know, and that's the thing that for me, the big driving factor is I really like— I focus on what I call the baby steps. I focus on the 1% better just because it's so small. It's not asking a whole lot either if you're 1% better than you were yesterday, but over time that extrapolates. And a really, really good way to measure that for me is I just think about 6 months prior, you know. Yeah, I think about that meeting I had 6 months prior and I'm like, oh man, why didn't I say that then? I could have— I, I probably could have helped them out a little bit more. I probably could have solved that problem for them a little quicker. Yeah, but that also validates that I am, you know, I am getting better.

E Ethan DeLeon 00:44

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 is facility sales rep from Cintas, Kurt 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.

J Jason Duff 01:13

Thanks, Ethan. Curt, welcome to the show today.

C Curt Wisecup 01:16

Excited to be here. Excited to have a little chat with you guys. Yeah, a lot of fun.

J**Jason Duff** 01:20

So here's what I really respect about Curt. You're going to hear more about his journey today, but behind the scenes of a lot of our small businesses are some big businesses. We've really not had that perspective on the show. Um, and I think hearing the journey of what are all the things when you walk into a business that you just expect, and sometimes that is, um, the way that someone greets you, sometimes that is the, the music that's playing in the establishment. Could be the lighting. Well, something else that's really important to a lot of people is how things are clean or not clean. And you kind of wonder, how does all this stuff happen? Well, there are companies that provide outsourced services to help small businesses be their best. And getting to know Kurt and understanding more about all the different products and services that companies like Cintas offer I was amazed at how many different businesses he's touching in our community and not just in this region, but in other regions. And I want to hear your perspective. How did you get started in all of this?

C**Curt Wisecup** 02:31

Well, I've been with Cintas for 10 years, so it's been a journey and it's been a great journey. But I kind of got to— I do have to go back before that, how I led into Cintas, because it was kind of unique for me. I graduated from Wright State with a business degree. I was at Sinclair prior. I had the opportunity to play golf for Sinclair and got an associate's in communications, and I got an exercise certificate in science— I'm sorry, not science, exercise science. So I'm really big into physical fitness. It's kind of one of the things that I— it's like I have to every day. But it's also because, you know, I want to be around for a while and I want to also lead a very healthy lifestyle, a good example for the kids.

J**Jason Duff** 03:10

But, you know, I was just out of Napa and Does drinking bottles of wine and glasses of wine count? I mean, did you study that at all?

C**Curt Wisecup** 03:18

A glass of wine a day is super healthy for you. Oh, see, I like that. See, that certificate's paying off. And they sell those glasses that are the size of wine bottles. So I mean, see, no one's counting. It's all about perspective.

J**Jason Duff** 03:31

Okay, okay, good.

C**Curt Wisecup** 03:32

Just want to check. But yeah, so I got my degree at Wright State, and during my college tenure, I actually worked at Kettering Health Network. I always made the joke is I worked at a college while my— or I worked at a hospital while my friends waited tables. So yeah. And during that, I was able to kind of get the perspective of some sales with medical device sales reps. And after college, I actually got a job working for a medical device sales company. I did that for about 2 years. I enjoyed it. It was fun, but it just wasn't— it just wasn't my passion. Like, I just wasn't— I just wasn't into it. You know, one of the things that I utilize a lot of is you always have to be two feet into whatever you do. And I got that actually from one of our training directors at Cintas. But the thing is, I look back on that, and for me, looking back, I wasn't in it. So I walked away from that. I told my wife, I said, you know, I'm passionate about fitness and I like helping people. Um, so I looked at going back to school for physical therapy and, um, had all the prereqs, had to take a few more classes and talk with my wife and said, yeah, I think I'm gonna do this. So then I had about 6 months or so until the classes were going to start. And I said, you know what, I don't really feel like going into a mountain of college debt again. So yeah, so I decided to clean up my resume and throw it on Monster.com, to really date myself. And I wasn't actively looking. I just put it on there, said maybe somebody reaches out to me. And lo and behold, the general manager, a gentleman named Eric Kabeen, reached out to me from the Cintas location in Vandalia, Ohio. Location 02, Dayton North is what we call it. And he called me and said, hey, saw your resume, I'd love for you to come in and talk about working at Cintas. And I'm like, what's Cintas? And he goes, oh, you've probably seen our trucks driving around. I said, I can't, can't say that I have. But you know, when you're not looking for something, it's hard.

J**Jason Duff** 05:28

Is it a software company? Exactly.

