

Audio file

[Interview with Daniel Driftwood rest Mar 13.m4a](#)

Transcript

00:00:00 Amritha

All right. So so I'll just dive in.

00:00:07 Amritha

According to your like, what was the biggest struggles when you are running running your restaurant?

00:00:16 Daniel

It's uh.

00:00:17 Amritha

Top three.

00:00:23 Daniel

The biggest struggles I I guess just time management has probably been the biggest challenge and you know we're.

00:00:29 Amritha

MHM.

00:00:32 Daniel

A brand new space, so just trying to kind of like navigate through opportunities and see what.

00:00:33 Daniel

News.

00:00:41 Daniel

Aligns with our brands, but what we have time for like what we want to participate in, what we want to invest, invest in in time and money and like who we want to collaborate with. I think that's been the biggest challenge is just trying to navigate you know, all of the.

00:01:02 Daniel

All of the different kind of like opportunities that present themselves within the industry that people don't really understand. You know there's a lot of.

00:01:08 Daniel

Like.

00:01:09 Daniel

Asks from restaurants as far as like donations for charity events, different food programming throughout the city. You know, we have, like, taste Washington coming up this this weekend.

00:01:21 Daniel

An example of that and they and those tend to be like more of.

00:01:26 Daniel

More things that people want you to do and then sell to use that. It's for marketing. But you know the amount of time and energy and money that you have to put into those things and the return on that investment are necessarily there. So it's just really trying to like take the time and understand like when when it.

00:01:44 Daniel

What and who we want to be spending our spending, our time working with, that's been the biggest challenge outside of just capital as the other as the other challenge, it's just cash flow and restaurants.

00:01:47

Hmm.

00:01:56 Daniel

That's.

00:01:57 Daniel

The most challenging for sure. So I think trying to find and secure like working capital at a reasonable rate. But there is another thing that's that's always a challenge for for any any small business, but for definitely for restaurants, I'd say the most.

00:02:11 Amritha

Got it.

00:02:12 Bhargav

Today, how are you going about finding these opportunities, whether it's for capital or for collaborations or you said you got a new space, so how are you finding all of these too?

00:02:23 Daniel

They all just kind of come to you, so you know, like for collaborations or or asks of different at different events. It's all just like networking and relationships that I've kind of built and then people are generally interested in the restaurants and kind of like what we're what we're doing.

00:02:43 Daniel

A little bit of a different model and a different kind of mission statement and ethos than a lot of other.

00:02:49 Daniel

Restaurants in the area, so a lot of people are like wanting to align themselves with us in one way or another.

00:02:56 Daniel

But yeah, usually it's just like a people will just reach out via e-mail or or.

00:03:05 Daniel

Come in person or talk or or, you know. Try to schedule a phone call.

00:03:11 Daniel

Yeah. And then for the capital thing you.

00:03:13 Daniel

Know just it's.

00:03:14 Daniel

Just trying to navigate like what is beneficial for the.

00:03:18 Daniel

For the business and what's like?

00:03:22 Daniel

Dot there's just a lot of.

00:03:27 Daniel

You know that that industry is really it's hard to navigate and understand what's what's true and what's not. So it's just just being kind of smart and try not to get yourself in a position where you're.

00:03:38

Yeah.

00:03:41 Amritha

That makes sense. So like when you do your events right, like when you select people like it should, do you have like some sort of interview process that helps you, you know, select people more, which aligns with your?

00:04:01 Amritha

Brand.

00:04:03 Daniel

Yeah. I mean, the main thing for us because we have such a small team and we are such a small.

00:04:08 Daniel

Restaurant.

00:04:09 Daniel

It's really impactful for us to do any event in which we have to close the restaurant, which if we do any large event or any collaboration either it's either it's on site or off site, we have to close.

00:04:24 Daniel

So there's a dollar associated with clothing. You know you're missing out on those revenue.

00:04:29 Daniel

On that revenue, not only are you missing on the revenue, but you're also displacing a handful of people that would be dining with you for the first time. You know, we're still in our first, you know, we, we we just completed our first year, we're into our second year, but we're still finding that you know 85 to 90% of the people that are dining with us.

00:04:45 Daniel

It's the first time that they've ever.

00:04:48 Daniel

Every single day. So you know that that opportunity to kind of like, OK, I'm going to forego, you know, 80 to 90 people.

00:04:55 Daniel

That's potentially the first time dining here to do an event. It's just kind of.

00:05:00 Daniel

Like.

00:05:00 Daniel

What's good to look at like what they returned? Like? What's the benefit? What's the cost benefit of doing that? So a lot of times it it just comes out to to, to dollars and cents. Like if we're going to close and do it off site for like with the Park Zoo, then we need to be able to.

00:05:15 Daniel

To.

00:05:17 Daniel

Have the proper compensation to justify the closure, so that's kind of what we're at where we're at right now. And that part is really challenging. I mean, I would I would love to be in a position in the future where we're able to do both or we can still operate service regularly and and you know, do an event at the same time. But it's right now it's just like.

