Episode 108

Wed, Sep 23, 2026 9:00AM • 41:10

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Small Business Administration, SBA loans, 7(a) and 504 loan programs, entrepreneurial communities, Bellefontaine Ohio, Small Business Development Centers, SCORE mentoring, Women's Business Centers, government contracting, SAM.gov registration, disaster recovery loans, EF3 tornado recovery, cutting red tape, small business advocacy

SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Brad Zaun, Andrew Coffield, Terry Bolden, Ethan DeLeon

Terry Bolden 00:00

You can have a vision, but you need some determination and will to actually see it to fruition.

Ethan DeLeon 00:05

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Jason Duff 00:43

Hey guys, it's Jason Duff. I want to welcome you to the Small Nation Podcast. Very excited today because I have 3 incredible guests from all around the country in our studio today talking about something that I care a lot about, and that is small businesses. So I'm going to do some introductions and let them talk about what they do and It's just really special because we were traveling around and visited with a lot of different businesses today. But to my right, we've got Brad Zaun. Brad, tell us a little bit about what you do.

Brad Zaun 01:12

Well, I'm the regional administrator for the Small Business Administration in 2 areas. One is the Great Plains region, which is Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Kansas. And I'm also the acting regional administrator for the Great Lakes area, which is Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.

Jason Duff 01:32

Great states, by the way. Some of my favorite places.

Brad Zaun 01:35

I call it the old Big Ten Conference until those East Coast and West Coast teams decided to join in.

Jason Duff 01:41

Yes, I like that. I like that. And you've got a colleague also from the SBA on the national side with you today as well. Andrew, tell us about yourself.

Andrew Coffield 01:49

Absolutely. I'm Andrew Coffield, the Deputy Regional Administrator for the Great Lakes. I was born and raised right here in Ohio and was a graduate of The Ohio State University. Okay. There you go. So we do have some football rivalries in our district, and I'm just happy to join Small Nation today and talk about small business.

Jason Duff 02:10

Great to have you on the show. And then Terry, please introduce yourself. You're from the great state of Ohio as well.

Terry Bolden 02:15

I am from the great state of Ohio where I say all roads lead through Ohio. Yes. I have the privilege and pleasure actually to serve as the district director for the entire state. So I get a chance to meet businesses and help entrepreneurs from Cleveland to Cincinnati, from Athens to Liberty, Ohio, and, and especially at Bellefontaine.

Jason Duff 02:37

Awesome. Well, great to have Terry Bolden on the show today as well. This is something I was thinking about driving in today. Small business is community development. And a lot of the guests that we've had on, we've got mayors, we've had other economic development professionals, and we kinda hear at a localized level, the things that they're doing to encourage the entrepreneurship ecosystem. But then on the federal level, on the state level, there are a lot of tools and resources that the SBA provides. And I'm excited to kind of unpack that because most people know the SBA for loans, but the SBA touches far more entrepreneurship, counseling, government contracting. Something that's been very personal to me is disaster recovery. manufacturing, exporting, rural communities and ecosystems. It really is around everything that the SBA does is to help small businesses succeed. And particularly, Brad, I'd like to start with you because you have an interesting perspective because you've been on multiple sides of this equation. I want to hear a little bit more about your background around that.

Brad Zaun 03:42

Well, I was 23 years old and had a dream to own a hardware store. And so I bought a hardware store that was going out of business. Of course, I had problems at 23 telling a banker that I was wanting to buy and rebuild this hardware store, which we did. And I ended up getting a guaranteed loan through the SBA. Wow. And so it was just a great opportunity for me. And since then, I've been involved in several businesses. I just took a leave of absence from a manufacturing company based in Iowa. And then you talk about public service. I was upset because the city came in and took my parking in the front of my store by eminent domain. And I decided, well, I'm going to run for city council. And I did, and I was successful. Then I ended up running for mayor, and I was mayor for 7 years of a suburb in the Des Moines, Iowa area called Urbandale. And then—

Jason Duff 04:38

Tell us about Urbandale. What was the town like?