C**Curt Wisecup** 05:29

Yeah, I had no idea. So he kind of told me over the phone, industrial laundry. I did some research online, went in, had a 2-hour conversation with him, and it wasn't an interview. It was just talking about the positions and everything that you do and all the things you can do. And it really, it really felt weird because I was like, all right, there's something to this. But the big thing for me that really drew me in was what Cintas calls its culture. It's, it's just an overabundance of positivity. As I walked through that plant and I saw people hanging garments on, you know, hangers all day. And I saw people unloading trucks, you know, it's not a— that's not a glamorous job, you know, it's, it's dirty. There's some grit that you have to have, but everybody was happy. Everybody was having a good time. Got to go on a route ride with a gentleman before I even started the interview process. And same thing, like, this guy is walking in and talking to all these people, all these customers. Everybody loved him, you know. Loved everybody. Yeah. And I'm just sitting there thinking to myself, like, all right, this, this looks like fun. And I got hired on as a, as a, as a service sales rep, which is a route driver for Cintas. And I absolutely loved it. Probably to this day, I can say probably one of my favorite positions because it was perfect. You're outside, you're in nature. There's not really that many hot days and cold days in Ohio when it comes down to it. Tons of people you're getting to talk to. I'm happy to see them, they're happy to see me. I'm providing solutions, you know, if they need more uniforms for a new employee, I'm taking care of those uniforms. If they need another mat for an entryway, yeah, I'll get them that mat. So it was great. And then, um, from there it's just kind of— it was kind of the, uh, the snowball effect, as I called it. I started, you know, I did really great as a, as a service sales rep. I was— and, um, I was one of the, one of the top reps. And then I was promoted to a service supervisor where I saw an overteam a team of drivers. I would handle routing, which is just figuring out where we're going to put new customers and handle interviews, and did great at that role. Loved it. Harder position, Cintas. But the thing that I've learned about it is each position I've gotten into is I was able to take the knowledge from the prior position and be the best you could be at that current one. So after service supervisor, I became a catalog manager where I handled things like logoed garments and supplying PPE to customers like gloves, hairnets, food processing. And then after that, I moved to a service manager role where I oversaw a team of drivers and a service supervisor and was very successful in that role from the standpoint of being what we call peak. So I was a top-level performer at that and achieved OAA, Outstanding Achievement Award for the location while I was in that role. And then I went on a field ride with the sales manager, 402 at the time. Her name was Kay Owens, and she said, She was like, hey, let's go. And I said, we rode around. She's like, what do you like? Let's go to a few spots. And I'm walking into customers and doing some cold calls with her. And as I'm walking into these cold calls, which isn't something that I would do as a service manager, I'm walking in to meet current customers, you know, I'm talking to them about, you know, you know, Joel over at Joel's Stamping or whatever, saying like, hey, you use a Cintas over there. And yeah, she's like, have you ever thought about going into the sales side of the business?. And I was kind of like, like, yeah, I can do that. That sounds fun. So I kind of make a joke sometimes as I'm on a— I know there's a plan for the people that are putting me in the positions, but I say that I'm on a raft floating down a river.

J**Jason Duff** 09:02

I just, I like that.

C

Curt Wisecup 09:02

I just dock up wherever they need me to.

J

Jason Duff 09:04

Yeah. You say that, but I think some of these things have been, you know, purposeful. Yeah. Would you say?

C

Curt Wisecup 09:10

Absolutely.

J

Jason Duff 09:10

Yeah. And, you know, I respect that you, you're the guy today that worked in the route where you're selling those services, but you understand what is required behind the scenes to perform.

C

Curt Wisecup 09:22

Yeah, and that's, and that's the big thing too, is, um, you know, Cintas is nothing short of a buffet of services. Like, a customer would get overwhelmed if I walked in and just said like, here's all the things we can do, you know, and you throw out a list and they're just like, whoa. So that's why I kind of look at myself more as just a consultant. Like, I like to come in, I like to talk with the business over, figure out what their needs are, and then work with them on that and what's going to make the most sense for their business.

J

Jason Duff 09:51

So I have to admit that before knowing you and before knowing Cintas, I kind of had a perception that spending money on changing rugs was the biggest waste of money. And, and here's why. Like, I prided myself— like, I love to go to Sam's Club or to Costco, and I— part of my job for my business, or my business, was to buy the cleaning supplies. So I would scan the aisles And of course, you know, you see big bulk items of commercial cleaning stuff. And I was the guy filling the soap containers. And, you know, the rugs, I could buy a \$28 rug and put it out there. And I'm like, why would people pay someone to switch that out? Well, that was until I started going through a few winter cycles and understanding how do you clean a rug after it's been destroyed with salt and grime and everything else. And do it when it's negative, you know, 5 outside. And the thing about it is, because I was being cheap and I wasn't really thinking at everything else a part of that equation, there was a lot more cost that was ruining my carpets, was ruining my floors. You know, maybe was it causing people to potentially slip and fall in my business? And that's when I started to see the value is that having someone else that's providing that service and, you know, not even valuing my time in the process. And I think that's a lesson for a lot of small business owners. Your time is your most precious resource. And so it's evaluating what can you outsource to a trusted partner that will allow you to be doing more of what you do best. Do you run into that? I mean, is that when you're out there selling and someone says, well, my rug's just, just fine, I'm going to go to Sam's Club and buy a new rug. Why would I pay you to do it? Absolutely.