00:05:38 Daniel

We want to focus on being consistent and and and elevated and make sure that our our experience in the restaurant doesn't suffer because we're doing something outside of the.

00:05:50 Daniel

As of right now, we just we just closed for the day and then do it off site or we have before we close for the day and do a private a private party and and typically for for for us if that just means it needs it needs it just needs to make sense dollars wise to to justify.

00:06:07 Amritha

Got it. I have another question about like how you selected your location. So I read an article about like you bought the. We say there was a a bar before. So how was the process of?

00:06:25 Amritha

You know, finding the bar and you know, like I think you had to do renovation as well.

00:06:32 Daniel

Yeah.

00:06:33 Daniel

Yeah. Yeah. So I live in West Seattle. My wife bought our home there in 2018. And at that time.

00:06:37

MHM.

00:06:44 Daniel

The bridge was down and we were really looking to try to find the space for ourselves that made sense, like travel wise and community. I mean you.

00:06:54 Daniel

Know.

00:06:55 Daniel

We spend all of our time in the restaurants, so it's like and we have two young kids, so trying to find something that.

00:07:02 Daniel

Was like close to where we live was pretty important to be able to be able to bounce back and forth if we needed to, the time came.

00:07:11 Daniel

That space in particular kind of was just became on our radar. And then once we saw the space and understood like the.

00:07:20 Daniel

The lease, it was a lease assignment, so we're taking on an old lease. So just to understand the value of of how much that the the rent would be for the space and the size and how many seats we could do that we really wanted to try to try to, you know, do whatever we could to to secure.

00:07:37 Daniel

That location. So we were working with the.

00:07:40 Daniel

Who had that listing? And yeah, I mean the acquisition of the location was was more or less straightforward commercial real estate. So that's been around forever. I think the the challenging part is just to try to find you know, the number that that makes the most sense for for us.

00:07:59 Daniel

That I think the.

00:08:01 Daniel

The the flip side of that is just the construction part was the getting the city permits and actually starting and doing construction and navigating that was was the hardest part about the whole situation acquiring the the existing business is easy. The liquor license part is actually relatively straightforward. It's a little bit complex and.

00:08:22 Daniel

Kind of complicated, but it's really inexpensive compared to other cities, so that part wasn't too big of a deal. But I think the biggest challenge was was definitely the renovation is just trying to find.

00:08:33 Daniel

And, you know, Seattle is already challenging enough for construction. So on the commercial side, it's just everything is just way more expensive. So it's just trying to find, you know, find value and like our like our design choices without trying to you know.

00:08:52 Daniel

Per the style of space we want.

00:08:54 Daniel

To to kind of put together. But yeah, that that was definitely the the hardest part was navigating with the city for permitting and understanding the costs associated with the build out. We also did like you know, projections of how much it would cost. And then when we actually get into it, it's like 2 years later and everything is more expensive.

00:09:14 Daniel

That part was really challenging as well and just trying to find.

00:09:19 Daniel

Honest people that are like.

00:09:22 Daniel

Not trying to, you know.

00:09:24 Daniel

Make it more expensive than it needs to be.

00:09:27 Amritha

Yeah, that's on stuff.

00:09:30 Bhargav

See. Oh, I guess one question I have and this is like overall it seems like you're having one of the challenges I'm hearing is that you're having difficulty trying to find out trustworthy people or whether it's for in terms of.

00:09:44 Bhargav

Contractors who are going to help you with renovations or it is in terms of financing, is that an accurate statement?

00:09:54 Daniel

I mean both both. I mean I think I think inexpensive capital is always a challenge to find for small business, but especially for for restaurants because the risk is really high. So it's like that hard to get to people to understand like your vision and then it's a long a long.

00:10:09 Daniel

Term.

00:10:10 Daniel

Play and and kind of leveraging the the, the the business, the asset.

00:10:14 Daniel

Itself, I mean, they're always high generating revenue.

00:10:17 Daniel

Businesses. It's just like trying to trying to find capital that's.

00:10:25 Daniel

That's that's works. So you know, there's no sense of taking taking a bit of money with a high high rate or a large.

00:10:35 Daniel

You know payments, I mean it doesn't doesn't help cash flow at all. So I think just like trying to find banking partnerships or you know more traditional finance that that have rates that are you know we did an SBA, we first acquired the property but navigating that is really, really challenging. We had a really good bank partner with KeyBank.

00:10:55 Daniel

They they helped us out a lot. They did also work with all the people there. But in the future, after you're actually moving, you know it's and then it's, then it's like hard to like.

00:11:04 Daniel

To like keep you know, if you're, if you're needing, you know, a small amount of money to to be payroll or if you you have, you know, a leak in the in the ceiling and you have to close for a few days. You know those those things just really add up any sort of like once you're in operation any sort of like destruction to.

00:11:25 Daniel

To the day-to-day.

