

PK Pod 103

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SPEAKERS

Channing Moreland, Matt Hunckler



Channing Moreland 00:00

And I'll never forget in that meeting, our first hire, she who's like been the most a part of it with us out of anyone kind of turns to us and says, you know, we really just need to know



00:13

you know, what



Channing Moreland 00:14

is the real vision behind this for you guys? I'm like,



00:17

Girl, you've been with



Channing Moreland 00:18

us like, right and I was like, Oh wow, yeah, like we've never actually like said it. I love she doesn't even know because we've never said it. How can anyone else now?



Matt Hunckler 00:44

Hey there Powderkeg fans. This is Episode 103 of powder keg igniting startups, the show for entrepreneurs, leaders and innovators building remarkable tech companies in areas decidedly outside of Silicon Valley. I'm your host, Matt Hunckler. And today, you'll hear from two founders who are building an amazing company in Nashville, Tennessee, Channing Moreland and Makenzie Stokel are the co founders of even more an online platform that connects event planners with vetted live entertainment. I don't want to spoil the story. But while Channing and MaKenzie were in college, they saw an opportunity to improve the booking sector for the music industry by building a platform that connects event planners and artists in a way that automates booking live entertainment. Since then, the company has grown incredibly, and they're at a really unique stage of the startup right now. Where they're just kind of redoing the mission vision core values. And I'm really eager to talk to them because they've been part of the powder keg community for years, going back to sort of our initial launch in Nashville, and their company has been growing like crazy. So excited to talk to them and Channing and Mackenzie thanks for being here.



Channing Moreland 01:53

Thank you, Matt. Great intro. Yeah, seriously.



Matt Hunckler 01:58

Pretty, pretty sure. We just took it for Your website so nicely done.



02:01

Oh, Okay, perfect. I was like, oh man,



Channing Moreland 02:04

exactly what I was said with. With this changing so much right now we're like, is it accurate? Doesn't that's just a nice surprise. Thank you.



Matt Hunckler 02:13

Hey, that's good kudos to you for having an accurate description on your website.



02:18

It sounds like it should be obvious, I guess.



Matt Hunckler 02:21

Oh no, it's totally not and I get the startup life. Before we dive in, give me a sort of some idea of the scale right now of where you're at in the startup journey.



02:34

Um, let's see we have including ourselves, we have four full time employees and four part time employees so we're at eight now actually, we just brought another part time on literally last week so nine



Matt Hunckler 02:51

Congrats. Yeah, that's awesome. And are all of your clients still in Nashville or do you have clients elsewhere as well?



Channing Moreland 03:00

Definitely expanding the client base. Now, we made so many mistakes in that expansion plan last year, and we, you know, kind of retreated. And then now we're back out with a new plan. But what we're the way we're going about it now is the clients that we receive in other markets, we then go there and make sure that we have artists to fit and so a few of them that, for example, are Houston and Austin, Boston, Atlanta, the Chicago area starting a lot in New York and in LA now. So we're kind of we're getting our region set and then growing outward in secondary markets to



Matt Hunckler 03:39

nice Congrats, I can relate to that on so many levels. So you're here to talk about that. But before we dive into kind of how you got to where you are now, can we go back a little bit and I would just love to learn a little bit more about each of your own individual entrepreneurial stories. And Mackenzie, maybe you could kick it off for us. What was your first entrepreneurial memory. Were you a kid? Were you recently waited?



04:06

Um, I love that question. Let's see, the first thing that comes to mind is a selling Girl Scout cookies like way back in the day was like my you know like door to door selling as a kid. Oh yeah. For like the Washington DC trip in middle school that was always I just always liked it. I always like to sell in the most basic way possible. So I think just the just the fondness of doing that, and



Channing Moreland 04:42

I kind of was awesome attitude. So



04:47

I guess



04:47

maybe kind of was was the first little step into entrepreneurship.



Matt Hunckler 04:53


It seems like when you're younger and you kind of get that positive reinforcement even if you're not selling every single time. which you probably were because you're a beast at selling, but what what is some of the stuff that you learned early on as you're getting that positive reinforcement? And were there any times where you failed and and maybe walked away with something that maybe you can still use today as you're continuing to build your client base?



05:21

Yeah, that's, it's so interesting to think about it like that. And, you know, maybe even like how it could have shaped decisions today, but it's so much less. I mean, you know, as like a kid, it's not even that intimidating to go up to somebody's house. And, you know, like, kind of bombard them in their space in a way, you know, you don't think of it as how you might now if you were to go up to a stranger's house selling something, it's kind of intimidating or you don't know what they're going to say or who they're going to get. But as a kid, it's kind of, you know, you don't even think about it. It's just like, Oh, sure, you

know, who doesn't want cookies.

