

TCNtalks Transcript / NO BS Marketing with Dave Mastovich

Melody King: 0:01

Welcome to TCN Talks. The goal of our podcast is to provide concise and relevant information for busy hospice and palliative care leaders and staff. We understand your busy schedules and believe that brevity signals respect. And now here's our host, Chris Comeaux.

Chris Comeaux: 0:23

Hello and welcome. I'm excited today we have a crossover show TCNtalks and Anatomy of Leadership because we have a great guest today Dave Mastovich. Dave is the CEO and founder of Mass Solutions. Welcome, Dave, it's good to have you. Thanks for having me, Chris, and I love your ear right behind you. In fact, I meant to grab my book as I was running to the studio, but your book no Bullshit Marketing the other thing I kind of thought of Dave sent me this beautiful button that I keep on my desk. When you press the button, it actually says that word I've thought about. There you go. Dave's got it right there.

Chris Comeaux: 0:58

For those of you who are actually watching this, well, I want to read from Dave's bio. So, Dave is the CEO and founder of Mass Solutions. It's a marketing consultancy that drives patient revenue and talent growth through innovative marketing solutions, and I love this part, creative storytelling. He's the author of No Bullshit Marketing 17 Contrarian Ways to Increase Referrals for Healthcare Providers, and it was an Amazon number one bestseller and the host of the no Bullshit Marketing Podcast. During his tenure at UPMC, Dave helped grow the organization's revenue from under \$1 billion to \$10 billion. He leverages cognitive science and 80-20 analysis combined with systemically gathered insights to increase referrals and improve recruiting and retention. So, Dave, anything I'll leave out on that that you might want to add or edit.

Dave Mastovich: 1:48

No, it's awesome. I'm excited to be around leaders like you and you notice, whose book's right next to mine is your book, and so whenever I first heard of you and got introduced to you, I was excited and got your book and enjoyed it. And then I listened to your latest podcast and thought it was great the one that had just come out recently and thought there was a lot of stuff in there. So I'm just excited to be here.

Chris Comeaux: 2:10

It's good to have you, Dave. Well, Dave, I've always I kind of stumbled into this question and then the audience circled back, and so that question is what is your superpower?

Dave Mastovich: 2:21

I believe that my superpower is that I'm able to take the complex and make it simple, and then explain that to whoever needs to understand it.

Chris Comeaux: 2:35

I'm an accountant. Right, accountants take a whole bunch of picture, a jumble of numbers, and they take those numbers and then they organize them in a way that turns that data into information. Well, if you Google the word leadership, you get six billion hits. So, in some respects I tried to take that vast body of knowledge and create a table of contents, like a meta framework of what is leadership. Well, one of my chapters was message into the community of what is leadership. Well, one of my chapters was message into the community and I feel like it's exactly what you just said.

Chris Comeaux: 3:09

Your superpower is Like. Message into the community is how do I first off understand what does the community, ie my customer, need and want? What do we do? And then how do we message that back out into the community that they know we heard you and we now do this in an incredible way. That's the seventh M, or the sixth M, of message into the community. So, when I thought about like you know, I'm always trying to bring guests that put meat on the bone because I knew it was more of a table of contents. So, picture it, like you know, 20 miles wide and 12 inches deep, but then with the podcast going 20 miles deep, if you will, so with your superpower in this area of marketing. So that probably gets us to our first question. And no bullshit marketing. You challenge the way most organizations just approach marketing. What do you think is the biggest myth that you see leaders still believe about marketing today?

Dave Mastovich: 4:04

It's what they think marketing is. So, leaders misperceive what marketing is. They tend to think that it is the website, ads, social media posts making things look pretty, and that's the biggest problem that they have, because then they're going to get frustrated with marketing.

Dave Mastovich: 4:24

They're going to get nervous and anxiety about marketing. They're going to say that marketing doesn't have ROI, when that all happened because of how they defined it and how they perceived it. Real marketing starts way before a message is even ever thought of. Real marketing is systematically gathering insights from your customers, and your

customers include employees, referral sources, strategic partners and then the ultimate customer. So, when you gather that insights from them and you ask them open-ended questions and then this really difficult part you stop and listen. They'll tell you what they really want from someone doing what you do. Then you craft the story. So, since leaders don't see it that way, they see it as a department, or they see it as a function, or they see it as a cost. That's why they're frustrated. That's why the vast majority of leaders are frustrated with marketing.

Chris Comeaux: 5:31

That's so good, Dave, and it really is. It's saying much more succinctly with what I was trying to get out of that chapter on message into the community, because people hear that word right, like been there, got the t-shirt, yeah, I need a marketing department. In fact, the thing that occurred to me and so you know we obviously have a lot of listeners in the hospice and palliative care space and a lot of my brethren peers, because Teleios Collaborative Network is nonprofit hospices they get very frustrated with one of some of the for-profits, if you will, and what's occurring to me is they're kind of putting lipstick on a pig. They may have slick marketing, but is that marketing really reflective of what's kind of behind the veil, if you will? And so what I'm hearing and what you're saying is the most potent and powerful marketing comes from a place of deep understanding of what you do, and maybe the best is not only what you do, but is what you do what the customer really wants and needs.