Brad Zaun 04:40

Well, Urbandale is really I'll tell you what we have— what you have here in Bellefontaine is really kind of reflective of what is going— what was going on in Urbandale. We had a kind of a rundown downtown area, and in the city what we did is we put the infrastructure in with streetscaping, and then we had individual businesses, and we did not have a Small Nation. That was unfortunate, which you all need to go nationwide But what we did is we just took pride in our community and we rebuilt it. And so, and then I served in the Iowa Senate for 20 years as well.

Jason Duff 05:16

Were you entrepreneurial in your young age, or did you— were you around entrepreneurs at all growing up?

Brad Zaun 05:21

Oh yeah, I've always wanted to do that. And my dad had a John Deere dealership where I cut my teeth. But yeah, I've always wanted to own my own business. And, you know, I can go back to high school. I was one of the top pancake ticket sellers because I've always loved sales as well.

Jason Duff 05:37

You know, you mentioned some of the adversity that you experienced, like, just in being a business owner. Was there ever a moment that you weren't sure that the business was going to make it?

Brad Zaun 05:46

Never. You know, what we did is we treated our customers like you want to be treated. Obviously, I grew up in a rural part of the Des Moines metro area and a farm. We had to get out and work is what we were told to do, and we worked all the time. And you treat people the way you want to be treated. You know, you wear the same hat size. But all these small businesses, people that are out there, and we just had lunch and we met Grandma. Yes. I mean, they're talking 80 to 100 hours a week as a small business person. But there's a passion for it, and there's such a pride of owning a business.

Jason Duff 06:25

When you would interact behind the hardware counter, what were some of the interactions that you would have about, you know, what people would be saying about what they wanted to see in their government?

Brad Zaun 06:35

Well, that was a challenge because I was the mayor at that time and people sometimes forgot that it was a retail store rather than City Hall. But I could tell you that, you know, it's the same challenges that I hear today. You know, it doesn't matter if you're in Iowa or Ohio or any of the other states in the Midwest, which by the way, the Midwest is the best part of the United States. You have something very special in Ohio. Ohio, you know, manufacturing, you're number 2 in the United States in manufacturing. And this community that you have, thanks to your organization and your team, it's just incredible what's been done here. But the challenges are really not any different from one state to the other, especially in the Midwest.

Jason Duff 07:19

What made you decide to run for mayor?

Brad Zaun 07:21

Well, I wasn't happy about what the mayor was doing.

Jason Duff 07:25

There you go. That's the way to change it.

Brad Zaun 07:26

And I thought we could do a better job. I mean, we were a bedroom town and I didn't want to be a bedroom town. And we just expanded the commercial areas and we were very successful in doing that.

Jason Duff 07:37

Was there anything that you discovered about how cities actually operate that might have been different from how you thought until you got into office?

Brad Zaun 07:44

Well, yeah, I mean, I was 29 when I was a mayor. Obviously, I was surprised at what it takes to put together a city. But you know what? I was grown and I was raised by my father. You live within your means. And obviously property taxes are a huge deal. And I was proud to say we were the 3rd lowest tax rate for the size of the community in the state of Iowa. We just ran it like a business. And I see this time and time again. There's too many elected officials out there that don't treat that money that they receive from the taxpayers like their own money. And I always treated it like it was my own money.

Jason Duff 08:22

And just along those lines, do you think being a small business owner before you were a mayor Actually, you know, made you a different kind of mayor?

Brad Zaun 08:30

Yes, it did. Because unfortunately, there's too many people that are elected that really aren't from the real world. They don't have real-world experiences. They're not trying to make payroll. And, you know, when you sign the front side of a check, it really gives you a different perspective.

Jason Duff 08:49

And that kind of propelled you to say, I like public service, but I want to do more in Iowa? Like that led you to the state?