00:11:29 Daniel

To being open and generating revenue, it's it's a huge deal. You know, it's like, oh, if I my bathroom is backed up, but I have to close to go get them plumbed. And you know, we're going to, we're going to be out for two days. Not only are you canceling all the reservations

that planning on coming in and putting a bad taste everybody's mouth, but you're also missing out on like if we're closed for two days that's \$20,000.

00:11:49 Daniel

Revenue that we just don't have any longer, you know it's it's really, really impactful that you know if you're in a position where it's like OK, Now I have a bunch of things that are due or payroll.

00:11:58 Daniel

Is coming up like they do like, OK.

00:12:01 Daniel

We really needed to be open for those two days so that that part is like is really challenging for sure.

00:12:08 Bhargav

Got it. And I guess would the other question that comes to my mind is have you worked with any of the local authorities in your district like the bias or Seattle Good network or something like that to get guidance assistance or or whatever sort of support?

00:12:25 Daniel

No, I haven't. I actually haven't really been aware of any programs. Also it's that's goes back to like the time thing. You know I'm I'm still an active.

00:12:35 Daniel

Member of the kitchen. So I I don't I think the challenging part is trying to be able to juggle you know those those things into the the advent, the the the day to to you know couple days to be on the computer and.

00:12:47 Daniel

Try.

00:12:47 Daniel

To get a little bit of actual business done as opposed to the day-to-day operation of restaurant, we actually have to.

00:12:54 Daniel

But that and that we have to do that every single day. So I think hours of space and our style of restaurant.

00:13:00 Daniel

It's.

00:13:01 Daniel

It's very time dependent, so you know, we're getting all of our product is fresh. We're fabricating everything in house every day. So that that part is.

00:13:12 Daniel

Is also a challenge is.

00:13:15 Daniel

Trying to take yourself out of the away from the kitchen to to do you know?

00:13:21 Daniel

Computer work can be really challenging at times.

00:13:24 Bhargav

Yeah. And I I don't think I know enough of restaurants, but I guess I keep hearing that people hire restaurant managers to help out with this other stuff. So I guess we ever considered that option.

00:13:37 Daniel

Sorry, say again.

00:13:39 Bhargav

I hear that people hire restaurant managers to help out with the operational parts of restaurants so that the people who are passionate about cooking can continue to focus on cooking and run like the the you can see the.

00:13:51 Bhargav

Kitchen stuff.

00:13:52 Bhargav

So I guess, have you considered?

00:13:54 Daniel

Budgetary spend, though, right? So like if I were to bring in a manager to to run XYZ, then now I have to pay them \$80,000 a year plus benefits. And you know, so it's like.

00:14:07 Daniel

You have to do that like are you able to justify hiring a person a a manager? Like if we're not hitting specific numbers or we're not busy, then we don't have. We don't have the budget to hire any extra people. So you end up doing a lot of the stuff yourself and the the on the food side. I mean the, the, the restaurant.

00:14:27 Daniel

And the vision of the of the food is is comes directly from.

00:14:31 Daniel

For myself, like I am the chef and owner, so like I have to do those ideas and those things that are that that come are just coming directly from from B and my team. So we're a collaborative team.

00:14:45 Daniel

And we work together to develop the menu. But you know that only comes by being in this space. You have to be there and work there and be in the ingredients. And you know, I'm still shopping the farmers markets two days a week. It free and fresh product every day, so that there's there's like a.

00:15:04 Daniel

I can't. I can't outsource that. That that's the.

00:15:07 Daniel

That's like the the creative side that you.

00:15:09 Daniel

Know.

00:15:11 Daniel

Then go doesn't hire someone to paint his paintings.

00:15:16 Amritha

Daniel, 11 more thing I want to ask you. Were you like? You support a lot of local markets, right? And are you aware that like the government gives a lot of grants for those things?

00:15:32 Amritha

Or did you do your research already on that?

00:15:36 Daniel

No, I I.

00:15:38 Daniel

There's a few things that we applied for early on with the state of Washington, but we haven't. We haven't looked into other grant programs that.

00:15:51 Daniel

That we would, yeah. That that I think we would definitely qualify for or be very interested. Yeah. No we haven't we haven't gone.

00:15:58 Daniel

That route.

00:15:59 Amritha

Got it. OK, yeah.

00:16:01 Bhargav

A quick tangent, by the way, I just saw you. I just need to ask this, but do you have any? I saw your menu, it looks amazing, but do you?

00:16:09 Bhargav

Have.

00:16:09 Bhargav

Any more off the menu? Vegetarian or vegan options? Because we would love to come and dine out at your restaurant if you ever get the opportunity.

00:16:17 Daniel

Yeah, yeah, the I mean, the way that we cook all of our items are easily adjustable to accommodate vegetarian and and and vegan dietary.

00:16:25 Daniel

Functions we also like don't use, you know all the all the typical allergens that are that are common these days. So dairy, gluten, nuts, all of those things are are intentionally left off

of items or easily removed without impacting like the overall composition of the of the dish. So yeah, I think the majority of the menu.