Chris Comeaux: 6:27

Easy to say, really hard to do, in fact, the genesis of my chapter on messaging to the community. There's a guy named AJ LaFleur and he was one of the few people to work his way up through Procter Gamble. So he literally came from the bottom rung and became the CEO and the title of the article was what Only the CEO Can Do, and I never heard it framed this way before. But he said the CEO's role is to reconcile the external with the internal. Now, easy to say, really hard to do, in fact. I'll quite often say it's really impossible today because no one CEO can do all that.

Chris Comeaux: 7:01

And frequently I'll use the metaphor Do you remember years ago the Michael Douglas movie, the Ghost in the Darkness? He was on like a safari and the lions started actually hunting the actual hunters. And there's this scene in the movie where at night because that's when the lions would come they had to sit shoulder to shoulder in a complete 360 degree circle looking outside the camp. That to me is a metaphor of a great organization. Is getting all these inputs of what is the customer, what is the community asking for? Can we turn back around and know is that actually what we're doing? And can our marketing reflect back out that that's what we do? And very beautifully crafted messages that the

customer goes oh my God, that's what I need. Would you reconcile that or say that differently?

Dave Mastovich: 7:47

No, I agree with that, and I think when I look at hospice, we've done some work with hospice and nonprofit hospices have two battles. The one battle is with for-profit hospitals that are looking at it quite differently, have some private equity involvement and the dollars and cents matter a lot. And then the nonprofit hospices are different than that. But both nonprofit and for-profit hospices have this challenge. Their customers don't really know what they want or what they could benefit from. What they do know is someone they love is dying and they wait until that last minute and then call hospice for days when it could have been months or even a year or two years.

Dave Mastovich: 8:30

And that's your challenge is addressing this term that we're all afraid of and we all fear and we all get sick in the stomach. But that's what really has to happen is you have to educate the entire world, and I've said this for about a decade is that's the challenges. A nonprofit hospital doesn't have that kind of budget to educate that, but they can still tell the story and a lot of that times. It's a challenge of kind of what many of us do. We get in our own way with certain things because messaging is held so near and dear, logos are held near and dear, taglines are held near and dear and client after client just fights the process. But if you let go and you do the research, you'll get phrases from your past families and you'll get phrases from referral sources that are unique to you, that help you to tell that story and to tell the nonprofit angle.

Chris Comeaux: 9:23

That's so good. Well, I love that. You argue in your book that and this feels like it's building off of this discussion you argue that marketing should be a leadership function, not a support service, and this is why I love that I got to meet you. I've been blessed that I've been. I've got a lot of tools in my toolbox in every segment of the organization, but this is where I feel the most incompetent, Dave, just in full transparency, I feel like I've felt over the years it's like some voodoo, like I don't get it, I don't understand it. But just in my relationship with you and then me trying to write that chapter on message into the community, I feel like I understand it better now. But I see where people do exactly what you're poking on your book. Oh, that's the support service, that's their job. So what does it look like when marketing becomes what would we call it, an organization-wide competency? Would that be a good way to frame it?

Dave Mastovich: 10:16

Well, it's a leadership function that drives revenue and culture, not by itself, but it drives revenue and culture. And so, when you have a leader that understands that and there's the cliché ones so take the cliché ones. Steve Jobs Steve Jobs is a marketer and that's what enabled Apple to grow. One of the things they also had tremendous innovation. But Steve Jobs at UPMC, where I was, we had a person at the top that was a marketer. And so, when there are leaders at the top, those organizations flat out dominate, they dominate, and so what it is is the challenge starts. I'll tell you a little bit about what happens. What happens is most leaders come up through the ranks from either finance or operations, primarily those two. Sales Haven't had a lot of the leaders come up through marketing. It's starting to change and has in the last 10 years. So, what happens is you have people that come up from the rankings where they from the of the organization not really having done marketing, and they're often in an organization. That's one of two cultures. One culture is the operations-driven culture. Think Tim Cook. Apple hasn't had a whole lot of innovation, but they're operations-driven. The other one is sales-driven. So, when an organization is sales-driven, that is the sales mindset, and that mindset is that marketing helps support us by making stuff look pretty when we need it to. Operations is like we have this great product, we have this great service. What are you talking about? Okay, so when those two things happen, they get into those leadership roles and they haven't really understood marketing. Get into those leadership roles and they haven't really understood marketing. And then they try to do this.

Dave Mastovich: 12:09

So marketing is an efficiency function, Chris, and there are very few efficiency functions in the organization. It's another reason why leaders get frustrated with marketing. Because sales is an efficiency function. Marketing is an effectiveness function. Sales is an efficiency function. Marketing is an effectiveness function. Sales is an efficiency function that it's tactical. Marketing is an effectiveness function that it's strategic first. Operations is absolutely an efficiency function and it's tactical. It doesn't mean there isn't strategy behind sales. It doesn't mean there isn't strategy behind operations or HR. That's not what I'm saying. I don't want people to try to slam me unrightly. What I'm saying is with marketing, the entire focus is strategy and effectiveness. Efficiency can still be there, right, but it's effectiveness and strategy. Operations finance sales. They are efficiency and tactical first. They still do strategy, but it's not what comes first. So those are the reasons why the people get in the leadership role and don't understand marketing and get frustrated with it.

Chris Comeaux: 13:13

That is so well said. You're making me have some great ahas, Dave. I could look through the rearview mirror and you're so right. Like the glass ceiling I was trying to break through is not many folks on the finance side made it to the CEO. Now, here we are in 2025. We're

like really yeah, man, in the early 90s, that was not a pathway. Good luck, you became the CFO and that's the most you'd ever be.