Brad Zaun 08:57

Well, I had an old hardware store and I got tired of the state of Iowa coming out with all these damn permits and for everything I sold and some of the bureaucracy and red tape to have a small business. Remember, I was a small hardware store. And so I had the Senate Majority Leader said, hey, you'd be really good at this. We want you to run for that. And so again, I was very passionate about small independent businesses that were out there. And so many times lawmakers pass laws and they have no idea what the, the, you know, what kind of circumstance they put small business owners in.

Jason Duff 09:33

It really is the friction points that hold back a lot of entrepreneurs. And you speak about red tape, and I know we're going to talk about some of the new programs and initiatives that are happening both at the state and federal level, federal level, to cut some of that red tape. But, uh, one thing I know that's a big pain point that we hear a lot of entrepreneurs is they want to buy a building, they want to renovate it, and usually they're out of business before they've even started because maybe they've never navigated, um, building codes or maybe they've never navigated, uh, zoning codes. And so I think the more we can identify what friction points are and help entrepreneurs get to those coaches, those resources, those people, that have done it and been through that, that's going to be key. And I'm going to wrap up with a few more questions, then we'll get on to some of our guests. But you've had— now had a seat on almost every side of the table, being an entrepreneur, a property owner, a mayor, a legislator, now SBA leader. What do you understand today about small business and communities that you didn't understand 25 years ago?

Brad Zaun 10:39

Well, first of all, I would have to say I did not realize All the programs the Small Business Administration offers through the Small Business Development Centers or SCORE. All the services that we provide at the Small Business Administration is free of charge.

Jason Duff 10:55

Did you guys hear that? Free of charge. I like that. Do you like free?

Terry Bolden 10:59

Free 99.

Jason Duff 11:00

Yeah, I like free.

Brad Zaun 11:02

Yeah, it's just that we've got counseling services. We're going to probably talk about advocacy, which is a huge area of the Small Business administration. And I just, you know, it's just incredible. You know, for once, it seems to me like the administration is actually listening to small business owners. As you know, President Trump took down all the walls between all the federal agencies and said, you all need to work together to help solve some of these problems and challenges that small businesses have.

Jason Duff 11:34

That is a great segue to you, Andrew. Tell us a little bit, what does the SBA actually do? You know, most people hear Small Business Administration and they immediately think loans, but that's only one part of the SBA. Brad, give us the elevator pitch. What are some of the things the SBA actually does? And sorry, Andrew, not Brad. Move to you, Andrew.

Andrew Coffield 11:57

Absolutely. So as you mentioned, SBA does do primarily loans, and that's through the 7 program and the 504 program. Those are the 2 flagship programs. Okay. We do have a lot of other really exciting loans that I'm sure we'll talk about a little bit later. We also offer free counseling through the Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers, and SCORE program, along with our Veteran Business Opportunity Centers. And one of the big areas under Administrator Loeffler's leadership and President Trump's leadership is red tape. And ultimately, we know that small business owners really focus on trying to make it. And nothing's more frustrating than when the federal government gets in the way. And under the Office of Advocacy, led by our Acting Chief Counsel Everett Woodell, is the Red Tape Hotline. And ultimately, what small business owners can do is reach out to the Office of Advocacy and report those burdensome regulations. It may be a paperwork burden. Maybe it's a financial burden. One of the big things we hear about is quarterly reporting. I know a lot of small businesses struggle with that. We recently got a big win with CMMC, which is the Cybersecurity Maturity Model certification that was costing business owners $500,000.

Jason Duff 13:21

That's real money.

Andrew Coffield 13:22

And that is real money. And to a small business owner, that's make-it-or-break-it money. And thankfully, under Administrator Loeffler's leadership and President Trump's leadership, they were able to put it on pause. And they just recently completed a roundtable hearing from small business owners on what their feedback is on how to improve it to make it more cost effective. So if there are any small business owners that are listening to this podcast, they can reach out to the Red Tape Hotline at redtape@sba.gov, or they can submit a form online at advocacy.sba.gov.

Jason Duff 13:56

And talk about removing those friction points, that being one of the common areas. And just like Brad, like you shared, with the hardware store. And as we are walking around today, we heard a lot of people concerned about red tape, concerns with the IRS, concerns with some of the steps that in the process the government had just not being easy. There is a hotline and resource, and we're going to put that— can you say that website one more time?