00:16:47 Daniel

Like a large portion is is vegetarian inherently and then to for to to, you know, accommodate vegans. We we're we're able to remove the the dairy items really, really easily both it's just like like cheeses and.

00:17:00 Daniel

But intentionally we cook with a lot of olive oil and we tried to be accommodating to all, all the dietary restrictions.

00:17:09 Bhargav

Awesome, thank you. I definitely think I'll be doing that.

00:17:11 Bhargav

Reservation soon.

00:17:13 Daniel

Yeah. Yeah, we did a tasting menu for a couple of there's two, a couple that was celebrating the anniversary that were both vegan and we actually did a a tasting menu for them. That was just 100.

00:17:22 Daniel

Percent vegan.

00:17:23 Bhargav

Nice.

00:17:25 Amritha

Yeah, yeah. I'm just gonna take it back one back to the questions I wanted to ask you about. Like, how did you find your brokers and you know, like financial partner, did you have that connection through your network?

00:17:43 Daniel

Yeah, yeah, I got. I got just for talking to colleagues and other people trying to open restaurants who have been successful in the space. I I talked to a bunch of different people and got some. We found our our banking partners through a friend.

00:18:03 Daniel

Uh.

00:18:04 Daniel

Of one of our construction people who has opened a bunch of restaurants at bars throughout Seattle, and he recommended working with.

00:18:12 Daniel

This woman, Jennifer Brian Baugh from KeyBank, who specializes in in SBA.

00:18:21 Daniel

Funding for small business and and restaurants and bars in particular. So that was super helpful as far as the broker side like that.

00:18:29 Daniel

That part we kind of fell into, we had been on the lookout for spaces and there's a few, a few spots that you can go online just to find, like commercial spaces that come available, obviously like Loopnet. And then there's a couple other like just commercial sites and then they'll build lists.

00:18:49 Daniel

Spaces where you just hear about spaces that are available, and then I we looked at 1 space in Madrona and then the person who showed that was a broker and then she.

00:19:00 Daniel

He then like essentially took us on as a client and found I essentially was like I'm just. I'm not really interested in this space. It needs too much work. I I.

00:19:10 Daniel

Really want.

00:19:10 Daniel

To be in West Seattle, but there's nothing available West Seattle. And then she's like, actually, there is going to be something available in West Seattle. We're representing it. We can go look at it tomorrow.

00:19:21 Daniel

So we kind of were able to.

00:19:22 Daniel

Get that off market, which is.

00:19:23 Daniel

Cool, just through networking.

00:19:25 Amritha

That that's amazing. And like, do you feel like she was very constructive throughout the whole process?

00:19:35 Speaker 4

Yeah, I yeah, I think it was. Yeah, she was. She was great. I think, you know, there's.

00:19:40 Daniel

The commercial side is just like there's a lot of like.

00:19:49 Daniel

Oh, how to put it, I guess.

00:19:52 Daniel

Like smoke and mirrors. Like, there's not a lot of, like, clear information. There's a lot of people that are like, not hiding things, but just not disclosing everything. So it's really it was really hard to get a lot of.

00:20:04 Daniel

Information out of.

00:20:06 Daniel

People are like, you know, the third party negotiation part is also really challenging. Like if I'm negotiating with someone like, for for like tangible items like food items like fish or meat or something. And I'm, I'm, I'm having a conversation with the other owner about about the the cost of something and how what what I need it to be to make sense to put on our menus.

00:20:27 Daniel

And then but for like.

00:20:30 Daniel

You know, negotiating the a way larger amount of money having to go through a third party is like it's just so challenging. I'd rather just talk to the other.

00:20:39 Daniel

Owner.

00:20:39 Daniel

And be like, OK, how much?

00:20:40

Yes.

00:20:42 Daniel

Like what? Can we just make it like? What? What is your bottom line type of thing instead of this back and forth? So that part was a little bit frustrating, but the rest was really smooth and and she was great in and, you know, navigating all the rest of the everything through escrow and you know.

00:21:01 Daniel

The fees were relatively low and she would charge us a fee. It's just a seller fee.

00:21:06 Daniel

So yeah, I think for the most part it went well. We're we're still working with her and looking at.

00:21:11 Daniel

Another space together.

00:21:13 Amritha

Got it. OK. And so she helped you with lease negotiations and all of those things, right, like and I?

00:21:20 Amritha

Think.

00:21:20 Daniel

Yeah. So the lease, the lease was a an assignment lease assignment and so the lease was already in place and the current tenant was essentially selling the the the lease.

00:21:34 Amritha

Yeah, sorry.

00:21:34 Daniel

Took over a.

00:21:35 Daniel

Low cost lease. The lease assignment was from 2000 and.

00:21:40 Daniel

4.

00:21:42 Daniel

So.

00:21:42 Daniel

Paying quite a bit under market was one of the main reasons why.