Chris Comeaux: 13:34

And so, I could look back through my career and I think I was able to participate in transforming that role of being strategic and tactical. And my aha is I've never had someone like you in my life that brought that to the marketing side. Interestingly, I've seen it on the sales side. I've seen it on the operational side. It's interesting in the hospice side. You've seen a lot of CEOs that kind of grew up on the social work side. So, it's more of those. People will call those the soft skills, but it's more of the psychosocial, emotional skills, seeing them make it to the top and then have strategic focus and tactical. So, I think you're opening my mind to go.

Chris Comeaux: 14:14

Yeah, I see why this is the. To date has been the road less traveled, but I find it also fascinating. I don't know if you had a chance to listen to our podcast with Daniel Pink, but he's predicting, because of AI, a lot of those efficiency, left brain dominated areas, if you will, are going to be taken over by AI. So, the future superpowers are going to be more of those heart-centered, right brain centered things. Yes, and probably the most potent and incredible marketing, like I think of Simon Sinek. That guy was brilliant. I mean, it's not like he's teaching rocket science. Start with why. Well, damn, that's commonsensical, but what a brilliant thing. And to me, great marketing has that impact on people. It almost taps the why, but then it helps share in a visual way that you just connect and go oh man, that's it. I need that.

Dave Mastovich: 15:00

Well, you hit something that's big. So, when Simon did that first TED Talk, it hit me and I'm reading his book and I go, oh wow, that start with why. Your why is only two of the why questions for my industry and what I do. Because there's your why or reason for being, but there's your customer's why or reason for buying. And when you answer the two why questions, that's when you can come up with one big idea and that's your framework for your story. And that's your framework for your story internally for recruiting and retention and externally for referrals and patients. It's your why or reason for being in, your customer's why or reason for buying. And that hit me the year that book came out and I've been pushing that and that's our whole model and that's what we train our people when we have our IP around is to come up with your big idea so that you then have that storytelling framework to tell internally and externally. And that's so. It's great that you brought up Simon Sinek.

Chris Comeaux: 15:58

That is so good man. Maybe this is a good segue. So many you say many companies are just not good at storytelling. In fact, I think you say storytelling poorly. And again, interestingly, that podcast with Daniel Pink. He predicted that storytelling is one of the superpowers of the future. So, what do you think is the key to telling a compelling brand story that connects? I'm getting a picture of a Venn diagram when you just said what you said their why and our why and where those intersect and so, yeah, how do they do that?

Dave Mastovich: 16:33

Yes. So let me touch on one more thing. That happens that your listeners will probably be nodding or even go like the old Seinfeld Newman. They might do the Newman about themselves. Here's what happens, and it's this self-fulfilling prophecy.

Dave Mastovich: 16:47

So, leaders perceive marketing as this department or function, that is, a support. Leaders see it as something that can do an ad, a website, a social media post, make things look pretty. So, then those leaders go and hire a good intentioned person who has a background in tactical execution. Now they'll get insulted. If you say they don't have the strategy background, but they don't. Doesn't mean they can't be strategic. That's not what I'm saying. Background but they don't. Doesn't mean they can't be strategic. That's not what I'm saying. But it is not strategy to say I think this should be an Instagram reel. That's not strategy, that's tactical execution. So, it might sound like semantics, but that's what happens. So now you hired that person, and you viewed it as this, but then you say I want to see what the ROI is for my marketing. And that's like saying what's the ROI of the Keurig machine? Because you're now saying I want this to be a support function. So, it's the same as my security team, it's the same as the Keurig machine, it's the same as the break room. So, you're not allowed to have it both ways. When you say you want to evaluate the ROI of marketing, but you saw it as a function to make things look pretty and you hired a person to do that, who's going to maybe do that and maybe not. They might be just marginal but even if they're good, you're not getting an ROI of making something look pretty. It's still needed. It's needed.

Dave Mastovich: 18:23

But the way you get the ROI is to systematically gather insights, and the key word there is systematically gather insights by talking to the customer. And your customer is current employees, prospective employees, it's referral sources and it's customers. It's talking to them. It's referral sources and it's customers. It's talking to them. And I recommend, in a qualitative fashion, because most companies don't have the budget to spend a lot of the time on research, initially because they've been doing marketing this old way and now you tell them spend a lot of money on research. So, I'm saying do it qualitatively with an outside party so you can get an objective person to ask the questions and listen. Ask

three, four, five questions, things like what's the one reason why you use Valley Hospice? What's one thing you'd change about Hospice B? Who's our competitors? What makes you refer to us? These four, five, six questions at the most. Now you ask that internally and externally. You ask that to referral sources, families, employees, et cetera. You're systematically gathering insights.

Dave Mastovich: 19:29

The second part of systematically gathering insights is looking at data and, as a financial guy, you're going to love what I'm about to say. Data and, as a financial guy, you're going to love what I'm about to say. When we work with someone, we say here's our NDA or we'll use yours. Before we even come to a discovery meeting, we already want to sign an NDA because we're going to ask you for three years of patient data, referral data, sales data if you're non-healthcare, and so we want to look at that data because we have IP around, what we call the Pareto Principle Plus, and that is our 80-20 thinking and 80-20 analysis. Two different things 80-20 thinking, 80-20 analysis those two areas the voice of the customer, talking to those people and listening and tracking it and analyzing that data tells you who you are today, but also, if you have a good marketing team with you, who you ought to be and can be Now you can build a story and that story has to be around, your why or reason for being in, your customer's why or reason for buying.