Andrew Coffield 14:20

Absolutely. The website is advocacy.sba.gov, or they can email at redtape@sba.gov.

Jason Duff 14:28

It doesn't get any easier than that. And we'll add this in the show notes as well, but that is a tool that if you hit a roadblock or a challenge, you've got resources here that are, you know, care about small business, that want to help, you know, keep you moving and keep you in business, right?

Andrew Coffield 14:45

Absolutely. I mean, the Small Business Administration is here to help for small business owners. And I know a lot of small business owners that we've talked to really felt like their voice hasn't been heard in Washington. And under this leadership, their voice is being heard and we are taking action.

Jason Duff 15:03

I love that. And one thing that— and me doing research and learning more about the SBA, something that kind of stuck in my head is the 4 Cs. So capital being a really big one and helping entrepreneurs access financing through SBA-backed lending programs and other capital resources. So can we just answer— and maybe this would be a good one for you, Terry, And Andrew, maybe you guys can tag team this one. How does the SBA actually lend money, and can you explain how the SBA loans work?

T **Terry Bolden** 15:34

Well, we're at the SBA, you know, first capital is the lifeblood for all businesses, and we go from small business to small business. You know, they tell us, you know, we need $50,000, right? And we say, hold on, let's reevaluate what your actual need is, because we don't want you to go out too far and find yourself in a pinch, but we also want to right-size that. So, we do work with businesses to ensure that their ask for capital is aligned with their need. Now, the SBA is not a direct lender. We do work with delegated authority lenders across the entire country. We have over 4,500 lenders across the U.S. But what we do is we guarantee the loans. So it makes it easier for the bank to say yes for a small business that's either starting up or having some credit challenges in other aspects. We guarantee typically about 75% of the loan itself. But however, what's special about what we're doing now in the manufacturing initiative, we're increasing that guarantee to 90%. We're very committed to bring manufacturers back to the US to build an economic strong base, as well as it's a security issue. We think about manufacturing here locally and building a supply chain logistically. It just strengthens the US economy. But we're not a direct lender. We do work with our delegated lenders across the US.

J **Jason Duff** 17:12

Who would be a great SBA loan candidate? You mentioned the new program with manufacturing. That's a significant shift. shift and change. But who else are typically really good candidates for SBA loans?

T **Terry Bolden** 17:24

Well, I'll give you an example. Someone who's just an inspiring— you know, you're thinking about starting a business and you walk into a bank and you say, you know what, I've had a food truck here for the last 5 years and I'm thinking about expansion, but I need a brick-and-mortar business facility so I can expand and have customers here on site. So basically, we're in that growth mode of helping a business expand. They come to us, they ask the lender for an SBA loan, and we evaluate where their revenue is and then basically get them into the right loan product at that time. We do have, as Andrew mentioned, the 7 loan, which has been our bread and butter from day one. It's a working capital acquisition and everything in between loan program, and we also have what they call a 504, which provides an easier access pathway for a small business to work with both the lender and a capital development corporation. And it's primarily based around hard assets. So if you're looking to buy a brick-and-mortar or perhaps even equipment, the small business is only putting 10% invested into that deal. and the other 90% is either coming from the Capital Development Corporation or the lender. So the perfect example is a business that's thinking about expanding and growing like the food truck and buying a brick-and-mortar and using those programs or products to leverage and grow their business.

Jason Duff 19:01

I love that example. And kind of sticking on that storyline, another one of the big Cs is counseling, that the SBA supports an enormous network of entrepreneurial assistance. And we know personally at Small Nation, we leveraged regional SBDCs with Columbus SBDC and also Springfield SBDC. And I'd like to maybe talk a little bit about what they do and what those regional partners do. But also, you have an organization called SCORE. Would love you to share more about that and also Women's Business Centers and Veterans Business Outreach Centers. Who'd like to take that one?