C**Curt Wisecup** 11:38

What do you tell them? I mean, yeah, well, I mean, that's a simple— it's a conversation of the— I think the biggest thing that, that I like to point out is the safety factor. And that's one of the biggest things. And it seems like something so minute because it doesn't happen until it happens, you know? Yeah. Nobody, nobody ever trips and falls on purpose. They trip and fall because there was an accident, whatever, ice or torn up rug or something. And when that happens as a business owner, that's 100% on you, you know. And you're right, like the idea of changing a mat out, you know, some people would look at it like, why, why would you ever do that? And it's like, and you know, it's also the, the fact that like people look at things when they walk into businesses, you know. Like if, if you're going to get it, we'll just use a dental office for an example, you know. If you walk into a dental office and it's beautiful and you walk in the door and there's a nice crisp logo mat sitting in front of you and everybody's nice and friendly, then, you know, people notice those things. If you walk into the same office, it could even be subconscious, right?

J**Jason Duff** 12:37

Like, there are people that their eyes, their senses are tuned into that. But then there's also a subconscious perception that if, if I go into this restaurant and the floor is filthy, there's a good chance the kitchen is filthy too.

C**Curt Wisecup** 12:52

Yeah. And that's the thing, like, the same thing. They walk in and they see the mat that's half torn up on the floor. It doesn't matter how nice the floors look and everything, they might be like, oh, I wonder, wonder what type of equipment they're buying for the back then if they're not even taking care of their own. Restrooms are a big thing too. Like, I think that's probably one of the most unique things that I run into in not just from being a sales representative for Cintas, but as a customer. I can tell you the last restaurant I went to and how dirty the restroom was. I couldn't even tell you how the food was, but I remember those things. Yeah. So that's a big thing is, you know, is, is, you know, making those restrooms likable because Sometimes you can have an experience somewhere that is just great. You know, my wife and I went to a restaurant that will remain unnamed in Vandalia, and the food was so good. It was a great experience. And then she went to the restroom and came back, said, we're never coming back here. Yeah. And I'm like, what happened? So she said, the restrooms are horrible. And like, that is what we took away from that. And the fun part about that is how many other people do you think she told?

J**Jason Duff** 13:51

A lot.

C**Curt Wisecup** 13:51

A lot. It was a lot. And now it's like, that's the viewpoint, as opposed to walking in the restaurant at, you know, like Brew Fountain or Syndicate, and, you know, they have the, the, you know, of course I'll say our Cintas dispensers on the wall, and it looks very crisp, it looks very modern, looks very clean, it smells good because of the air fresheners. People are going to remember that, you know, and it, it carries, that value carries. But yeah, I mean, it's definitely something special for small business owners.

J**Jason Duff** 14:17

So you remember the early days when I was cheap here in Bellefontaine and wouldn't pay for rugs? I mean, because in the beginning it's what you don't know but need to know, or you learn along the way. I mean, we, you know, started renovating buildings and, you know, leasing spaces and starting restaurants and other businesses more than 10 years ago. And I think at the time you were probably, when we were first getting started here, maybe doing routes and deliveries on the truck.

C**Curt Wisecup** 14:42

So I have a really — that's probably my favorite part about, you know, getting to speak with everyone and getting to know everyone in Bellefontaine is the chance to tell that story to someone. And it just — new business owners in general that I've been working with. Fat Boys Pizza is just down the, just down the road here. I got to, I got to tell Dwayne this story earlier and told him how I was a route driver and on my Thursdays that was my Bellefontaine day and I drive right up Main Street, you know, and just nothing there. Go service Majestic Plastics. Sean Amos is the owner out there. Go there. I'd go over to Heartland Egg, come back and there was just nothing there. And it was just like, like, man, it's like, you know, service the city of Bellefontaine. I took care of the uniforms for them and it was so much fun progressing through Cintas, you know, as a service supervisor. And then at that time, that's around the time Brew Fountain got started. So I got to meet, you know, Adam, and I got to get introduced to him. I was kind of behind the scenes. I wasn't more — I wasn't as involved in that until he was probably about 3 or 4 years in. But I got to introduce myself to him. I got to meet him and watch that business flourish. And then as I was a service manager, that's when things really, from what I noticed, started to really take off, is where I started to build relationships with, with Adam at Brew Fountain more and more. Him and I would go play golf every now and then. I met Brittany over at 600 and got to sit down with her. And I'll be honest, the first time I met her, she wasn't happy with the services, but we were able to turn that around into a great trusted partnership. Now I work really closely with Dalton over there, you know, and then the same thing, and it keep — it kind of just kept snowballing, per se. I got to work with Matt Brown over at Iron City where he was using a different vendor, and I got to work with him, and he got to see kind of what we're doing for other restaurants, and it eventually switched over to us too. And then got to work with Rob over at Vicario's when he moved to his new location. He was already a Cintas customer, but when he moved to this new location, having that prior relationship, introducing myself, showing them all the things we could do, now he uses us for almost tons and tons of his facilities out there. But, and the cool part about it for me too is getting to utilize all these individuals as referrals. When I'm working with new customers, I can say like, hey, I work with —

J**Jason Duff** 16:59

can you explain what, what is that? Because I think in sales, uh, some people don't know what a referral is.