00:21:46 Daniel

We wanted to.

00:21:48 Daniel

Get the space and put the investment in in time into.

00:21:51 Daniel

Into building it out.

00:21:52 Amritha

Got it. And I think I wanted to ask you like.

00:22:01 Amritha

Like, did you like? Are you in? Are you doing your accounting and all of those things on your own or are you getting some help?

00:22:12 Amritha

Through like tech.

00:22:13 Daniel

Outside, outside accountant that does our bookkeeping and our our taxes, we file our our.

00:22:20

MHM.

00:22:27 Daniel

Excise taxes and stuff ourselves, and then we have ADP for payroll and we're looking to try to.

00:22:34 Daniel

See about something that's a little bit less expensive.

00:22:38 Amritha

Yeah.

00:22:38 Daniel

That's gonna work. The other ones that are a little less expensive.

00:22:41 Amritha

Yeah. And again, did you find the accountant through your network or were you suggested through some other?

00:22:50 Daniel

We had a pretty big challenge with accounting in the beginning. We my my, my wife did it when we were just we had to actually run the bar at the bar for four months before we closed for construction. So in the very beginning, she did all of the bookkeeping, and then once we actually opened as.

00:23:11 Daniel

As the restaurant.

00:23:12 Daniel

Our our actual concept then we hired an accounting firm to do everything and and they did a really bad.

00:23:19 Daniel

Job.

00:23:21 Daniel

And so then we have this new person that we just hired a little almost a year ago and then they're kind of going through all the old.

00:23:32 Daniel

Backlog of data to fix everything.

00:23:34

MHM.

00:23:35 Daniel

So that's been really challenging and taking a really long time, but I don't know that I would recommend either one of them.

00:23:43 Amritha

OK. Would you be interested if sorry, go ahead.

00:23:45 Bhargav

Yeah, we'll see. Thank you.

00:23:47 Bhargav

Yeah, this is going to check that I'm assuming that you found the account both accounts through your network again and not through an outside.

00:23:55 Bhargav

Search.

00:23:56

Yeah.

00:23:57 Amritha

Got it.

00:23:59 Speaker 4

Yeah. The first one we found.

00:24:02 Daniel

Was actually not. We just we. My wife found someone she wanted. Someone local in West Seattle. So we found someone that was that. Did that. But it was just a little bit too.

00:24:14 Daniel

I don't know. There's there's a different. I think I'm not exactly happy with either person. I think there's a a big difference for accounting like typical accounting and then restaurant accounting. So I think like the, there's just there's a lot of vendors, there's a lot of like coding that needs to happen, a lot of like reconciliation.

00:24:32 Daniel

A lot of.

00:24:32 Daniel

Like you know, we have like 70 vendors. It's just a lot, so.

00:24:37 Daniel

If they don't have the bandwidth of the time to really.

00:24:40 Daniel

Like.

00:24:40 Daniel

Take a stab at it. It it'll stack up really, really quickly. And then you're kind of backlogged for a while. It's like we don't stop getting deliveries, we still get.

00:24:47 Daniel

Deliveries every.

00:24:48 Daniel

Day. So I think that part is is really challenging trying to find someone who's like understands like restaurant accounting or has experience in restaurant.

00:24:58 Daniel

Money so they can just look at if you're, you know, coding invoices or looking at invoices or reconciling, then you're just like oh, I know exactly what all this is. I don't need to like.

00:25:07 Daniel

Contact me to be like, OK, what is this food or alcohol or, you know, supplies or like, what item is this company coming from? It's like a lot of them are recognizable or you don't know. You have a.

00:25:19 Daniel

Quick interview for the first little bit.

00:25:22 Speaker 4

Call or text if you need something, but yeah, I think that's that's definitely been a big.

00:25:27 Speaker 4

Challenge pain point for us, for sure, it's just.

00:25:30 Amritha

Got it. And yeah, I was going to ask you like, would you be interested in like, so there are these folks who are, you know like funded by the government, one in mind is Shanti we we have actually spoken to her, she does.

00:25:49 Amritha

Help you know, like small businesses. Find the, you know, trusted resources.

00:25:55 Amritha

Like brokers, accountants and all of those things. So if if we do, you know, send her your way or if we do try to create that connection, would you be interested in, OK.

00:26:08

Also.

00:26:09 Daniel

Yeah, absolutely.

00:26:10 Amritha

Awesome. There are only a couple of questions and I'll let you go. I know you're busy.

00:26:17 Amritha

So like in in terms of like tech do you use like do you use them and how has it been helpful in your in your day-to-day life with respect to small business?

00:26:34 Amritha

Running them.

00:26:35 Daniel

Yeah. I think obviously on the, on the marketing media side, it's it's it's hugely beneficial. I think obviously doing yourself at this service, if you don't really dive into that and try to put as much content and stuff out just for marketing. So on that side, that's.

00:26:52 Daniel

Pretty.