Terry Bolden 19:42

Well, a little bit about the SBDC. They have been really a true partner of ours across the US, and what's really unique here in Ohio is that it is a partnership between the state of Ohio and the SBA. There's a 50/50 match across the state of Ohio. What we do, as I mentioned earlier, all roads lead through Ohio. I'm going to keep promoting the Buckeye State everywhere I go. We do brag and say that a small business doesn't have to travel more than 50 miles to actually get to an SBDC center. And I think that's important for our businesses here in rural and Appalachian communities that are really trying to get access to advice and counseling and capital services. But the SBDC primarily, they help businesses when we talk about marketing plans and actually having that level set, conversation on where you currently are and is this idea actually either it's a business idea or it's really a hobby. Some businesses, they've been baking pies forever, right? Right. And you think about turning this into some kind of system of taking it to market, but really it's a hobby than it is rather a business. So the SBDCs have the tools that we help support to level set with small businesses to ensure that they're on the right path. We could talk a little bit about SCORE and I'll pass to Andrew to kind of—

Jason Duff 21:14

Yeah, love to hear more about that today.

Andrew Coffield 21:16

Sure. Yeah. So the SCORE program, it is retired executives and they are all volunteers and they're across the nation. And ultimately what they are is they're retired individuals that have learned the lessons the hard way and want to pass their knowledge on to small business owners. And so they counsel one-on-one with small businesses. And through the SCORE network, they actually partner them with individuals in that line of work. So since we had pizza for lunch at 600 Downtown, if they wanted to, you know, get a SCORE counselor, it would be somebody from a restaurant industry. So they understand the challenges and where the pitfalls are. And again, all of these resources are provided by the SBA free of charge.

Jason Duff 22:04

I, I love that. You know, one of the top things when we talk to guests on the show, the, the idea of having a mentor comes up almost as, as key. And I think as you reflect back on your life, there's probably been people in your life that has been that coach or that counselor or that person that, can push you outta your comfort zone a little bit, but be there when you need some advice. And so I love that SCORE exists of people that have actually achieved success and have, a background to be able to help new business owners learning about that too. So that's a great example. I'm glad that they're there. And then women businesses and then also veteran businesses, that's a big focus with the SBA's work as well.

Andrew Coffield 22:42

Absolutely. The Women's Business Center program and our VBOCs, we have them around the country and they also serve all entrepreneurs. They do have that focus area of women and veteran. And ultimately what it is, is Very similar to an SBDC of they can go in and get counseling and training, but it's got more of a tailored approach to it. And so, again, another free resource for small business owners.

Ethan DeLeon 23:09

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Jason Duff 23:23

The contracting piece. This is one that I have to be honest, I'm very new to, but particularly we're very close here in Bellefontaine. We're about 45 to 50 minutes away from Wright-Patt Air Force Base, and obviously very large footprint. There's lots of innovations happening. Ohio recently announced that Anduril is building a new plant here, which is going to be one of the most advanced military technology firms in the country. And so for the small business owners that are listening and hearing and saying, I have a large federal agency or contractor, but I don't know how I could sell my products to them, can you explain a little bit about how the SBA has a role in contracting and helping small businesses?

Brad Zaun 24:10

Well, I'd be happy to take that on. We sponsor at the SBA what's called matchmaking events. We had one in Charlotte, we had one in Detroit, we had one in Milwaukee, we had one in Phoenix. and we're moving around the country. Some are smaller, some are larger, and what we do is we give those small business people the opportunity to have a one-on-one meeting with any federal agency. Obviously, the Department of War is a big, big area, and you get the opportunity set up, scheduled, that you could go in and, and have that conversation. Most importantly, as a small business person that always wants to expand their business, is you get a face, you get an email, and you get to talk to the person that's the purchasing agent for whatever that particular agency is. As well as we bring in a lot of larger corporations. I know that Honda has been— was in Detroit when we did that there, and a lot of the automotive companies are there as well. So it's just an opportunity, and obviously through contracting We're trying to give opportunities for small businesses to grow their business with large corporations or federal agencies.