 Channing Moreland 05:57
So there's definitely

 05:58

some fearlessness As a child that I think I've tried to hold on to, whether I've been successful at that or not, I can always try and think back about, okay, you know, well, if this little girl like could do that, not really think about the consequences. That's kind of how I have to I have to hold that in. Sometimes it's just like, go for it or say things I might not be comfortable saying or talk to strangers and just kind of not be afraid of the outcomes.

 Matt Hunckler 06:27

That's cool. That's a really cool experience. I remember selling Christmas wreaths for my basketball team as a fundraiser. And that was my first door to door sales but I also did the vacuum cleaner thing in college. That was very character building. Channing, how about you? What was your first entrepreneurial memory?

 Channing Moreland 06:49

Man, I can resonate with you both. I feel like why is kids are we always selling things to someone. I mean, it's true. It's pretty funny, but I do remember one and this is going to sound weird, but I okay, so I went to a, like an unconventional church. But it was it was great growing up in a very welcoming place. And they were open to ideas of how we could make money. And so we said, we wanted to I remember with one of my best friends who was a DJ, we were like, let's put on a rave. Like we, as kids really want that man. We're like, let's put on a rave and make money. And we'll do it in like the fellowship hall area. And we'll just have a bunch of kids come there, and we'll just party. And we ended up making so much money that we did it like five times again, and we just mean this kid Ricky just kept putting these events on, which is funny because that's what we were doing in college. And I honestly, until you ask that question, I've never thought about that. But that's my first real memory of making money in a weird way and being like, oh, let's do this again. So



Matt Hunckler 07:57

any big breakthroughs other than Hey, this is a way to make money.



Channing Moreland 08:02

I think realizing how much I loved seeing like because we had to it was like we were going in like shopping for team members because we're like, we need this person to do this. And then like organizing it all and seeing the finished product. That was a breakthrough I look at today My favorite part is, you know, we're messing up, you know, every day, of course, but seeing the team when they jive, that's my favorite piece of it.



Matt Hunckler 08:27

That's cool. And you're in a good place to be doing that right now as you're growing the team. Yeah. Well, talk to me a little bit about how you two met.



08:38

Great story.



Channing Moreland 08:40

We're so we



08:41

went to Belmont University together in Nashville. I'm from Indiana, so I came



08:48

came on down and then chance from Boston. So we're both kind of



Matt Hunckler 08:55

nice bands.



08:56

Yeah, I didn't know a lot of other people and We were roommates at orientation so like before classes even start summer before college, you know, you come down I think it was like the end of June and you go and kind of just learn about what's college about and actually pick your schedule. So we just happen to walk in at the same time to this orientation with our parents and they just paired us up and said all right, well, you know your for the next two days, you guys are gonna be roommates. And we just became friends pretty quickly.



Matt Hunckler 09:36

What was it sort of clicked for you? Is it that you're very similar? Or is it that you're complimentary?



Channing Moreland 09:44

I just remember you know, being from Boston you know, I I was I didn't know much about Nashville, even though I actually technically grew up in Oklahoma and moved to Boston, but I was just like, what is Tennessee like, I didn't even know I was Nervous by some of the stereotypes we had heard from Belmont. And I remember after a little bit of the orientation, we can see, you know, her sitting on this like brick wall together, right? Just like, I don't know about this, like some of these people were meeting here. Like, she was like, Yeah, me too.



10:19

Yeah, so it was definitely relating to each other and that Bellman is belmonts a very conservative school. It's, you know, the, if there's a lot of rules. You know, there's just a lot, a lot more that you have to do to live on campus. And so we were both kind of like, Whoa, this is way more intense. And we thought like, is



Channing Moreland 10:44

this to make the right pick? I'm going to the school. And great people, though. Great. Oh, no, he's right. But yeah, we just like we're instantly like, Okay, I think we're on the same page here. Mm hmm. And that, just can Continued I mean, then, you know, you you fast forward to assigning our first operating agreement together as sophomores and we had to like kind of pencil in what our roles were and even that as like friends and business

partners. Fast forward to now and it's still, you know, the same and intact and how we could have subconsciously foreseen some of those roles and traits that we're really just now starting to understand is besides me



Matt Hunckler 11:29

sometimes it just works out perfectly. And I know something that sometimes entrepreneurs, maybe bristle at is being a little bit more rule heavy and having to play by the rules. So being at Belmont, did you to ever brush up against that and, and potentially have to bend or mitigate some of the rules as you're starting with even more.



11:57

I think that's probably should have been on core values that were we don't follow any rules, because then I feel like



Channing Moreland 12:05

we should do that. I mean,



12:07

yeah, anybody's rules, whether it was like our campuses, our, the social rules of you know what you're kind of supposed to be doing on weekends versus our business. I'm yeah, yeah.