Dave Mastovich: 20:34

Now you also know who the target market is. In a much more defined way. I would rather you talk to 17 referral sources than 700. If those 17 are the kind that are going to be part of your 80%, that comes in from 20% of your referral sources. So right now, anybody out there will do the analysis and it's going to come close to 20% of their referral partners prefer 80% of their patients.

Dave Mastovich: 21:01

It just happens. First of all, Chris, 20% of the clothes in your closet is what you wear 80% of the time. 20% of the foods that you eat is what you eat 80% of the time. It's part of human nature. So, this isn't me making this up.

Dave Mastovich: 21:14

So those two things of asking the customer and the customer includes employees, referral sources, et cetera and analyzing the data drives your big idea. Then you create supporting storytelling pillars for each of those target audiences and then you decide on the channels and then you decide on what's said, then you decide on who's talking to the referral sources and then you start getting more patients that fit your ideal patient profile. And that's when life is better. Same for us when we can get customers that match up to all of our ideals, that understand that we're marketers that are strategic and tactical. When we

get a customer like that, life is good, and if 80% of our customers are like that, my team is happy. When it drops down to 70 or 60 or heaven forbid, 50, we're all frustrated because we all get drained. Happens to you, it happens to everyone listening to this podcast, so you've got to get the right people to talk to, and that's the way to do it.

Chris Comeaux: 22:14

So, Dave, when you do that kind of marketing material review listening to you, I'm having all sorts of bells go off in my head here. Do you find that 80% of their materials end up being from their perspective, as opposed to those key people? And therein lies the mismatch.

Dave Mastovich: 22:30

That is what we do subconsciously is we tell people all about us. We tell them how great we are, we tell them what we do, and you should, but you have to frame it differently. You find out what they are worried about and then that's what you tell them that you're genuinely good at. If you are. If you aren't, don't. That means you're not the right fit. It's like I tell people young people come to me and so they say to me they're in a job search and they'll tell me I didn't like this, I didn't like this, I didn't like this, but this money was good and I think I'm going to take it. And I say, okay, so let's have a meeting six months from now, start planning your next job. And 25-year-old looks at me like what? And I say no, no, that's what's going to happen. Because you're not a fit.

Dave Mastovich: 23:18

I say I use predictive index and I say here's your PI. You should be asking questions around what energizes you and what drains you, because if they answer in ways that it looks like they're going to drain you, why would you take that job? Because you're just going to not perform well. Then they're going to think you're not good and you're going to either get fired or quit. So, the same thing happens with our customers.

Dave Mastovich: 23:39

If the customer says like, for instance, there are customers that really, really, really want tactical execution, if they say to us hey, Dave, I just want you, because I heard you in a podcast, I think you're going to want to hear, I want to talk to you and I want you on the project and I just want my website done. I want it done real quick and I want this, this and this. There are times when I've had to take that because, just like you and everybody else, when we're in business, we sometimes take it doesn't work. It doesn't work. That person doesn't want to hear creative ideas. They want to tell me make the logo spin.

Dave Mastovich: 24:09

What are you doing that for?

Chris Comeaux: 24:12

That's so good. Actually, I used this line yesterday because I was doing an assessment call and years ago I remember Stephen Covey in a coaching session and a guy was having marital problems and he looked at the guy and it was a very direct comment which kind of was out of characteristic for Covey, and he said you're in the quick fix, aren't you? And the guy's like, what are you talking about? Like some of these issues you're poking on, there's some fundamental things that aren't even in place and I think that's kind of what you're poking on. People like I just want you to fix my logo, I just want you to fix my website, which is much more transactional, but to match that strategic with, then let those tactical things execute in line with where are you trying to go? I'm seeing again bells are going off. It is the road less traveled which makes what you're doing so unique.

Dave Mastovich: 25:00

Well, I told you there's multiple hospices that we've worked with, and I was joking with you. I said, hey, we'll call their referral sources. And sometimes their referral sources will say I'm not allowed to say anything. And I asked you. I said am I missing something? And you go no. And I'm you. I said am I missing something? And you go no. And I'm like I know they need to have a list and all, but you're still allowed to help someone if they say what do you think of Hospice B? And you know. So, I tell my clients. I come back and I say, hey, the referral sources you gave us feel like they can't talk about you. If someone asks, there's kind of an issue there, you need to educate that person. So, these are the things you find out just by going out and asking. Right?

Chris Comeaux: 25:38

Yep. Well, so your book advocates this is a good segue. Your book advocates for transparency, authenticity and clarity. How do you coach organizations to strip away their jargon and just get real with their messaging? Man, get us where I love. Your book is like no bullshit marketing. To me, this is getting to the real crux of what you're after with your book, the one thing that I will tell people.

Dave Mastovich: 26:01

There's many things, but one thing that I tell people that when we practice it, it's comical and this is what helps. This can help me not be seen as the bad guy. So, the CEO will often have some language written and then they'll show it to either finance or HR and it comes back with phrases like well, therefore, and I say, okay, if that's your partner, your life partner, would you read that out loud, Read that out loud? Would you say this to him or

her? To him or her, If, you were doing whatever you enjoy, if that's golfing, if that's going to a show, if that's having a drink after a concert or something, would you talk like that?