C**Curt Wisecup** 17:04

Yes. Okay, so a referral is as simple as, uh, just being able to mention a current customer who you're using, or somebody maybe you just recently got signed up with to, uh, use the services. And, and I'm very, you know, I'm very transparent. I'll say, hey, if you want to call them Here you go, here's his number. You know, we get— really get letters too. I worked with a place in Springfield, Ohio called Mad River Vet Clinic who was with a different vendor, and, um, they, they were nice enough to write me a nice referral letter that went through in detail what we did for them to get them started, you know. And I, of course, I utilize that when I go in and walk into businesses because let's face it, most of the time small businesses, time is their most precious asset. So when I'm walking in asking for their most precious asset, they usually don't want to hear it. Yeah, but you know, if I can say, hey, I work with, uh, I worked with Missy over at Mad River Vet, this is a referral letter, here's my card, be a powerful sales tool, give me about 10 minutes of your time. Yeah, and that does go a long way, more so even than marketing material. You know, I can come in with a little pamphlet that shows how cool our dispensary is, the trash can. Yeah, but when they have a letter from an actual business that's similar to them in the area, it can go a really, really long way. And, uh, and that's what I see. And that's that— like I said, that the cool part of that story is I've gotten to tell that to tons of cintas, you know, up-and-comers, you know, management trainees who ride with me in the car, and I take them to Bellefontaine. I'm like, see all this? None of this was here. Like, you wouldn't have known you were in high school anyway. But, uh, but it is— it's something— it's something really cool. It's special. And it's like, it's created a— I feel like I've an indirect behind the scenes, like, yeah, definitely not responsible for the growth. That goes to you, but definitely a part of it. And it's something that I share to tons. Like, I tell my family about a lot. My mom and dad are both retired. They come up to Bellefontaine a lot. I'll be like, hey, you need to go eat at this place, this place over here. And I do the same thing when I'm even in the Springfield market. I'm working with the new owner of a Chick-fil-A. And I told him, I said, hey, if you get a chance, you're new to the area. He's from Georgia. Take a trip to Bellefontaine. And yeah, it's a cool little town, best peach you'll ever have, 600 downtown. And if you get a chance, get the Reuben at Brew Fountain, it's really good. Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 19:24

So, and I think that's the power— you're using what works for you, you and your business, and then, you know, sharing that with others. And, and that word-of-mouth marketing, that's one of the most effective ways to, to share great businesses, companies, you know, services.

C**Curt Wisecup** 19:42

And it's, it's, it's so like, it's— I was telling you before we started, I'm a very like, I'm a process person. I'm very like, I, I'm very organized. And having that ability to kind of plan my day that way, you know, we call it geomapping, where like, I'm gonna— hey, I know I'm gonna be in Bellefontaine all day. I'm thinking on my way there like, okay, which of the customers am I going to talk about? What are the services I'm going to talk about? APTM with this customer as I'm sitting in front of them and trying to get them to buy into, you know, not buying a \$25 mat for their front door and we're going to come in and change it out on a weekly basis because they have to see the value and get them to understand that, you know, this is going to not just save them time, it's going to make the place a little safer, it's going to make it cleaner. But the perception, you know, that's probably the biggest thing with small businesses specifically. Like as soon as someone walks in the door, like they want to be— they, as an owner, you want them to like the place that they're walking into. Like they want to be— and they want to leave and be able to tell that to a bunch of other people.

J**Jason Duff** 20:44

Yeah, the amount of detail that they put into paint colors or everything else. And oh yeah, even today, online presences, you know, there's a reason they call it storefronts and they put so much intentionality into, you know, making sure it's pristine and represents your business well. Kurt, can you speak about the mindset that it takes to get up every day? Like you mentioned a little bit about your drive up to your clients and how you're thinking about it, but to achieve like where you've, where you've grown in the company, like what, what drives you? Like what is that mindset that, that fuels you? Yeah.

C**Curt Wisecup** 21:14

So I mean, for me, there's, there's one thing that I, that I really like strive by and it's just so simple. So I look at things very, very small, but I'm also very visionary. So it's almost like a catch-22 because I'm thinking of things like baby steps, you know, like, okay, how can I get 1% better than I was the day prior? What's this like if something didn't go well while I was talking to a customer? What's the one thing I could tweak just a little bit, you know, to make it better at the next one? And at the same time, I think to myself, 2, 3 months down the road, constantly thinking about, all right, what do I have? Like, things are going great right now. Oh man, I got presentations lined up. I got I got customers that are excited to have our business in, you know. I got maybe people that have called me because it snowed in November, you know. This is awesome. Yeah, but I'm thinking 3 months down the road, like, what do I have going on then, you know? And that's the thing that for me, the big driving factor is I really, like, I focus on what I call the baby steps. I focus on the 1% better just because it's so small. It's not asking a whole lot either if you're 1% better than you were yesterday. But over time that extrapolates and a really, really good way to measure that for me is I just think about 6 months prior, you know, I think about that meeting I had 6 months prior and I'm like, oh man, why didn't I say that then? I could have— I probably could have helped them out a little bit more. I probably could have solved that problem for them a little quicker. Yeah, but that also validates that I am, you know, I am getting better. I think—