Channing Moreland 12:21

I mean, yeah, we did. That's for sure. I remember. I mean, the way we started making money with our events was unconventional, totally, I mean, wasn't



Matt Hunckler 12:33


talking about that. What was the genesis of the idea?





12:36

So the original idea, our sophomore year of college was that we would create a platform


that would show people what events are going on, especially concerts, very music focused, what events are going on in your city, and obviously, we're in Nashville. There's lots of events, lots of stuff we could show and promote. There's plenty of websites like do that now and do a great job of it. Our little bit of our differentiator was that we would kind of connect with your existing music platforms or, you know, you could put it in your preferences, your music preferences, and we would give you recommendations based on that. Cool. Um, so we had a, we had a website that was, I mean, it sounds like it even could have been cooler than it was. It was just a calendar really, like it was just a website with the calendar. And we uploaded events to it. And no one ever like, I don't think anyone ever went to the website, except for us. And we,

 Channing Moreland 13:42
yeah, and so,

 13:43
like, we didn't do any market research or like, Oh, you know, this is an actual problem. We're like, well, we would like it. So it must be a real thing. Right?

 Channing Moreland 13:51
You know, I feel like a first mistake a lot of entrepreneurs do is they build what they want, not what others want. Yeah, and we started then putting On events to kind of not only, like populate it, but then also it was a way. We weren't even trying to make money. You know, being in school, we were just trying to create cool experiences. And by us creating events and booking those bands that we were following that also then became another really business entity, but something for what we were doing to.

 Matt Hunckler 14:22
Yeah, I love the quote, I think it's, don't fall in love with the solution, fall in love with the problem.

 14:29
Yeah.



Matt Hunckler 14:30

And it's interesting, because a lot of times entrepreneurs are like, Well, I have this problem. So everyone else must have this problem. I've certainly started some of those businesses in the past and those iterate and grow. What were some of your kind of bigger aha moments in those early days as you're trying new things?



14:52

I feel like some of the biggest ones were I mean, that was a certainly the biggest one probably is that, you know, we didn't necessarily See, who is the customer of this? Do we actually have a model? Do we have a plan to make money? We didn't think those things out before just building it. So you know, that's not smart.



Matt Hunckler 15:13

It's, I mean, some people have the model and the strategy, but they fail to take action. So I would say, you know, better to do something than have the perfect model and plan and not do anything.



Channing Moreland 15:24

Yeah, I like it. And I like thinking that way. I feel like such a theme. Now. I mean, even at 3686, the, the theme of the conference, you know, with startups was it's like, it's like, just start, I feel like we're all saying that. And, you know, there was a lot of concept of like, you can even fail through the startup. And I think that's, we are like queens of that, you know, we started with something at least, but then we were evolving and Id ating and generating the new, even more version, you know, just by messing up in the process.



Matt Hunckler 15:57

Yeah, talk to me a little bit about you mentioned 3686 But for those who are listening, that aren't familiar with it, can you tell us a little bit about that conference? That's in Nashville?



Channing Moreland 16:06

Yes. So it happens at the end of August every year. And 3686 are the coordinates of Nashville. And it's an entrepreneurial festival, very focused on bringing startup founders and investors together, really focusing around tech mainly, but anything goes and it's it's

really actually one of my favorite conferences, just in how strategic they are and connecting those investors to entrepreneurs and giving time for that. So it's two days, which I like nice and quick. Sometimes the three day ones or four are just way too much.



Matt Hunckler 16:43

Drag it on. Yeah. Yeah, well, and people come from all over the southeast, but even nationally for those two I remember I got a chance to speak last year and I was blown away by just how many people one how many people were there, period, but then two, how many people We're in from out of town.



17:01

Yeah, totally. I think because we live in Nashville and it's in Nashville. We're not having to do trap, you know, we're not having to book flights or hotels or anything. It's just we don't maybe take it as seriously until we get there and realize how serious it really is. And people, people from all over the country, like you said, are there and it's a great program.



Matt Hunckler 17:23

Well, and I know that you got hooked up early on with some interesting programs there in Nashville. What what kind of stage were you in when you first got introduced to the music accelerator?



Channing Moreland 17:34

Yes. So we just to give a little background, we were juniors at Belmont. And we had just won a business plan competition at Belmont. And the judges on that panel, were in a row. They were amazing. And one of them was Phil Schmeling who's now over at Studio bank and at the time he was running in crowd capital and he came up to us. And he was like, I don't really know what you're doing. But it's cool. And you should go to the entrepreneur center, it seems like you're ready to take that leap into that kind of community outside of your college community. And you should do that. And that was the best advice we received because it broke us out of that college bubble. It showed us the opportunity of building your network early on. And then the music tech accelerator that was coming out of the entrepreneur center. It was actually happening in a couple of months from then. And so a few people had recommended that we apply for it, and it's called Project music is the first ever music tech accelerator of its kind. It was backed by eight plus major music industry companies. They chose eight companies to go through it. And we were selected

and it happened I'm sorry, that was that happened at the top of our junior year right? Or no, that was in it was the second semester so second semester, so we come back after a break and We start this thing. And then we still had a year left of school when we



19:04

finished and going into it, we were still I mean, we applied to be in it with that initial idea. Kind of not really necessarily having a model, but we knew we needed to change. We knew we needed some help. So that's why we wanted to get in to get as much advice as possible. And we I think we barely got in like, if they had only picked seven, we would have been.