Dave Mastovich: 26:44

And then I can just stop because the game's over, I'm not the bad guy anymore and I say that's what you have to do in your storytelling. You have to sound like you. Now I talk with my hands flowing storytelling. You have to sound like you. Now I talk with my hands flowing. We don't ever edit that out. That's me. I have this weird syntax. I'm from Western Pennsylvania, but I have a drawl that I don't know how I got. That's who I am. When they hire me, I'm going to sound like this why would I try to be anything different? So, you have to be that.

Dave Mastovich: 27:16

And then the second part is I heard someone say our strategy is authenticity and I said well, then you're not authentic. Because if you say it's like in the old days, when you'd say when you were young, you'd say if you have to say you're cool, you're not cool. So, if you have to say you're authentic, you're not authentic. You just aren't. So authentic is authentic. So, when someone tells me their strategy is authenticity, I say that's BS. So, the key thing is to ask each other to say what we just said. We're going to send out an email. Read it out loud, but we're going to put on the video. Read it out loud and you'll immediately go oh my gosh, I would never talk.

Dave Mastovich: 28:01

First of all, when you try to read stuff that's poorly written, it's a struggle. It's a struggle to read something out loud that's poorly written. Another thing people do is passive voice. They're constantly putting in the. Not only is Dave a marketer, he's also a dad. Dave's a marketer, but he's a dad first. Which of those sounds better? Passive voice is what people write and talk in, but they don't in real life.

Dave Mastovich: 28:28

I was telling a friend I said you are a tremendous storyteller. He had me cracking up. A client of ours asked us to help with the US Open so we had to go look at the box. Great, great little job I got to take. A buddy of ours asked us to help with the US Open, so we had to go look at the box. Great, great little job. You know, I got to take a buddy of mine to go make sure the suite looks good. So, he's telling me these stories. I'm going like dude, you are just a tremendous storyteller, and I believe I really believe this. I believe all of us, when we're around our closest friends and family, are good storytellers. Some are just fantastic, but all of us are good. Yet when we get in the workplace, we suddenly become higher and we talk, and that's part of not being authentic.

Dragonfly Health Ad: 29:04

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Chris Comeaux: 29:51

Well, I'm sitting here reflecting and just going. So, what is it about, especially like healthcare organizations? Like I'm really, I'm picking up what you're putting down because I'm turning the mirror and going. But what is it the deal within healthcare organizations? You know what's the unique marketing challenge that we just can't overcome and listen to the customer.

Chris Comeaux: 30:12

And as I'm sitting here too, Dave, I'm reflecting my mentor, Quint Studer. I think you and I mutually know Quint. I asked him a question on my podcast because now he has two baseball teams, he's got a restaurant, coffee shop and, of course, all of his experience in health care. And I said, hey, Quint, which one's the easiest? And he said health care. And I'm like you saw the look on my face, like bullshit, like all the regulatory challenges and all this stuff, and he goes. No, Chris, he goes. I get it, he goes. I saw the look in your face. I'd never seen a business that the connection to purpose is so clear. So, and I get that. But yet why is it then that connect to purpose? But then we forget what you're poking on here, of that voice of the customer. Why do we lose that? Why are we not? Why do we lose that? Why do we lose that focus? Do you think?

Dave Mastovich: 30:59

I think a lot of it comes down to there's a nervousness, there's a fear, there's a lot of hands involved I think in healthcare more hands get involved with storytelling and marketing than any other industry and that's a recipe for disaster. Because if the CFO is looking at a piece, and so the head of HR, and they're looking at it from the standpoint of what they think looks good and what they think sounds good, without realizing Now if they had a strategic person doing that copy, not just a person to make it look pretty Like, I tell people when you get me writing something for you, I'm choosing words based on science, based on the science of what that word is going to trigger in someone, and I do it with the best intentions. There are BSers who do it with the oh. When I write an email this way, it manipulates Dave and Chris, and when I say this this way, it manipulates Dave and Chris and the audience. That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying I want to write in a way that

triggers that emotion. That's what we're trying to convey about how we can help them, and you've got to be truthful. So many hands get involved and they get nervous about it that they end up saying things that are following the leader.

Dave Mastovich: 32:10

So anytime I work with a healthcare client, I come in and I say I write on the whiteboard, I say non-negotiable phrases that won't be used State-of-the-art technology, it's expected in the United States. Don't say it Compassionate care. So, the guy up the street is going to go hey, we provide you care, it's not compassionate, but we get you care. There's no one out there that doesn't believe they're giving compassionate care. Now we both know that if we do all the surveys and we do mystery shopping, there are some people that just aren't as compassionate. But the reality is, don't use compassionate care, don't use state-of-the-art technology.

Dave Mastovich: 32:45

You have to get the phrases that match up with you. We had one client. It was a large physical therapy operation and all of the research showed that people wanted to get back to what they were. They wanted to get energized and they wanted to do it at a time that was convenient for them, within 10 minutes of their house or office. And that phrase became return, renew around you. And so, you know, you're saying return, renew around you. You're saying that to me who's had some injuries, because I'm a, you know, big workout guy. And return, renew around you. The key is around you means around my schedule, around my location, and that's listening to the customer. That's not trying to say all the big verbose tech stuff or that we do whatever we do in each of these healthcare realms. So that's what I would say happens.