J**Jason Duff** 22:50

oh, sorry. No, I just give you a shout out. Like, we, um, our team member Shannon was having a billing issue, and you know what a lot of big companies do when you have a problem like that? It was a call the billing department. That's not my problem. Yeah, you know, wait on hold. Yeah, good luck, right? Yeah. But I think that's another thing where you step in to say, I'm sorry you're having that problem, let me ask some questions around that, let me then work with the team, and I'll, I'll champion this to, to get this fixed. And then you follow back up and ask the question, did this get resolved? I want to, I want to hear. I think teaching people the importance of creating solutions for customers. But when a mistake happens or when there's an issue, like actually getting to the solution, there's not a lot of people and companies that do that anymore. Yeah, they kind of say, stay in the queue and good luck.

C**Curt Wisecup** 23:36

Yep. I think that, um, for me the reason is, uh, like we, we like— I act with a very high sense of urgency. Like if somebody calls me, like, all right, that's a priority. Right now. And the reason is because there's, there's something on the line. It's called your brand, you know. And what's a great way to increase your brand is to become that go-to person, you know. And that's what, that's what I like to be known as. But the flip side of that too is I want Cintas to be known as that as well. Yeah, it's not just about me. It's also about having this brand, not just necessarily around Bellefontaine, but my market and throughout the country, because we're a big company. We have a lot of big customers and we want people to think, oh man, we should have Cintas. Cintas will get that taken care of. And then it goes a step further that dives down deeper and says, well, hey, call Kurt, he'll get that taken care of. And that's happened before in town, you know. I mean, I know for a fact that if Adam's having something going on, then he'll reach out directly to me and I will get it taken care of immediately. And I always— I think the proactiveness too is part of it. I like to reach out to customers just checking in, hey, how's everything going? It's going good. Oh, you know what, actually we need this. I'm like, all right, let me get that taken care of for you.

J**Jason Duff** 24:45

You mentioned that you, you know, from the first time you started coming to Bellefontaine and over the last 10 to 15 years, you've seen a dramatic shift. Yeah, you've seen just a little buildings renovated. Yeah, just a little buildings renovated, new businesses started. You've seen existing businesses expand and start new locations. Just like you mentioned, I think how you approach that motivation to make your professional growth and personal growth better. We're doing the same thing, and it really is— it's incremental, like, development and incremental changes. Like, the shift of saving and revitalizing and restoring your town— a lot of people think like there's this magic wand that just happens in a year or two. It's actually— it takes time, and it takes like looking at those little tweaks to the dial, um, to the marketing, to the, the appearance. Like, there's all these different factors. But, um, the thing that I'll just, you know, share, that it is a team of people. And I think you alluded to, like, you should take pride in that you're a supporting actor in, in this whole show. Um, and I'll just, uh, share that part of what we've been building at Small Nation is a specific formula for how we can revitalize, improve, and redevelop towns. And that's called the Small Town Success Formula, because what we found to create success, there's a unique process to do that. One is that you've got to buy and invest in historic real estate in your town. And it's those buildings that have the character, that have the great location, that have all the history. Many times those, those downtowns and those communities have not been activated yet. So getting in the real estate game is going to be important in town. The next thing is that actively recruiting tenants. So you mentioned many people that were here on that, that early journey in year 1, 2, and 3, and they had the courage to start restaurants and to get that traffic, energy, life back in place. And then we had to get access to capital. So it was like finding business partners that then would say, hey, I'm gonna, you know, take risk on your restaurant idea, I'm gonna take risk on, you know, investing in this, this property with you. And that last part is, is really the coaching, mentorship, and support. And I think that's the, the pieces that we're excited about now. Yeah. When a new business comes into Bellefontaine, we have a whole host of services and tools and people to introduce them to. Right. So like when the Queen of Hearts Fine Chocolate and Gifts opened up, they called you because they wanted a logoed rug with their logo on that to keep their space clean and nice.

C**Curt Wisecup** 27:25

Yeah. And I mean, that was— working with Sherri has been a treat. No pun intended.

J**Jason Duff** 27:31

She's one of a kind. We are going to invite her on the podcast at some point. Coming soon. I cannot wait.

C**Curt Wisecup** 27:36

But that was, that was so cool. Not just— obviously it was just so cool to walk in there and see— because I got there before there was really anything in there.

J**Jason Duff** 27:44

Yeah.

C**Curt Wisecup** 27:45

It's just like, all right, what's this going to be? I mean, okay.

J**Jason Duff** 27:48

The building was pretty rough. The second and third story was condemned. Yeah. The whole opera block. Yeah. The whole opera block has been really one of the largest and most difficult projects we've done. But now you're starting to see it's, oh, it's coming alive. Yeah. And in our previous conversation, you said Cintas was beginning to notice that they're picking up business here in the small town, right? Like, tell us about that a little bit.