Channing Moreland 19:31

Yeah, I feel like we were a pity pick, but I'll take it because it changed our lives. Oh, yeah. That's great.



Matt Hunckler 19:37

That's amazing. What What was the concept at that point that you applied with?



19:43

Uh, it was still the same. It was coming off of that calendar of events, but it but I mean, the way we've made all of our money was putting on our own events. Well, that's somehow incorporated into this website, but We had these things that didn't necessarily have to do with one another. And what we had done is just booked music produced events and made money doing it. That was really all we knew, honestly. And we wanted to turn it into a real business. And see in scale,



Matt Hunckler 20:18

that's a lot more than a lot of people in the industry know. So I feel like you're starting with some pretty good knowledge and background. And it sounds like maybe in the accelerator, things really were forged and polished and iterated upon. Can you talk to me a little bit about that experience? What were what were some of the bigger, aha breakthrough?



Channing Moreland 20:41

Well, it felt like every day was a breakthrough because it was like, Yes, we were going to college, but it felt like we were getting an MBA and exactly what we wanted and needed to learn. Yes, which is what we were, it was, you know, 14 weeks of this is how you need to do this.



20:58

And I remember on day two You know, we come in and



Channing Moreland 21:02

McKenzie and I really start to look at what are we actually even doing? And that is a question that is so important to ask. And it was just that was a breakthrough moment of now we have the mental capacity of space and time to look at our business and see all the holes. And yeah, that's scary and hard. But we should all be doing that like every three months. And so that was a great experience of us saying, oh, we're booking a ton of vetted x over here. And that's a really lengthy process. And it's time consuming and a lot of logistics going into it. And it's a mess. And then over here, we really like when technology can aid in the solution and when that can be scalable, bigger than just the two of us. So we started to see what we were doing, but then we needed to go make sure it was a problem for others. And not just us.



21:52

Yeah, that was that scary.



21:56

super scary. Yeah. I mean,



22:00

We were the youngest in the program by far, and also the only female founders. So it was just kind of, you know, thrown into this this accelerator program thrown into these opportunities. And we had to just figure it out every day. But I think, I think at first people were like, Oh, these are the interns of the thing, right? Like you guys, you guys aren't really a member of the cohort. And then by the end, we really, even just in our confidence, we've

gotten, you know, we knew how to speak about our business. We knew how to speak to different types of people and gain respect, I think a lot more than going in.



Matt Hunckler 22:41

Talk to me a little bit about overcoming that challenge. You know, a lot of founders talk about imposter syndrome. They talk about maybe being underestimated what what did you do to kind of overcome that being probably I'm assuming the some of the younger people and excited or if not the absolute youngest People in the accelerator and this being your first go round with starting a startup.



Channing Moreland 23:06

This is a huge topic for me, in particular, and something that I'm still now working through from, like the post effects of that particular accelerator. Because with my personality, and I'm so thankful, like McKenzie, saved my butt through that accelerator, but like, I felt like I had to be like, walls up, like do not affect us, we are good. And like, I became a robot with like, a lot of male energy and like, I remember like, wearing button downs and like, you know, just like not being myself because I felt like we were put into the situation and I had to protect myself, in a way and it was it was like a weird experience. And there totally was that imposter syndrome. And there still is that time for sure. Tough, you know, but really working through. I mean, I think what is really helpful to come back too is you there's a reason you we are doing this. And that right there is enough of a differentiator at times, I believe is the founders of who are doing it. And just having that reminder really helps me go, you are not an imposter. You are doing this for a reason and working through that. But it was really hard to be to go through that first process.