Chris Comeaux: 33:48

I was listening to Thayer talk about the concept and he would use different words, and he would call it triangulation. And I'm thinking triangulation is like this negative thing in communication. But I finally got this visual that, because I was watching Red October with my kids and like a submarine ping off the ship, the ping comes back, they get the calibration, then they calibrate the torpedo and it tries to get to where the ship is going. Yes, that to me is a visual, what you're describing. And to think about where you just said, about return, renew around you, so to land the plane at that.

Chris Comeaux: 34:20

And I'm thinking how hard it was probably for you to do the deep dive, listen to the voice of the customer, listen to the voice of the organization. So, here's my question, I wonder so I'm getting this picture of, like this Venn diagram with the overlaying circles. Are there times when you're like, dude, we just hit the bullseye on that one. And are there times

when you're like you know we did the best we could? And if the times when you did the best you could, what are the elements within that organization that didn't support your team to hit the bullseye? Because I bet it probably more the latter than the former because you're illustrating, you've got a superpower. Your organization's amazing to do the work that you do, but I bet you there's sometimes when you're like you know that probably was okay, but it wasn't like our best work. What did that organization do that prevented you guys from nailing it?

Dave Mastovich: 35:06

Well, let's say, let's be completely transparent and vulnerable, because we as a team are human. There's times we don't realize it and we were off the mark, so sometimes it's us. Other times it is that the client doesn't choose the ones that we do. We just did a naming of a product for the company and we asked this they have this new innovative product I won't get into it more because the NDA, but we asked them what does it do? And they said it solves this problem. And we said okay, and we asked all the internal people separately it solves this problem. We then did an all-employee survey it solves this problem Went out and talked to three different key target markets and got a ton of interviews done.

Dave Mastovich: 35:47

We need something that solves this problem. We came up with a name that said the thing that solves that problem Exaggerating. But we came up with a name that was like four words, three, four words, and initially they liked it, and they said great. And we designed the logo. They said great, logos done. Month goes by. When they're about to do the launch, they come back and say we don't want to use that name anymore. And we just go why? And they go well, you just think it's too simple. So, a lot of times people think that simple is bad when simple is best. So that's one piece that happens, but when it works, it's because you use the research. Upmc became famous because of choose your health care as if your life depended on it. What emotion are we playing off of Chris?

Chris Comeaux: 36:38

hmm, your life depends upon her right fear, fear, right.

Dave Mastovich: 36:43

So, I've been blessed to work for some really exciting companies that were we could. We could promote fun. You know, years ago worked a lot with twin pops and we could put twins having popsicles, having twin pops, popsicles and that's fun. You're playing off of happiness, you're playing off of nostalgia, whatever this, we had to play for fear. Why, when we went throughout the western half of Pennsylvania, Allegheny County and 30 some counties around it, we would research and keep hearing things like their local

hospital was a first aid station. I wouldn't feel comfortable going there. They would use a phrase that today wouldn't make the sense that it made 15, 20 years ago. They'd say I wouldn't take my dog there which now that could be like a five-star restaurant.

Dave Mastovich: 37:32

You might say you wouldn't take your dog there, because we take our dogs everywhere. But back then that phrase was said again and again. We're talking about places 150 miles apart saying the same thing, and we come back, and we said wait a minute, what? What's our advantage? Our advantage is that we've got these tertiary hospitals, we've got these specialists in cancer, we've got people coming from 50 states and other countries. We're where you come when you know you've got to live, and all these community hospitals that they're choosing right now they're afraid of.

Dave Mastovich: 38:01

So we played off that emotion and went with choose your healthcare as if your life depended on it and just continually grew, and then did an integrated financial healthcare delivery system, which we're one of the first in the world, which meant we had the provider arm, the insurance arm, the hospital arm and all of that was playing around that phrase and it worked because we were really good. Now, if we'd have said that and we were crappy, it wouldn't have worked. That's why the research has to be there, and then you have to have the creativity. Now, that's a good example, one that's really long. That's a long phrase Choose your healthcare as if you're a life dependent, but it worked. So, you know I've had other ones that were short Duquesne do more.

Dave Mastovich: 38:40

Duquesne University had a problem with no one knowing how to say their name outside of Allegheny in the five contiguous counties, and we came up with Duquesne do more, because all the research showed that when you went there you did more with your life. So, it was do came do more. Two words that one was hard to get through. Initially they were like no, no, and we're like why don't you sleep on this? This one rocks.

Chris Comeaux: 39:01

So, Dave is there, so I imagine, to be able to do this reconciliation process. Is there a sweet spot? Because there's some aspirational aspect in that right Like you want to live into this thing. So, it's not like you're a hundred percent there today. So that message is kind of calling your organization forward. But is there like this creative tension between that gap Are we going to get? This is way too aspirational. We aren't putting the lipstick in the pig, and so how would you talk about that?