C**Curt Wisecup** 28:11

From our location perspective, you know, if I were to compare a town that's similar to Bellefontaine, and we'll say size, and then maybe a kind of a similar downtown, it'd probably be like maybe like Troy, Ohio. It's kind of similar. Yeah. And they— don't get me wrong, there's some great places down there, and Troy's beautiful. It has some— but from a Cintas footprint in Troy versus Bellefontaine, is there's a little bit of a— there's a little bit of obscurity. Like, we're not in as many of the businesses, and it's kind of like the why. Like, what is the reason behind that? Yeah. And, you know, and I think that one of the biggest things was, is obviously the uniqueness of myself being in this market for as long as I've been. And I've been able to build relationships, build referrals. But the biggest thing is I trust, you know. I have trust between the business owners, and that's something that as a company, from our perspective, you know, we're trying to figure out, you know, like, how can we get relationships like this with other real estate developers, other companies that are kind of doing what you guys are doing in different towns and things? And how can we gain that trust and get that relationship and everything? And I think that that would, that would spur, you know, obviously some more businesses for Cintas. And at the same time, it's going to create quite a bit of trust between business owners in the area. And, and that's been something that, you know, and I, and I do take— I'm like I said, I take a lot of pride for it. It's, it's become personal for me in a strange way over the past years that I've been— because like, it's just, it's just been so cool, for lack of better phrasing, to see it all develop and kind of think to myself in the back of my head, like, knowing like, oh cool, I was able to help them out with And I was able to get Sherry a logo mat and she needed it when she was opening and I had a week to get it.

J**Jason Duff** 29:53

Yeah, 100%. And I love your perspective because a lot of times we highlight small businesses and entrepreneurs, you know, who have their own storefronts. But you have that attitude in the job that you're working now, you know, for a larger brand and it's still making an impact. And I think, you know, sometimes I, I think it's, you know, I want to highlight both, you know, because we need both. And, you know, on this like idea that a rising tide raises all ships, right? Like we're, we're obviously trying to develop and, you know, renovate our historic buildings and make all this possible. But the impact it's having for Cintas, you know, as a business, the impact it's having on you, like as well, like personally, your brand, right? It makes you look good as well. Like it takes, it takes everybody. How do you maintain — like, you're growing, growing, growing. How do you personally maintain that same level but also want to put more on your plate?

C**Curt Wisecup** 30:50

Well, I mean, for me, like, the— it, you know, I guess for lack of better phrasing or for easy way to say it, you know, my job is to, you know, get storefronts. Like, that's what— that's— that's what you got to do, you know. And, and I think the big thing for me is, and I said this earlier about being two feet in, and I kind of picked that up from our sales training director.

J**Jason Duff** 31:09

I like that.

C**Curt Wisecup** 31:10

That's a good saying. Yeah, if you're, if you're two feet in, which basically just means you're in it, then you're gonna figure it out. Like, I think if I were to give like tips, advice to younger people that are in sales roles or whatever it may be, is, you know, take those baby steps, 1% better, but also make sure you're in it. Because if you're not two feet in, if you're not 100% in what you're doing, then you're not going to grow at the rate you want to grow. You're not going to, you know, knock on the amount of doors you need to knock into. And like I said, like, it's just something for me, like, it's, it's unique because it's become kind of personal, like, Bell Fountain. I love that. But at the same time, like, it's also professional to it. But I think for me, passionate. I think I just, I love just walking into a place you know, and seeing the, the business owner or whoever it is, the receptionist. And most of the time, 9 times out of 10, what are they thinking? Oh, solicitor.

J**Jason Duff** 32:10

Yeah, another thing, I wish they would teach sales more in education. Oh yeah, like that was the thing. I know you mentioned that you had a traditional education and went off to college, and it's amazing to me how the skills of sales are not in the nomenclature of a lot of organizations or universities. But for you, like, how did you have a coach? Do you— how did you build the accountability and the discipline to walk into a business and hear, more likely than not, the word no and still have the courage and energy to go back at it every day?

C**Curt Wisecup** 32:47

I think this is— that's the thing too, is like I said, I've been doing what I've been doing for 10 years now. I've only been on the prospecting, the sales side of the business for just over a year. But before that, you know, I had a lot of experience with walking into, maybe sitting down in a meeting with people that weren't that happy with Cintas, and that builds up a lot of ways to negotiate conversations and have tough conversations and being able to kind of track around that and everything and work to a solution and then ultimately build that trust into a great relationship with that customer. But, you know, for me, it's, uh, I think the skills that I've kind of acquired and learned is, first off, you really just need to, I mean, just not, not take it personal. You know, like you can't walk in somewhere and you do, you get told no, you get told to leave, you get told like, I don't have time for you, get out.

J**Jason Duff** 33:39

I've heard. I bet you have some stories.

C**Curt Wisecup** 33:41

Yeah, 100%. Yeah. And there's definitely been times where that happens. But when it comes down to it, like you literally just have to be like, like, all right, whatever. And then go on to the next one, you know, or learn from it. All right, what could I have done differently? You know, I think the biggest thing is, is, um, when you walk into these places, they have to like you within, you know, what, probably 5 seconds, maybe 10 on a good day, depending on the day of the week. Fridays are always better. Thursdays sometimes are the best. I don't know why.