24:25

How about you? Yeah, I mean, it was helpful that we had each other so it was like, Okay, well, there's at least there's two of us and we can be a team. While we feel very alone, in a way in this process, but I mean, it really thickened our skin. I mean, we had to I remember a big part of this accelerator was every week you're pitching so you're pitching to groups of investors, mentors, the rest of the cohort, different people every week, and they are Literally critiquing you on everything, not just your business, and your business model, but how you're actually pitching. And if you are terrible at talking to people, you know, like, literally just like me giving you all the negative feedback, and it really sucks. But I think by the end, we, you know, we had to just take it and shape up. And by the end, we were rock solid. And they would rate you against each other. And then you could see that and it was



Channing Moreland 25:31

crazy at the start, but then at the end, we were ready for that too. So



Matt Hunckler 25:36

well more comfortable with it by the end. Yeah, at least you had those thousands of Thin Mints under your belt that you'd had sold previously. So at least started like a baseline of confidence in knowing that you can do this. So talk to me about that, you know, what was it like maybe you weren't knocking on doors, but this initial concept in the accelerator program, when you kind of said, Okay, this is our go to market. This is what we're going to initially test our v1. And we're going to go out and talk to people and see if they want to buy it. How did you go about doing that? And what did you come up against when you metaphorically knocked on those doors?



26:16

It honestly wasn't metaphorically for the first year we, I mean, physical So, so we kind of so once we did actually pivot which, from, you know, this kind of thrown together idea, we pivoted to a being a online marketplace that connects entertainment, mostly music and artists with private event planners. And the real type of event planner we were focused on at first was college event planners, a lot of times. Greek life so the social Chair of a fraternity or sorority was our customer. And they were having parties, they were doing events and they wanted bands. So that was that was our that was our business. Right out of project music. And so we were literally like driving to campuses and going and knocking on frat houses and like asking if we can talk to their social chair about how they book entertainment and what their needs are and if they would ever do it online and like figure out kind of the pricing and the budgets that they have just to learn more about them to see if we would be a good fit. So we still weren't doing the door to door thing. And that was terrible. You know, we were literally walking into a frat house that was stinky and dirty and




Channing Moreland 27:34

oh, I just I remember so many of them.





Matt Hunckler 27:40


Are there any in particular that are emblazoned in your memory?


 Channing Moreland 27:43
Yeah.


 27:46
Wk you right at Western Kentucky University. One.

 Channing Moreland 27:50
Oh, Valdosta. Yeah, it was just like, people live here. This is disgusting. And then you know, there's such a there's such a push pole, especially when you have a marketplace because you have a whole other client, that you're servicing the artists. And it was really stressful with college events because it was like,

 28:11
everyone as an

 Channing Moreland 28:12
artist underlying Lee would love to play. It sounds like a great idea. An artist wants hypothetically to play a college event. But what that event really looks like if you turn the lights on is horrifying on so many like codes. Yeah, but the artist wants it. So we're like, okay, we're gonna make these connections, and it just didn't, didn't feel good. And I kind of understood why it's been such a hard thing to but we did continue to see that this user and we were a little ahead of it a couple years back, but these users are coming up and they are ready to do things online. Yeah, we we see that and we could validate that but it was a tough market to go after.

 Matt Hunckler 28:57
That sounds sounds like trove of stories there. How long did you do that before you started kind of broadening your aperture on who you might be selling to?

 Channing Moreland 29:08
Yes. So when we graduated in 2016, we spent that whole year really developing the platform going on two college campuses. And it was at the end of 2017. So after like a

year and a half ish, where we just started seeing other customer types coming to us naturally. We were enjoying those a lot more. Yeah. And we were still having a really hard time with the churn and just the deliverables with colleges. And so I remember last year, so at the end of 2017, we saw that and in February, we made the decision we're like, it's not that we're turning away from college yet. Let's just really make an intention to focus on corporate this month and the number spoke for themselves. Seeing just that month looks like



Matt Hunckler 30:01

I think I met you just before that when you both came up to Indianapolis. And and pitched



Channing Moreland 30:09

you know so funny. I was thinking about that because and I loved that event. That event was so cool.



Matt Hunckler 30:15

You're you were both amazing. Thank you had your pitch down.



Channing Moreland 30:19

Nice man. I hope so after that, but I realized that that was the last time we ever pitched that particular concept. Yeah, it was the last time we ever did it was Wow.



Matt Hunckler 30:33

Wow. And so everything kind of exploded in the positive connotation of the word which is the only way we talked about it here at Powder Keg. So everything kind of exploded after you looked at corporate as a as a way to continue to grow the client base. Talk to me about that.



30:53

Yeah, we let's see. So we did. We did a few corporate events. Just basically through people that we had met, or had heard of us, or maybe even, you know, they just liked an artist that they knew we work with them. At the end of 17, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yep. Yep. And

then, right, because then, like January 2018, we're like, let's just stop what we're doing and focus all of our efforts on doing more of those corporate events, getting more of those corporate customers solely marketing to them. We can still serve this college community that we have that our existing customers but as far as getting new customers, let's just try it for a month. Yeah. Our sales tripled in a month. So we were like, okay, that's definitely the move. We're certainly going to do this and it's so much easier on our mental state as well. I mean, it's just, you know, they're paying on time and they're just professionals. So we shifted? Yeah, so it's been a little over a year and a half now that we've been focused on corporate events, but we'll still do different types of stuff. You know, that's certainly our main focus. But we've done plenty of weddings. We have still done stuff on, you know, private parties or stuff on college campuses, but we're focused on the corporate,



Channing Moreland 32:22

and I feel like it I mean, I feel like it really has taken a year and a half to learn this customer. It's, it's been interesting, you know, to see how you know, how fragmented the corporate industry is now, and how we can really provide a great solution to multiple different types of users, but it taught us a lesson in how much info and knowledge and, you know, research it takes to really understand your buyer.