00:26:53 Daniel

Pretty big on on for on the internal.

00:26:56 Daniel

Obviously like POS systems and how they communicate to each other in our reservation systems, I think those are really, really important and we we obviously use them everyday. We just switched POS to.

00:27:11 Daniel

Toast and trying to get comfortable with that integration, I think you know there's some pluses and minuses for for all of them. I think like the.

00:27:23 Daniel

Like like.

00:27:25 Daniel

The evolution of of your.

00:27:29 Daniel

Of the dining experiences has kind of changed dramatically over the last five years, so there's like this kind of changed into like, more fast casual and not a lot of like kind of like.

00:27:43 Daniel

UM.

00:27:45 Daniel

It's not as formal service, so you know a lot of like the the touch pads and I'm going to, I'm going to take, I'm going to take your order at the table on a on a, on a tablet those.

00:27:56 Speaker 4

Sort.

00:27:57 Daniel

Of things I think that for for us doesn't really make sense just because we're trying to offer like.

00:28:04 Daniel

A little bit more of a polished service and that feels very informal.

00:28:07 Speaker 4

To to me so.

00:28:09 Daniel

I'm not a big fan of of of that, if you were to go out and dine at a really high end restaurant.

00:28:15 Daniel

You would never know who's going to come up to you with a tablet to ask you or take your order. You know, I think it's like, convenient. And I understand, like, the the benefit of it in a lot of other styles.

00:28:29 Daniel

Restaurants. But for us it's just like not. It just feels it very informal and it just kind of takes away that extra like touch and and a little bit of pressure for tipping in the moment while someone standing in front of you and just constantly.

00:28:44 Amritha

Got it. And you mentioned about marketing like, so have you been using instead? I know you've been using Instagram.

00:28:52 Amritha

I've got really good for my amazing followings. And do you use like how did you build that?

00:28:52

Yeah.

00:29:03 Daniel

Yeah, I know. Right. Pretty crazy. That's all organic. None of those are paid anything. They're all real people, and most of them, the data on it is 92% of them are actually from Seattle, which is kind of cool. So it's.

00:29:04

Yeah.

00:29:18 Daniel

I'm like able to direct market to people who are actually would be interested in the product.

00:29:22 Daniel

Which is really really awesome. So I had like a a strategy when I took over the business to kind of create bugs for the for the restaurant. So we did have a PR person, a friend of mine, that helped me with a couple of the restaurant projects. And she decided to take us on as a client just to do the initial rollout of like the announcement.

00:29:42 Daniel

Of the restaurant and then in tandem that same moment we had taken over the Instagram of the of the pub up out by Beach Pub. So then that day they had like 700 something followers, but they followed like.

00:29:58 Daniel

2000 people, so the same day, the night before, like 3:00 in the morning, I unfollowed every single person.

00:30:05 Daniel

Changed the name of the the account to the name that we had saved for ourselves.

00:30:12 Daniel

And that deleted every single post that they ever did, except the four that we did when we took over the space. And then I released Kickstarter campaign all on the same day. So then there's announcement that we were open, there was the Instagram page that essentially relaunched and then kickstarted it all happened.

00:30:32 Daniel

At once and then because there's this like.

00:30:37 Daniel

Kind of.

00:30:40 Daniel

It's like a human interest peaking thing. When you see a discrepancy of followers to following for Instagram. So if someone has like a lot of followers, but they're following a lot of people, then that's not there's, there's not a lot of interest there for new followers to like add. They're like, oh, they have a lot of followers because they're following a lot of people in their.

00:30:48

MHM.

00:31:01 Daniel

Each other, but if you keep your like total followers down, the likelihood of your following increasing by people physically seeing that number discrepancy. So if you're like, oh, OK, I see that there's 700 people following driftwood and they've been open, you know, they've been account for an hour.

00:31:21 Daniel

But there's only they're only following thirteen people, then the likelihood of you be like, oh, I gotta follow these people and they only have 4 posts. I have to follow this because I I'm interested in what's happening and then we're just. We just did a a really like.

00:31:35 Daniel

And a direct style of trying to like tell a story of us building up this restaurant space and then the content that we put out, we try to have it be very, very specific and and like like to tell tell the story of like where we're getting the ingredients and who we're supporting. And a few a few dishes every now and again I do a lot of story stuff for dishes.

00:31:55 Daniel

Some of my stagnant posts have been a little bit not, not as frequent as I would like. I need to. I need to get back on it, but we were able to grow really, really quickly with a lot of local people doing doing that type of.

00:32:09 Daniel

Strategy in the beginning.

00:32:11 Amritha

That's amazing. That's, and I really love your story on Instagram. Wanted to ask you, like, do you have any other Ave. for marketing that your you know your friend?

00:32:27 Amritha

Who was a PR?

00:32:27 Speaker 4

Yeah. So we have, yeah, we have like right now we have about 8000 people who have dined with.

00:32:34 Speaker 4

Us.