J**Jason Duff** 34:07

Thursdays are the magic day.

C**Curt Wisecup** 34:08

Listen, but for some reason or another, like, they, they have to, they have to like you when you walk in that door, you know, and you have to explain to them in a little, uh, whatever it be, a pitch. You know, we call them scripts and everything on why they want to take time. You know, and it isn't just about saving money, and anybody can save you money. Most places can save money just by, you know, calling the provider if they want to, but it has to be a value of some kind.

J**Jason Duff** 34:37

Some businesses get pigeonholed into being a commodity. How do you risk, you know, not being that? And what do you think you do and, and the work that your company does to say we're not just like every other commercial laundry vendor?

C**Curt Wisecup** 34:53

I think for me, honestly, and this because this goes back to— I'm like I said, I was a driver when I started, a service sales rep as we call them. And I think our frontline partners are our strength. Our service reps are a cut above because they go into these customers with a smile on their face. They're not just delivery. They don't walk in and drop off, you know, some uniforms and then walk out the door. They're walking in, they're having conversations, they're talking with the contact after it's all done and saying like, hey, this is what I took care of for you today. Is there anything else you need? Let me know. You know, you can call customer service anytime. For me, that was always kind of the biggest difference. And that's something that I utilize while I'm talking to potential customers. And I get to, I get to kind of make a different perspective for them because I'm not— as soon as they hear like, oh, 10 years, you were a driver, you picked up math. Yeah, you're wearing a tie. Yeah. But yeah, it really, it really changes the perspective in the conversation and saying that our service reps are very well trained. You know, they don't walk in and hand them the keys. You know, that's not how it works. They go through a training process, and in that training process, they have to learn, you know, how to navigate tough conversations along with, you know, making sure they're building relationships with their customers. And I can attest to the gentleman who I did my route ride with. He's been with Cintas for over 20 years, and I can tell you right now that his customers love him. So much that the services that are being provided by Cintas are just like, they go with each other. Like, Rob goes with all these mats. That's how it works. Yeah. You know, Rob, we still like the mats, but, you know, we're going to keep them.

J**Jason Duff** 36:41

Yeah, you better keep Rob. So, love that. Awesome. So, um, you know, kind of thinking about— sorry, kind of jumping back to like, you know, the trickle-down effect of, you know, development and you know, how it impacts everybody in the community. And, um, I don't know, I love hearing your perspective, you know, of, of downtown Bellefontaine and seeing the transformation. But, uh, before all of that, there's a mindset shift that has to happen. And, you know, I love hearing it, what it looks like from you internally inside of a, you know, a larger brand. But Jason, why don't you share a little bit about some of the resources that we're developing to, you know, help other communities do the same? Yeah, you know, really for the longest time I never imagined that we would be hosting so many different groups of mayors and county commissioners and economic development professionals coming to want to see what's happening here. And a lot of the questions that they ask is, the first one is, is this really real? And we were hearing from the mayor the other day, he gets calls and just says, hey, I, you know, went to Small Nation's website and looking over some of these statistics of how many buildings they've renovated and how many new businesses have been started. Like, just hear from your perspective, is this real? Um, and he, you know, shares, yeah, it's, it's more than real. In fact, you should, you know, contact them and come visit. So a lot of people take us up on that. But, um, now we're, you know, looking to partners like you and others and saying, how can we package what we have learned and then help other towns that are just like Bellefontaine that are peppered around the country. So I mentioned that Small Town Success Formula. That is, you know, really a way that we can take a lot of what we've learned, package it, and take our team to another town where we can do a visit, tour, provide renderings and recommendations and an action plan on what those towns can do. But we also bring a lot of those leaders here for live education, training, and development. And from the, the live education that we've done, there's been other folks that have reached out and said, man, I would love to come to Ohio, but I live several states away, and sometimes that's just not practical. So we are going to be developing and launching here in the near future some online training and education programs.

C**Curt Wisecup** 39:03

Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 39:04

Anything you want to share with that, Ethan? No, I think, you know, we're going to start off with just helping people, you know, get into that mindset, you know, that it's a collective effort and all the different ingredients, you know, to make that happen. Um, and how you can make, you know, that once was a sad story, make that a success story, you know. Um, so I'm really excited for that. Um, and just a piece of that, when you think it's not just, um, you know, talking about renovating historic buildings, it could be— and we'd love to have you on— it could be you teaching a course and program on the 7 things that every storefront owner should know that customers and consumers care about. And you'd be amazed, like, it's everyday knowledge that you deal with all the time. But there's a lot of businesses that have blind spots. And, you know, I can even share my story of how cheap I was in wanting to buy rugs at Sam's Club. Like, that was the earlier version of me. Now I see the value in all those things, and it's having this major impact on the perception that people have on this town.