Terry Bolden 25:24

In addition, I would also mention too, for all agencies, we do, as part of the Small Business Act, it's 23% participation for all small businesses. So each agency has to kind of meet a criteria and meet a goal to find small businesses to contract with. And as you've mentioned, Wright-Patt has led the way for the Midwest. They're doing not only repair, but they're also doing research and development there at Wright-Patt. I will also kind of throw a plug in too for our Apex Accelerator partners. If you're thinking about doing business with the Department of War or Department of Energy, they actually have the tools to get you connected with the PCRs, the procurement center representatives, to navigate through the web of doing business with the federal government. It's not an easy process necessarily because, you know, we have to register the business. We have to identify that your business aligns with what the federal government is purchasing. You know, the federal government is the largest We do $1 trillion overall annually just with businesses in the small business space, and that's purchasing anywhere from uniforms to ink pens and everything in between. But Apex Accelerator counselors, which are funded in part with the Department of War, are a great partner for us in identifying—

Jason Duff 27:01

This may be a lightbulb moment that you may be thinking about your business or a person that you're connecting with within your community. And, you know, what kind of bubbled up for me is, could somebody listening today have a business that's capable of selling to the federal government and not even realize it? And I think probably the answer is yes.

Terry Bolden 27:19

Absolutely. Absolutely. We would encourage them to go on to SAM.gov. That is the— I can't remember what the acronym actually means right now. It just slips my mind. System of Award Management.

Jason Duff 27:33

Ah. There you go.

Terry Bolden 27:34

SAM.gov, register their business there first. And what they can create is an aligning with their CAGE code and their North American Classification Code, the NAICS code, with opportunities that are actually out there that the federal government is procuring for.

Jason Duff 27:52

So there, Terry's there with the very first step. So thank you for sharing that. The last C, and this one's pretty personal to me, Because 2 years ago, we had an EF3 tornado come through Logan County that impacted my hometown of Indian Lake. And that tornado, unfortunately, took 3 lives and damaged hundreds of homes and many businesses in our area, including mine. We had a self-storage facility of 156 units that the tornado completely flattened. the facility. And so we had to work with our tenants and our customers and our community to rebuild. And one of the first things that came when and right after that disaster was that the SBA set up a disaster relief office in our community. And I had heard of the EIDL loan, which was made popular during COVID but it was really my first personal experience of needing immediate access to income, and also needing tools because in my case, I did not have enough insurance to completely rebuild my business. And it became— without that SBA disaster loan and being able to apply for that and have an affordable interest rate, there's a very good chance that, that, that business would not have been rebuilt. And so just to kinda share, The SBA, I can say from personal experience, but I'd like to hear from you guys, it plays a significant role in disasters. When a tornado, flood, or disaster hits a community, what happens behind the scenes at the SBA?

Brad Zaun 29:35

Well, I'll just start out with it. Obviously, the emergency management people from the individual state come out, do an assessment, and then of course, there's usually a request to the White House. There's different proclamations that can be made through our administrator or the president. And I'm so sorry to hear about the loss of life. You know, this is the one example where the SBA actually loans the money directly, which doesn't happen with anything else. But we set up these disaster centers, and I'm gonna let Terry kind of add to this as well.

Terry Bolden 30:12

Yeah, absolutely. And I do want to mention too, Thank you, Small Nation, for being the conduit for the SBA actually here in the region. We had the chance, the opportunity to come up and meet with some of the small businesses and talk to some of the owners who lost pretty much everything. Everything. Yeah, natural disasters are devastating and they're unexpected. Here, we do come with compassion. That's the most important thing. We do allow, as Brad mentioned, you know, the EMA and FEMA and other government agencies assess the damage and then designate what the disaster is. We then, of course, we set up a disaster center and we meet with businesses one-on-one directly with some of these, you know, some of these businesses don't even have their taxes or, you know, they've lost everything. So we walk through the process with ensuring that they're able to get some capital back in their hands to help recover and restore their livelihoods and their business. And it's a low interest rate with a term loan. And, you know, again, no other time in, you know, in anyone's life you want to experience something devastating like that. So we're here to be very compassionate and assist along the way.