00:32:36 Daniel

And we capture all that data via rezi our reservation system. You're required to put your phone number and e-mail.

00:32:45 Daniel

So we have marketed to them directly on a couple of different campaigns that we do like if we're doing a private dinner, we have.

00:32:50 Daniel

One coming up.

00:32:51 Daniel

On the 21st.

00:32:52 Daniel

That I actually have to put out some information on this morning sell out, but we'll use that tool to do private dinners and selling. I haven't really gone outside of that. I haven't done any like Google ads or anything like that.

00:33:04 Daniel

Just have tried to just be organic with it and not spend any money on marketing. I also like.

00:33:08

MHM.

00:33:12 Daniel

Some I don't know if it's just me or if it's other people as well, but sometimes.

00:33:15 Daniel

When?

00:33:15 Daniel

I see like a sponsored ad or something sponsored on a specific or a specific restaurant for whatever reason. For me it I see it as a negative. I feel like oh, it's like, oh, they're they're needing to spend money on marketing. They must not be doing well. That's the first thing.

00:33:25

MHM.

00:33:31 Daniel

That I think of when I see it.

00:33:33 Daniel

I don't know if that's just myself. That's probably not the best way to think about it. I'm sure there's some opportunities there to to, like, do a little bit more, maybe a a low dollar ad spend. I'm just not wanting to put the the investment in, in on that. There's other things that I'd rather.

00:33:50 Daniel

Spending money on we're still like new. We still have like some buzz and it's still generally challenging to get a reservation and we've had some press and done a handful of TV spots and I feel like that's all been really helpful and we'll continue to do those. We have a couple more coming up this summer but and then.

00:34:10 Daniel

Some some events, some like good, good, positive events that.

00:34:13 Daniel

Are able to to get a ourselves in front of more people, but I think like the location of it being beautiful, it's beautiful, but it does tend to tend tend to lend itself to a lot of like weekend dinners and not as many during the week dinners. There's definitely some opportunities there to kind of get into some other marketing.

00:34:33 Daniel

The news we're also talking to, I don't know if you guys are really those table 22, but they do, yeah. So we're we're we're talking about maybe doing something with them for seafood box or something to kind of another kind of Ave. to generate.

00:34:38 Amritha

Yeah, yeah.

00:34:44 Amritha

Correct.

00:34:50 Amritha

So like so you are open to collaboration with others, right? Like in terms of?

00:34:56 Amritha

It like organic marketing.

00:34:59

For yourself.

00:35:00 Amritha

OK. Yeah. Awesome.

00:35:01

Definitely.

00:35:03 Amritha

And did you find them online or table 22 did you?

00:35:10 Daniel

They reached out to us, I think. I think like because we kind of have like a, you know, we're generally well received and we're like getting a, you know, have a couple of good articles and good accolades and we're on a few lists. So I think people that want to align themselves with our brand, we just end up reaching out directly to us and are like hey.

00:35:11 Amritha

OK.

00:35:30 Daniel

We saw you on eaters top 38, you know, whatever. Or we saw your you an article in the Seattle Times and like those those things are people see that and they're like hey I.

00:35:41 Daniel

Want we want to work with you directly?

00:35:44 Daniel

You know, we had Capital One, we reached out and wanted to do a collaboration with us and then building rewards network. We're talking to them.

00:35:51 Daniel

About doing that.

00:35:52 Amritha

Oh, that's amazing.

00:35:54 Speaker 4

So.

00:35:55 Daniel

Yeah.

00:35:56 Amritha

That's pretty big actually. Congrats.

00:36:01 Speaker 4

Thank you.

00:36:03 Amritha

I want to ask you, I think there are only two more questions and I think I'm done so.

00:36:08 Amritha

Like, have you used any community based forums in in in this effort to get support and and have they been useful?

00:36:22 Daniel

And I I should I I have. I think the only the other part that's a challenge.

00:36:29 Daniel

For us, because I have two small kids. Yeah. I have a 18 month old with three-year old. So I think that's the other.

00:36:37 Daniel

Part that's like.

00:36:39 Daniel

Try to navigate all those things. I'm not sure if you have kids or not, but I think that that's been really challenging and and us trying to find childcare and nannies and people being sick and so it's.

00:36:51 Daniel

Like.

00:36:52 Daniel

The business of the restaurant is obviously super important, but there's a lot of other things that come into play, so I have I just haven't had the time to do that, but I I really, I do need to because I feel like there be some benefits there.

00:37:02 Daniel

To take advantage of some opportunity.

00:37:04 Daniel

These either collaboration or financial with with the some forums I think that would be really helpful. I have talked to like other friends and colleagues in the.

00:37:14 Speaker 4

Industry just about like.

00:37:15 Daniel

Asking about, you know, what do you have anybody you can recommend for this? Or my my friend reached out the other day and they're trying to do an acquisition of a new a space out in Walla Walla and they're like, hey.