Dave Mastovich: 39:29

Well, yes, I would say you're exactly right, because when we were working with Duquesne, one of their things was they said we aspire to be Notre Dame. And I remember saying, okay, it's a nice aspirational goal, let's put that over here and let's deal with what we are today and where we can get to. And where we were, we knew we could get to another level, but I knew that wasn't going to get to Notre Dame. That's just not going to happen. It doesn't mean you shouldn't aspire to it, so we couldn't go out and say we're the Notre Dame of Pittsburgh. Wouldn't have allowed that. So, yes, there has to be some aspiration, it has to be some level of a stretch goal, but just like you as a leader, you know a stretch goal has to be attainable. And everything about the flow state is that there's all these things that keep us from the flow state as people, and one of them is if the goal is too big, we won't get into flow state. If it's too easy, we won't get into flow state. When it's a goal that's a legitimate stretch goal, it's going to be a little bit hard for us. We can get into the flow state. So that's what Do More was it was still aspirational. We could say do more to help others. When we're talking about nursing, do More Business was for the MBA program. So you could be aspirational and take this tagline and then build on it with the storytelling pillars.

Dave Mastovich: 40:44

But you have to have a stretch goal. That's realistic. Someone has to say. I think I can get to that point, like if you tell me at my age, right now, I'm going to go dunk a basketball backwards, that's not going to happen, that's a goal that I'm not even going to try for. But if you tell me I might be able to get close to dunking again, okay, I might. I still probably wouldn't. There's no relevance to that. But my point is you have to have a goal. That's somewhat doable.

Chris Comeaux: 41:06

That's really good, Dave. Actually, I played basketball with my daughter's boyfriend this past weekend and my mind thought I was still 18, but my body was not. So let's just say I tweaked my knees. So, there's some wisdom in finding that gap between your aspiration and the current reality.

Dave Mastovich: 41:22

I tell all my friends I say anyone like in their 30s I say, hey, watch Around 35, 38, I'm out playing, still playing competitively in leagues and stuff. And I'm noticing guys my age are getting these Achilles tears. And I gave it up, man, I said I'm out. So, I was playing this one really good game and I made a game winner and I went okay, I'm going to end my career on that, I'm done. I'll still coach my kids and shoot around. But because when you're over 35-38, that Achilles is so waiting to happen, just happens so much.

Chris Comeaux: 41:53

So, there's good wisdom in that, but you know. So, as we look ahead, Dave, what do you think? This is kind of our way to start to land a plane here. What's one skill or mindset shift that every organization needs to adopt to make marketing a true competency in these next five years?

Dave Mastovich: 42:11

Well, I'm going to give you more than one, just because I think there's one that I'm just going to say that's tied to us as leaders, and one of my phrases is ambiguity breeds mediocrity. Clarity drives growth. Ambiguity breeds mediocrity. Clarity drives growth. That's important, because that is part of what marketing is all about is to reduce ambiguity to drive growth. The way to reduce ambiguity is studying the data, the numbers, the financials and using it in a marketing way. And the way to do that reduce ambiguity is finding out what the customer thinks, and it is tracking what you can track in marketing. So, ambiguity breeds mediocrity. Clarity drives growth.

Dave Mastovich: 42:57

But the biggest mindset shift from a marketing standpoint that's, leadership from a marketing standpoint is this Leaders need to reinvent the way they think about marketing and they need to focus on what I call business to everyone, with the six target markets that matter, and they have to think in terms of six target markets that matter and then drill down for them in their own industry. So, these six target markets apply to any company, but you then drill down into those six right fit markets and think of that as your marketing. And those are current employees. You need to be talking to them, asking them what they think, letting them be involved in building the stories. The second one is prospective employees. There needs to be a marketing and storytelling function to that because it's about conveying your culture and your mission, values and purpose, but your core behaviors. Here's where people miss the boat when they're doing employee marketing. You've got to talk about what the core behaviors are, Because if you say, for instance, one of the core behaviors at Mass Solutions is adapt, well, if I asked seven team members what they define adapt, I'll get seven different answers. So, I need to come back and if I'm doing my job, I'm conveying. Here's an example of a behavior that ties to that core value. That's not done a lot. That's where a marketing team can help you internally tell your culture story so that you not only have the core values defined but you have core behaviors defined that are then told again and again, multiple examples of these core behaviors. So that's what helps with current and prospective employees. Your ads should be written around the core behaviors and the core values, because when I said PI earlier, if I read your ad and I go, I don't like to do that, but the title's great and the money's great I might come in and fake you out and take the job and be pretty crappy. So just hit straight up with what the core values and core behaviors are. So those are two of the markets.

Dave Mastovich: 45:15

Then current referral sources and prospective referral sources. It's a goldmine. Your own data on referral sources is a goldmine, but hardly anyone is using it, Chris. Hardly anyone is tracking it well, hardly anyone is segmenting it. Hardly anyone is using the Pareto Principle of 80-20. Hardly anyone is driving both current and perspective, and by current, I mean lookalikes.

Dave Mastovich: 45:41

If you look at your 80-20 now and you say Dr X and Dr Y are two of our biggest referral sources.

Dave Mastovich: 45:49

Dr X looks, feels and smells this way. Dr Y looks, feels and smells that way, who else is a lookalike in our market to Dr X and Dr Y? Okay, they are prospective referral sources that we're going to talk to in the same way that we talk to Dr X and Dr Y. We're going to say the story of Dr X and Dr Y to these lookalikes because they're going to immediately go oh, that sounds like me. So current and prospective referral sources, Then current and prospective patients or customers, that's your six target markets. And if you think of marketing that way and you think of asking all six of those markets what they think and then you listen. And if you think of marketing that way and you think of asking all six of those markets what they think and then you listen, and if you think of analyzing your data and using all of that to build your story and choose your channels, now you're a marketer and you're a leader who's thinking of marketing as an effectiveness function that can drive culture and growth.