Matt Hunckler 32:52

Yeah, absolutely. Especially in the marketplace because you've got at least two you really got to know well. Any other Big lessons from the marketplace standpoint that helps you break through a little bit and the those earlier days of going after corporates,



Channing Moreland 33:09

absolute, so many I mean, one that comes to mind that, you know, it's really knowing to what your platform even you know does like are you a software as a service? You know, what kind of product? Are you as a marketplace? Who is the number one client because there has to be one that you I believe in our system that we have to focus on a little bit more aka the one pain. But you know, we even made the mistake with the marketplace of which one do we scale first? And, you know, do we have teams in other places? Or do we have a core team here selling this software? Like who focuses on what side of the marketplace? I mean, there's so many different things that go into it that we had to learn the hard way.



Matt Hunckler 33:58

Yeah, that man, that's the There's so much there. I almost feel like we have to circle back on another episode to go into the marketplace side because I really love to hear. I always think it's so fascinating. There's so much to learn in those early days of a startup team, and I know you're in the thick of that right now going from just you two to now nine people on the even more team. Can you talk to me a little bit about about what it was like to bring on that first person? How did you know it was time to bring?



34:31

Yeah, it was nerve racking. Uh, I mean,



34:36

fortunately, the person we did bring on was a good fit for us. And you know, so around, we didn't have to fire them right away. Like I know a lot of people do they find out isn't a good fit. So we did make a good decision on the person fortunately, and I think that was certainly among a good amount of luck as well, but



34:59

it's tough to I think we went a lot a little too long without hiring anybody. You know, I think we



35:05

forget some of the reasons why.



35:10

I mean, we always are very focused on being as lean as possible. And just seeing another expense of a of a higher was just kind of daunting and it was kind of like add, do we really need that person? Or can we just like, you know, lose our nights and weekends basically, to do that work ourselves? Yeah. You know, obviously, isn't the right move at, you know, you can only do that for so long.



Matt Hunckler 35:35

Yeah. How did you start to know that you couldn't do that any longer?



Channing Moreland 35:40

Oh, man. I remember it was a late last year. And we were just like crawling out of like, what felt like a grave. We were just like, Yeah, not yet. And it just was so it was like we were hitting this wall because we were just at capacity like we both had jobs within this thing. That's true. And I remember people like our mentors, of course, thank goodness for mentors and your stakeholders and people that can, you know, at times you have to, you know, protect yourself sometimes from the, you know, various feedback, but people were like, it might be time to bring on someone, have you thought about hiring sales, and we tried to go down that route, but we just haven't implemented enough of the process yet to do it. And we weren't ready. And I remember finally at the top of this year, we were like, Okay, this year needs to look different in capacity for ourselves. And we need to make an investment in our company together to do that. And that's going to be scary, but we have to try. And you know, of course, worst comes to worst, you fire them and you've learned something huge and you go to find a better person. So it was definitely at the top of this year when we made that decision. We started interviewing for the whole month of February, we entered You think we look like over 40



37:02

applicants? What was the role?



37:05

Outside sales?



Matt Hunckler 37:07

Okay, it was sales ended up in sales.



Channing Moreland 37:09

Yes. And it clearly was exactly what we needed because it opened our eyes to the world of what this could be. And it helped us start and grow our organization. And what was really amazing about the one we did hire like McKenzie was saying, she was more of a right fit

than I think I even realized. Because she naturally has more of like an operator mindset. And McKenzie are really great at process. And me being over more in the sales realm you could imagine with me not being great at process, it was a shit show. And so having her and mechanically Yes. And so it was it was incredible to have her be like, you know, we need to have a funnels coming in so we can do outside sales verse inside sales,



37:58

and I'm like, how what are you Say,



38:00

yeah, so many lessons there as well.



Matt Hunckler 38:04

That's great. I mean, I'm so happy that you were fortunate to find the right fit. You mentioned that maybe some of it was luck. But was there anything that you did that, in retrospect, you're like, oh, that was actually kind of smart. You know, whether or not it was your idea or, you know, something that you grabbed from a blog post or from a mentor? Why do you think that person fit? If it wasn't just like?