00:37:25 Daniel

Can you hand me give me your your financial person? I was like, yeah, absolutely. She's awesome. So I think there's a lot of that happening, but I don't know that it's it might just be personal. Like, just pick up the phone or, you know, it's actually, I feel, myself, I feel myself doing this a lot.

00:37:42 Daniel

It's probably pretty common in other industries too, but definitely in food. It's like I just reached directly out to the chef via Instagram, which is really, really cool, because you're able to do that and you don't need their information and then they're able to see you or go on your page and be like, oh wow, this is cool. And then they'll, you know.

00:37:59 Daniel

You can talk directly to that person, which is really.

00:38:02 Daniel

Kind of fun, so I've definitely done that a lot locally of of colleagues and people that I don't exactly know, but I've and that that are in the circle of of you know.

00:38:11 Daniel

That restaurants are here in Seattle. And then I spent a lot of time in San Francisco and California. So I've definitely reconnected with a bunch of people out there. And then other friends. So yeah, that that's been a good tool that I've used a.

00:38:24 Daniel

Lot.

00:38:24 Daniel

But a formal.

00:38:26 Daniel

I haven't. I haven't done that yet.

00:38:28 Amritha

Yeah, that. Yeah, that that sounds good.

00:38:32 Daniel

I think it would be like I think it would be really helpful a place for people to go and kind of like get some information.

00:38:37 Daniel

About.

00:38:37 Daniel

XYZ like re you.

00:38:39 Daniel

Know.

00:38:41 Speaker 4

Applications for sidewalk side.

00:38:44 Daniel

Like a cafe permit, we just had a huge or deal with that. Trying to see people outside for up this upcoming summer. It took almost 18 months to get an approval, so you know that would have been nice to be like, oh, I can go to.

00:38:57 Daniel

This.

00:38:57 Daniel

And see if anybody else has had.

00:38:59 Daniel

Some some issues or problems.

00:39:02 Amritha

Yeah. Yeah, sounds good, like, and. And would you be willing to provide mentorship when you do have the bandwidth?

00:39:13 Amritha

To other folks who are in the industry.

00:39:17 Daniel

Yeah, 100% definitely. I think everyone should be talking to everybody. I don't. I don't know that anybody should be like holding back or protecting any information or saving it for themselves. I think everyone it's it's a benefit for everyone. You know, further together we don't need to.

00:39:18 Amritha

OK.

00:39:32 Daniel

Be.

00:39:34 Speaker 4

It's obviously we're all competing for the same people.

00:39:37 Daniel

Some of us, but yeah, collaborate, collaboration is has always been key in in the success of any restaurant.

00:39:46 Amritha

Yeah, I totally agree. Like, I mean, not just in restaurant, I feel like collaboration.

00:39:51 Amritha

Should be a baseline for small businesses to succeed. Yeah, yeah. I think we are at the end of the interview and I wanted to ask you, will you be open to like when you do have the bandwidth to?

00:39:55

Harding.

00:39:57 Speaker 4

100%.

00:40:11 Amritha

Testing out urban high when we have like a a product out and.

00:40:18 Amritha

Yeah. So that's.

00:40:21 Speaker 4

Yeah, I would be. I would, yeah, I would, I would love.

00:40:23 Daniel

To love to see what you guys are building, I think it'd be it'd be really interesting, very intrigued when you first.

00:40:28 Daniel

Reached out I.

00:40:29 Daniel

Was very.

00:40:29 Daniel

Intrigued. So yeah, that'd be great. I would love to.

00:40:30 Amritha

OK.

00:40:33 Amritha

Thank you. And yeah, I don't have any other questions. Bhargav do you have any?

00:40:39 Amritha

Finally.

00:40:40 Bhargav

No, no, this has been great. Thank you so much for the interview we got.

00:40:44 Bhargav

A lot of.

00:40:46 Bhargav

At this point, just to give you an idea of what we're trying to do here, we're going and collecting these interviews, taking data points from different people and going and validating our assumptions on what is the right thing that we gotta go build here. One of the thing that keeps shining again and again is.

00:41:00 Bhargav

Building this collaborative community where you can reach out to other people and share the thing that hey, here's my account.

00:41:06 Bhargav

And you can trust this person and stuff like that. So you're not trying to make that communication a whole lot easier. So but for that, before we dive first into building something, we want to 1st go check is there an appetite for it? Do people really need this? Etc. So thank you so much for this interview. It gives us a lot of good data.

00:41:09

For sure.

00:41:22 Bhargav

Points to go and analyze. Awesome.

00:41:24 Amritha

Yeah. Yeah. And thank you again, Daniel. I really appreciate you taking.

00:41:29 Amritha

Your time to talk to us. This has been super useful, and we're definitely so when you do have the March 21st, that's a private dining event. We'll we'll look out for that, yeah.

00:41:43 Bhargav

Yeah.

00:41:47 Bhargav

No, we will go ahead and we'll resolve whatever is available on your on rezi. But thank you so much. And yeah, I hope you have a great day.