B **Brad Zaun** 31:41

Right. And I want to add this, is it's not just for businesses. It's multifamily, it's single-family dwellings, it's nonprofits such as churches. So we cover everything when there is a disaster.

J **Jason Duff** 31:54

That's an important differentiator that a lot of people, I don't think, knew until we went down that process with you. So we're going to pivot a little bit and then do a little fun segment. But You, you were in Bellefontaine today touring, and, and for many of you, this is your first time, or you heard of the town driving in. But what were some of the observations that you learned? And I kinda wanna lead into what makes entrepreneurial communities different. Okay.

B **Brad Zaun** 32:21

What was—

J **Jason Duff** 32:22

yeah.

B **Brad Zaun** 32:22

Well, I'll start with this. Small nation.

J **Jason Duff** 32:25

Thank you.

B **Brad Zaun** 32:26

Obviously, you have great leadership here. I wanna compliment you. Jason, on your organization. It needs to go nationwide. I mentioned that earlier. Just the pride that people take in this community. And we met with a lot of different people today. I just— not to mention the history. I mean, I have a manufacturing company that has to do a lot with concrete. You got the oldest concrete street in America right here, right outside this door. Just the pride is the big thing. And obviously you got a great state because you can't do this without good leadership.

A **Andrew Coffield** 33:07

As Brad mentioned, small nation. And a lot of what I saw today was not only small business owners that wanted to make money or wanted to run their business, but it was the pride in the community. It was how to give back to Bellefontaine. One of the observations that I made just walking down the street was actually on you, is as you were walking down the street, random strangers were coming up and shaking your hand and saying hello. And that speaks a lot to the work that you've done here of really not only bringing Bellefontaine back, but also making sure that it was a welcoming community to where businesses were attracted to it. And a lot of the small business owners we talked to were very, very prideful in what they are working on or very passionate about what they're doing. I mean, we spoke with Grandma at the pizza restaurant and I could feel her passion on how much she loved her business. And that speaks a lot to just all of Bellefontaine and all the small towns that we get to tour.

Jason Duff 34:15

Appreciate that. Terry?

Terry Bolden 34:17

For me, it's vision. I had the opportunity to to go into the Small Nation office, and I saw the before and after pictures over the last several years, and it's just amazing. So you can have a vision, but you need some determination and will to actually see it to fruition. And connecting all the dots with all the resources, the federal government, the state, the local government, and also the local folks who have vested interest in seeing a community revitalized. That's the spirit of Bellefontaine. We know that the entrepreneurs here are resilient. As you mentioned, with the disaster that happened a couple years ago, you know, everyone came together and they supported each other. And I think that's the spirit of this community. And I'm just— it's just been a wonderful, wonderful visit for me and to see all the small businesses and hear their stories.

Jason Duff 35:16

Thank you. It means a lot hearing all of those things. And I do think, I know we take a lot of pride in the Midwest, but one of the currency things that I've always learned is your currency is the way you treat people. And particularly in these smaller markets and small towns, when you do something good for someone else, it comes full circle. And I think a lot of that is happening here. So we're going to kind of head into some rapid-fire stuff, and I think this will be helpful for a lot of our listeners. Particularly from the expert panel that we have, you've interacted with a lot of small businesses and entrepreneurs. What do you think is the biggest mistake, mistake that new entrepreneurs make?

Andrew Coffield 35:55

Not reaching out to the SBA.

Jason Duff 35:58

Well, and I, I'll tell you, I think why, and I think doing this podcast is a perfect example. Sometimes the, the reason why they're not reaching out is they don't know where to start. And I think some of the websites and the resources that you mentioned, But just that idea of not knowing where to start. Is it going to a website? Is it going to your local SBDC office? Where is the place to start to reach out?