38:31

I, you know, I honestly hadn't really thought about it. But I think



38:37

we, the person we knew that we, ideally, this person would have had experience in multiple industries. At least for us, you know, that was a big deal, because we're very involved in the music industry, but we're also a tech platform. And we're also involved in corporate events like it's kind of like These like very different businesses all kind of in one place. Like we're serving different people. We're paying artists. So we're in the music entertainment industry. And so someone with at least a basic knowledge of all would, you know, maybe we can find somebody like that, which she did have, wow. And she'd also worked at a startup before and help launched a market, which was kind of like, perfect for us, because that's what we're doing. It was a tech marketplace. So she literally had like, that exact experience of launching a tech marketplace selling to people to use the

technology in a new market. So it was like,



Matt Hunckler 39:40

Where did you find this unicorn?



Channing Moreland 39:42

I know it's seriously Yeah, I mean, a lot of a lot of resumes. And another thing we did Oh, actually, something we did, which I Man, I wish this existed better. And if it does, please tell me but we went to a very vetted place. To search, which for us was huge. We went to a Facebook group that was closed, and only Nashville while surrounding but hospitality experience corporate planners were a part of it. It's 1200 people, and they all came from there. So right there, we knew that they already were kind of key in what we were looking for. And then hers just really filled the other gaps.



Matt Hunckler 40:28

Find out where your your potential people would hang.



40:31

Yeah, right.



Matt Hunckler 40:33

That's great. That's really smart. Did you do that just by just searching on Facebook for it and you stumbled across it or did a mentor someone mentioned it to you?



Channing Moreland 40:44

I was actually a part of it for sales opportunities. You know, I would scan that thing and yeah, I should throw it on there. And we got like 40 resumes. I was like, Oh, wow. Yeah.



Matt Hunckler 40:58

Very cool. Very cool. So today Talk to me, then, you know, you've got your first they'll say it takes that first crazy person to start a movement. Right? It's actually, they often say it's

not the founder or founders. It's that first person that's crazy enough to join the founders. Derek Silver's did an amazing TEDx talk on this, or it was a TED talk, actually. I'll link to it in the show notes. But it's a really great sort of metaphor for any anything, but it's this one person at a music festival. It's like dancing like a maniac. And sort of like, you know that that person didn't actually start the movement. It was the second person who said, Yeah, I'll do that too. And then from there, it just kind of expands and you see the entire crowd start to do this wacky dance, and sort of like how to start a movement. That's how you do it. So I'll link up how to start a movement. I'll send it to both of you. But talk to me a little bit about yet the three of you I'm assuming you're like every other startup entrepreneur at least first time startup entrepreneur, you don't have core values documented. You don't have mission, vision, purpose, all of those things, which is totally normal. But But talk to talk to me about or unless you dead.



42:18

Now



Matt Hunckler 42:20

talk to me about when you when did you know you needed to start doing some of that stuff?



Channing Moreland 42:26

I know exactly when it's so too late, too late, much too late. So I remember, you know, we had we had our first hire, and then we started, you know, she was, you know, she was that crazy dancer with us, thank goodness and we started seeing some other department, many departments that we needed to bring on. And it's not that we were going in immediately hiring these people, but we kind of brought them in as advisors, consultants and started bringing them in like marketing, finance, capital, corporate. growth, our interns and we started having this little unit



43:04

in like May.



Channing Moreland 43:05

And we were like, Hmm, maybe we should get all these people in a room together and just see what happens. And we didn't even really plan item plan that too well. And we were like, what if we can talk about some marketing concepts because that's what we know nothing about and let's just see what happens. And I'll never forget in that meeting, our first hire she who's like been the most a part of it with us out of anyone kind of turns to us and says, you know, we really just need to know you know, what is the real vision behind this for you guys? I'm like, Girl, you've been with us like, all right, and I was like, Oh, wow. Yeah, like we've never actually like said it. I love she doesn't even know because we've never said it. How can anyone else know and that's we took so much out of that and where we are now versa. I'm so glad we got everyone in that room for her to ask that question that embarrassed me because I have Ever thought to share that?



Matt Hunckler 44:03

How did you process that in the moment? And then how did you process that coming out of out of there that I'm assuming action.



44:13

In the moment, I was like,



44:17

just like, didn't even know where to start. Because I was just like, this is a lot of work to do. Like, we have to figure so much stuff out, let alone just the work of operating our business and, you know, making sure it's continuing on. But like, wow, you have to, you know, before we can even start marketing to other people, we need to internally know what we are and who you're trying to serve. Like, we need to define that. So, you know, at the time, it was just, like, incredibly overwhelming to think that we're gonna have, you know, we have this team now, but we're also like starting from scratch and away. It's kind of felt like, we're taking A few steps backwards, but incredibly necessary. And now that we've really we have gotten very close to defining that and have it, you know, written now everybody's seen it. It feels way better. And just like it feels like, you know, we can all move forward unless that is understood by everybody and everyone's on the same page. Otherwise, we're all going different directions rather than one consistent path.