Chris Comeaux: 46:46

Wow, that's awesome, Dave, and you just you confirmed, but also pushed on my thinking I think Quint Studer used to say this that people he called it terminal uniqueness. Well, yeah, but you know, and so I think in hospice we would tell ourselves, but there's so many stakeholders that that's what makes this more complicated, and so I guess my question to you is this is does that apply to every industry? You just set just talked about those six segments. Are there some that maybe have more? Or you find that six is definitely universal all across, and some or is that the average? And some might have 12 and some have four.

Dave Mastovich: 47:23

Those six are what you need to look at and within those six they're unique to you. So, referral sources for a wealth management company are completely different than our referral sources in healthcare.

Dave Mastovich: 47:35

But there are referral sources.

Dave Mastovich: 47:36

Any professional service firm has referral sources. They're just not looking at them. Because here's what happens on a professional services firm there's one or two people at that firm that loves BD, business development, and they go out and they're the rainmaker and no one else knows what they're doing or how they're doing it. So, the rest of the staff's barely doing any BD and that person gets hit by a bus, to use a cliché. You're in trouble.

Dave Mastovich: 47:58

So, we want to systematize referral sources for architectural firms, law firms, wealth management firms, accounting firms. But for us in healthcare it's legit referral sources. We legitimately go. That social services agency refers to us, this area agency on aging refers to us, this doctor refers to us. So, everybody has referral sources, current and prospective ones. Everybody has employees, current and prospective ones, and everybody has customers, current and prospective ones. When you get into your customer markets there might be two or three within the customer segment. So I'm not saying you're limited to all that, but if you look at those six areas and really do the analysis, the data analysis, and you do the voice of the customer, asking all six of those people what they think, it's going to be readily apparent to you what your target markets are, and then you get to choose the story and the channel for that target market.

Chris Comeaux: 48:47

That's great, Dave.

Dave Mastovich: 48:51

Dave, last final thoughts that you have. Oh, final thoughts that I have. So, I guess, when I look at some of the things there, marketing's often an afterthought. It's often thought of as a nice to have or it's thought of as something that you know we'll put a little bit of money into that. And I want you to think differently. I want you to think of it as an investment that will generate an ROI. So, we want to leverage the power of compound messaging. So, there's, you know finance guy, you know compound interest. I talk about compound messaging. Leverage the power of compound messaging. This all builds on each other. When you follow a system of marketing and you go to the business, to everyone, those six target markets that I mentioned, you gather the again and again and again and people are hearing it multiple times. So, someone's hearing it the first time and it's barely scratching the surface. Someone else is hearing it the 13th time and now they're

starting to say I want to hire Chris; I want to hire Dave. So that's leveraged the power of compound messaging.

Chris Comeaux: 50:00

That's a good Dave. Dave, would you provide us? Certainly, I want to link to your book but any links that you want to share for folks that want to get in contact with you you've actually offered your firm is looking to work with hospice firms and actually kind of looking at it as a way to give back. So, pricing that's a little bit more competitive in this realm. So, anything you want to add to that?

Dave Mastovich: 50:22

Yes, so Mass Solutions M-A-S-S-O-L-U-T-I-O-N-S dot biz B-I-Z is our website. Then I also have a personal website because a lot of my speaking, my workshops and guest podcasting and my podcast and that's David M Mastovich and gladly would talk to anybody would connect with people that heard the show. If someone wants a button or a book, if they email me at Dave, at masssolutions.biz and say they heard me on your show and gives me their address, we'll give them a gift of a book, signed book, or maybe the button as well, the no BS button.

Chris Comeaux: 51:04

That's awesome, Dave. Again, I learned just in this podcast from you this is an area that I could look through my career and go gosh. I wish I had met you many, many years ago, because this is always an area I've felt inadequate to the task and it's actually one reason why Dr Thayer used to say I write books to figure stuff out. That's actually why the message into the community was in my book, because I knew I needed to have that as a placeholder, because you are obviously masterful, because people do treat it as a sub-function when it is huge. It is one of the most potentially potential services within your organization. Competencies would be a better word, because we all want to grow right. We all want to do more if we believe in our product, and especially in the hospice and palliative care space. We do not do a good job in this area and I think more often than not probably Predo Principal Plus like 90, 95% of the time we treat it as an expense as opposed to a potential superpower.

Dave Mastovich: 52:04

Well, thanks. I really enjoyed it and, like I said, I love your leadership approach, enjoyed your book, so thanks for having me on.

Chris Comeaux: 52:17

You bet, Dave, well, to our listeners we just want to make sure that you don't miss an episode, and so every episode at the end, we want to share a quote, a visual. We call it a

brain bookmark, a thought prodger about our podcast subject, just to further your learning and your growth and thereby your leadership. We're going for like a brain tattoo, we want it to stick. Be sure to subscribe to our channel, the Anatomy of Leadership. We don't want you to miss an episode. You want to check out our book, the Anatomy of Leadership? We've got a link to that as well. We'll have all the links that Dave just mentioned Also if you want to connect with him and his organization. So thanks for listening to the Anatomy of Leadership, and here's our Brain Bookmark to close today's show.

Brain Bookmark / Jeff Haffner: 52:49

"Your why equals the reason for being, the customer's why equals the reason for buying."
by Dave Mastovich.