Andrew Coffield 36:23

I think the easiest place to start would be sba.gov, which is our website, and we offer our Local Assistance tab, which highlights all of the resources around your area. And we also have district offices in every state, Which Terry is our Ohio District Director. And again, that's where you can start. Reach out to your local district office, visit our website at sba.gov, and SBA will help get you started.

Jason Duff 36:53

This is another one. Is one book every small business owner should read?

Terry Bolden 36:59

Think and Grow Rich.

Jason Duff 37:03

Ah, we've talked about that one a lot. So the idea of masterminding, right? That's a great, great suggestion. Any other favorite books for small business owners, whether it's mindset or— Well,

Brad Zaun 37:16

I like The Art of Negotiation.

Jason Duff 37:17

Ah. Okay. Yeah. You always have to be dealing and responding to people, knowing how to communicate and get, get, get your influence on, on the process. It's a great one.

Andrew Coffield 37:28

Art of the Deal.

Jason Duff 37:30

Art of the Deal. Yeah. We, we just know we got a big, you were probably getting tweeted right now. Right?

Andrew Coffield 37:35

Probably.

Jason Duff 37:35

That's good. That'd be amazing. Art of the Deal. Good suggestions there. So those are really good. And Brad, this one's kind of— I got to ask a tough one for you. What's harder, owning a hardware store or being a mayor?

Brad Zaun 37:49

Being a mayor.

Jason Duff 37:52

Why?

Brad Zaun 37:53

Just our public elected officials, mostly on the local level. It doesn't matter if you're on the school board. Is you hear about every kind of complaint from a pothole to a streetlight out to a dog barking. It's a 24/7, you're on call 24 hours a day. And, you know, when I moved into the Senate, wasn't quite as bad because we have a part-time Senate or legislature in Iowa where we're only there for 4 months out of the year. But our local officials, and they've done a darn good job here with a partnership with Small nation. And I think that's a tough job, but it is very hard to run a small business. I could tell you, I was in Kansas and the speaker said, well, you know, you own your own business and you got the freedom to do what you want and you only have to put in a half day. I about jumped out of my seat. And he goes, no, 12-hour day. And we talked to Grandma today that said she's putting in 80, 90 hours a week. So, and that's, that, that's tough as well.

J **Jason Duff** 38:53

Uh, why is person once said to me that as a public official, you maybe grapple that you can't fire voters, but if you own your own business, you can fire your clients. And that has always stuck with me as some wise words there. Good point. Well, we're kind of wrapping this up, but just as a closing thought, small business development and community development aren't separate conversations. And I think the thing today that reminded me with everything that you share is that they are the same conversation. Every entrepreneur who takes a risk, every banker who believes in an idea, every property owner who invests in a building, and every community that creates an environment where entrepreneurs can succeed contributes to the future of that place. And it does go around to how we all work together to do that. And the reminder is there are resources to help. I think you heard from each one of these gentlemen saying, We are here to help. We're here to reduce the friction points that you're experiencing. We wanna be an advocate for you and your business. We wanna help you earn more business through government contracting. Sometimes the biggest challenge is simply knowing you guys exist and knowing who to call. But you have no excuses now because not only do they share great websites in the show notes, you're gonna have access to those materials. I wanna thank each of you gentlemen for being on the show today, and I'm excited to have you back. Hopefully in a few more years, you will see even more progress here in downtown Bellefontaine. And of course, we want to continue to impact towns and communities everywhere. So thank you for being a guest on the show today.

B **Brad Zaun** 40:28

I would like to add one thing for the people of Ohio and the businesses that are in Ohio. These 2 right to my right are the best in America as representative of the Small Business Administration. The Small Business Administration office in Columbus, which we've got Cleveland, we've got Cincinnati, The team that Terry leads is an incredible team, and I truly mean what I just said. You guys are number one. So thank you.

J **Jason Duff** 40:56

Terry, Andrew, Brad, thank you for being on the show today.

A **Andrew Coffield** 40:58

Thank you. Thank you.

E **Ethan DeLeon** 41:00

Thanks for listening to this episode of the Small Nation Podcast. Be sure to follow the show for future episodes on your favorite podcasting platform.