Matt Hunckler 45:29

Was there any particular process or book that was helpful or resource that was helpful when you're creating those values and vision?



Channing Moreland 45:38

Yes. So we had happened to have a marketing expert in the room then and we wanted to have a marketing summit. And she was just sitting there and laughing. She was like, Oh, yeah, here we go. And so we had developed, you know, a 90 day plan with her of how we would go about this. And that was, you know, she really has walked us through each thing. And she oversaw marketing for General Mills. And so she's really good at taking a huge thing and bringing it down to what is the actual core of the project. And so she has had us get walkthrough and whole experience to develop our brand identity, a whole experience who had developed the official brand personas, the brand guide, the, you know, every single little piece and that her as our process has been huge, and I wouldn't have known how we would go about that without someone like



Matt Hunckler 46:31

that. That's pretty great. What are some of the benefits you've seen from having those documented now? And even in this early stage of a startup? lifecycle?



46:42

It's it's just, I mean, I feel so I just feel much more clear on every decision we make. And I feel like we've empowered our team to be clear about it as well. You know, we, we don't have to every little every decision doesn't have to be a discussion. It's just okay. I know what Our goal is or even the short term goals and my role on this team, like it is defined and know what I'm doing. So it doesn't have to, you know, I don't have to go in, bring other people in to make sure you know, it's just like, Hey, we're all everybody that we have now like knows what they're up to knows who they need to ask for certain things, or communicate with, they know who but it's but really, it's like they're, I feel like we've really empowered them to know exactly like to feel confident really in their decisions.



Matt Hunckler 47:33

That's really cool. It's fun to see when that happens. And it sounds like you've both grown immensely as leaders and managers of a team as well. Do either you have a particularly I mean, that story was amazing. And so many lessons to be learned there. But you have any other interesting stories that you've kind of come across as you've been scaling this team

to almost 10 people you have now



48:01

Definitely.



Channing Moreland 48:04

I mean, you know, it's, you know, I think a harder topic that people don't, at least I sure didn't know how to go about was. Humans are humans, complex people. And you, as a manager, as a leader, you need to, you know, create, at least especially in today's world, which I'm so thankful for, and for people like Bernie brown talking about how leaders how they should, you know, to be courageous is to show vulnerability with your team. And that's something really huge that I have been trying to remember as in Listen, we're not going to be that corporate place that shames and causes fear for something that's just not who we are. And but on the other hand, it's like how do you create a safe space and listen, but create boundaries? But get things done, and be good people like all these things and stuff we've never really had to think about before. And so that's just been really interesting to walk through these relationships with your team and know what are their intrinsic motivators know what, you know, keeps them up at night. How can you remove obstacles for them? I know these are just words and not exact stories, but there's a lot of stories behind that, I think to have gotten us where we are now.



Matt Hunckler 49:32

I really appreciate you sharing that and I think Bernays book, dare to lead was one of my top reads of last



49:38

year. Yeah, right now. Yes,



Matt Hunckler 49:41

it's really, really good. And certainly take for me anyway takes a lot of mistake making in order to get some of those habit changes really solidified, but it's process and it's a journey. And I really appreciate both of you for sharing your process. Some of your process and some of your story with us here today on Powder Keg. Very, very excited to continue

to follow you if people want to follow the journey of even more, where should they find you?



50:14

Well, our website is even more.co ev a Mr. e.co. And then all of our socials is even more CO like app even more.



Matt Hunckler 50:26

Awesome. Well, thank you both for being on the show. I'm really excited for everything that you're doing the continued growth that you're seeing in terms of the team, and then it both of you as leaders. It's really cool to see so thanks for being on the show today.



Channing Moreland 50:40

Matthew, thank ya, you're the best. We love talking to you. It's really easy. You're the best asking questions and thank you for being amazing. We love Powder Keg, so



Matt Hunckler 50:49

love it. Well. We're really grateful to have you in the community. And like I said, you're just gonna keep doing awesome things. So and I'm sure continue to make mistakes too. So hope you'll You'll share in a future episode of powder keg igniting startups everything that you learn on this next leg.



51:05

Always sounds great. Thanks.



Matt Hunckler 51:07

Hey, this is your host, Matt Hunckler. Again, and I just want to say thanks for tuning in. I hope you walk away feeling inspired and armed with lots of new things to try out in your own business. Be sure to follow Channing and McKenzie and learn more about their company even more at Eva more.co. We'll link that all up in the show notes. You can find it there on Powder Keg calm, and to be among the first to hear the stories about entrepreneurs, investors and other tech leaders outside of Silicon Valley. Subscribe to us

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