C**Curt Wisecup** 40:05

Yeah, it's a— it's fun. That's a That's a great— it just makes me laugh so much just because when it comes down to it, like, when people are opening up businesses, I mean, they're— and I know it firsthand when I'm working with a new prospect, it's— they're under construction still, you know? Yeah. I know how they have a billion things going on, and the last thing they want is probably to talk to a guy about a mat on the floor that's not even done yet. Yeah, right, dude. I don't need mats, I need my plumbing to work. Yeah, right. But the thing is, is while talking with them and showing them the things that they— that we can take care of for them, and it saves them that greatest asset, time, um, it becomes, it becomes very, very, very valuable. The uniqueness of it is, is those places that do, you know, they buy their things, they go to Sam's Club, they search for the best deal, and they get what they need for their business. And it's just one of those things that that's become part of their process, you know. So it's shifting the mindset on, okay, That is part of your process. I get that. Every Wednesday you go to Sam's and you get toilet paper, paper towels, soap. You buy that same mat that's always on sale the same time of year, and you get it out there and it works and it seems functional. But here's something that we can take care of for you so you don't have to do that anymore. Wouldn't you rather like be home in the evenings than having to go get that stuff for your business? And that's when, you know, we come into play. And Cintas, as I mentioned It's a very, very, very large company. We're nationwide. You know, we have massive customers, you know, and, uh, tons of uniform wears. But our customers that are those small local businesses are equally as valuable as those big customers because, you know, there's probably a lot more of them statistically. Tons more.

J**Jason Duff** 41:49

And those small businesses, usually some of them can grow to be very big business—

C**Curt Wisecup** 41:54

businesses. Yeah, and it's, it's, it's just, uh, it's so much fun for me to work with just business owners in general. And I, you know, I love working with the bigger places as well. Like, I'll never sell that short. I love working with those individuals, but it's so much— it's so cool to help a small business owner get them what we call ready for their workday and, um, have everything they need. And then they open that first day and I'm always there, you know, come say hi, make sure things are going well. And you can just see Ellen's like, this is awesome. Cherry was super pumped to be selling truffles to everyone, which I did buy some and they were really good. But like, it's just, uh, it's, it's been a joy and it's been great to see what you guys are doing from this side of it too. Like, I—

J**Jason Duff** 42:38

you had a fun job, man. Um, thank you so much for just, you know, being on the show with us today. What are some of the professional development resources such as books, podcasts, etc.

C**Curt Wisecup** 42:48

that So from a books perspective, I've read SPIN Selling a couple of times and then Good to Great. And that one's a great one. It's been a little, it's been a little while for that one too. But I will say that the biggest— that book always sticks out to me because it's good is the enemy of great. And it's just like, it's if there's a more deeper phrase, because I think newer reps, not just with Cintas, whatever profession you're in selling, get stuck in the rut of just being good. Yeah, there's a— that happens, period, said and done. You know, whatever your weekly quota is, whatever you're supposed to sell in the month, you know, and then they see that number and they're like, all right, that's where I need to be. Well, that's not good. That's what's expected. You know, great is above that. And I think that is— that's one of the things that really drives me. Like, I know what I'm supposed to do during the week, but I want to do a lot more than that because that's what's going to propel me to the next stage of whatever it is in my career. And I say whatever it is because like I said, I'm just floating around, just floating down. They're just going to have me dock up, which we know is not true.

J**Jason Duff** 43:55

Well, here's what I take away. And, you know, again, thank you for being on the show today. I love the idea of that it's the small steps but the big vision. And I still— you said it several times today, but um, two steps in everything that you do, you know, both feet in everything, not just work.

C**Curt Wisecup** 44:15

Yeah, yeah, life, parenting.

J**Jason Duff** 44:16

Yeah, and those are hard decisions because every time that you say yes to something else, you're saying no, you know, to, to something, the things that already have your attention. That's right. So, you know, thanks for that reminder today. Yeah, absolutely. And then lastly, where can people follow you and keep up with what's happening with Cintas?

C**Curt Wisecup** 44:33

So from Cintas, and you can always just get on the main website. Yeah, www.cintas.com.

J**Jason Duff** 44:39

Can we find you on LinkedIn? I bet I'm on LinkedIn. Yeah.

C**Curt Wisecup** 44:40

All right, let's see my smiling face. And the picture is a little old.

J**Jason Duff** 44:44

There's not as much— they always are.

C**Curt Wisecup** 44:46

There's, there's no gray in the hair. Unfortunately, it's a little dated. But, uh, and then my email is, uh, just my last name, Weisskopf, and then a capital C at centos.com. Anybody can reach out to me there. But yeah, very, very happy to be here. This has been a blast. And, uh, I like— like I said, great opportunity and awesome to see what everything, everything that's going on in downtown Bellefontaine.

J**Jason Duff** 45:08

Thanks, Kurt. Thanks, man. Appreciate it. Thanks.

C**Curt Wisecup** 45:11

All right.

E**Ethan DeLeon** 45:11

Well, 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 were able to pull some value, some value from that conversation, and 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. If you enjoyed— sorry, we need to automate this. I think that's your job. Anyway, until next time, this is Ethan with the Small Nation Podcast. Signing off. All right, thanks everyone.